

# SERIAL STORY

## No Man's Land A ROMANCE By Louis Joseph Vance

Illustrations by Ray Walters

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### SYNOPSIS.

Garrett Coast, a young man of New York City, meets Douglas Blackstock, who invites him to a card party. He accepts, although he dislikes Blackstock, the reason being that both are in love with Katherine Thaxter. Coast fails to convince her that Blackstock is unworthy of her friendship. At the party Coast meets two named Dundas and Van Tuij. There is a quarrel, and Blackstock shoots Van Tuij dead. Coast struggles to wrest the weapon from him, thus the police discover them. Coast is arrested for murder. He is convicted, but as he begins his sentence, Dundas names Blackstock as the murderer and kills himself. Coast becomes free, but Blackstock has married Katherine Thaxter and fled. Coast purchases a yacht and while sailing sees a man thrown from a distant boat. He rescues the fellow who is named Appleyard. They arrive at a lonely island, known as No Man's Land. Coast starts out to explore the place and comes upon some deserted buildings. He discovers a man dead. Upon going further and approaching a house he sees Katherine Thaxter.

### CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

"By boat," he returned stupidly, only irritated by this persistence in raising what to him, in his humor of the moment, seemed trivial and inconsequent issues—"my boat. We got lost and ran aground in the fog last night. I came ashore to try to find out where we were."

"Then you have escaped!" She went directly to the sole explanation of his presence there that lay within her understanding.

"Escaped?" He shook his head, not in negation but testily. "Yes, of course; or I shouldn't be here." It was plain enough to him that he had escaped the fate to which he had been sentenced. To what else could she refer? "But you—he—that dog Blackstock—I want to know—"

"Garrett!" she cried sharply; and he fell silent beneath the challenge of her eyes. "Mr. Blackstock is my husband. Please," she continued, more gently, "don't forget that."

"Is it likely?" he sneered. "But where is he? What made him leave you here?"

"Garrett!" Her tone would have warned him, but he was able to see but one thing, the conclusion to which his reason, spurred by his inclination to credit the worst to the man, had jumped the moment he realized her existence in surroundings so foreign to her kind; that Blackstock, true to type, having persuaded Katherine to their clandestine marriage and gained his end, the control of her little fortune, had abandoned her even as he had abandoned Dundas, even as he would have discarded an old shoe or anything that had served his purpose and worn out its usefulness to him, leaving her to languish in this forlorn and desolate spot, out of his way and out of the world's way. He hesitated to collect his wits, then pursued doggedly:

"Tell me where to find him," he said, his voice shaking—"give me the least hint to go by, Katherine, and I'll—I'll hunt him down, wherever he may be. I'll bring him back, I'll—I'll in his agitation he verged on incoherence.

Quietly but effectively the woman brought him to his senses. "I shall have to ask you not to continue in that tone," she said with disconcerting dignity. "You must not misconstrue matters arbitrarily to suit your prejudice. My husband has not left me, as you insist; there is no need for you to contemplate hunting him down. He is here."

"Here!" Involuntarily Coast's glance veered to the house, suspicious and alert.

"On this island," she affirmed. "What island?" he demanded, turning back to her.

"No Man's Land."

He accepted this confirmation of his conjecture with an inconclusive, "Oh?"

"You didn't know—?" she asked, incredulous.

"How should I know?" She watched him, distrustful. "You didn't come here on purpose . . . ?"

"It was chance," he asserted. None the less an unformed suspicion involving Appleyard crossed his mind. He considered, rejected and forgot it all in a breath.

"We bought the island last spring," he said listlessly.

for his use. But it isn't generally known—the vice-president of the company, one of his best friends, managed it all for us. The necessity for seclusion, you understand . . . Even the servants know him only as Mr. Black."

"I understand," he said in an expressionless tone. "And this—he nodded toward the farmhouse—"is your home?"

"Not exactly." Already she was regretting the intimacy her breathless explanation had implied. She hesitated, seeming reluctant to continue. "We—Douglas and I—occupy two rooms of the bungalow, where the wireless station is, up on the hill. There are no facilities for housekeeping, so we come here for our meals. The servants live here—and Mr. Power, my husband's assistant."

He looked away from her, avoiding her eyes, while the struggle for mastery of self went on within him. To make time, "You—you don't find it lonely?" he asked.

She shook her head. "And yet—out off from the world—I should think—"

"I have sufficient to occupy me," she interrupted. "And we're not wholly out of touch. A boat brings us provisions and whatever else we may require from New Bedford every week."

"You see the papers, then?" he asked with a trace of eagerness.

"No; they are prohibited—doctor's orders."

"And no one writes you?" "Nobody knows where we are."

"An admirable arrangement: I congratulate Mr. Blackstock." Coast commented—contemptibly, he felt.

She gave him a look of slow, withering scorn. "Do you think he fears you?"

"Me? O!" He laughed shortly. "Probably not."

"Why should he? We both know you too well to believe you would—"



"Tell Me Where to Find Him,"

repeat your mistake, in cold blood, for sheer revenge."

"My mistake?" he parroted blankly. "Oh, to be sure . . . No; hardly that." He waited a moment, noting how strained and tense she was.

"Nevertheless," he added quietly, "I should like to see him for a moment."

"Is it necessary?" "I should like to see him," he repeated.

"He isn't here just now." She met his keen, questioning look with a proud lift of her head. "On the island," she continued, "but not here. He'll be back before long."

"Thank you," he replied evenly; "I'll wait."

"But Garrett!" She seemed to overcome an inward resistance and, re-entering the doorway, stood near him, touching his arm with a gentle, persuasive hand, her eyes imploring.

"Must you?" He nodded gravely. "But why—why rake up this buried grievance?" she protested. "Is it wise, right? . . . It's true, he testified against you. But what else could he do? You had your chance—he gave you your chance to escape, before the police came. After that, he had no choice. You shouldn't hold that against him, Garrett; if only you knew how he hated to take the stand against you, how terribly he felt it when you were convicted practically on his evidence . . . But now that it's all over and past remedy, wouldn't it be better not to reopen that old wound? Kinder, Garrett, and more generous . . . to me? You are free, can go where you will . . ."

"She broke off with an anxious thought: 'The detectives don't know where to look for you?'"

"What? No." He laughed aloud, but mirthlessly. "Oh, no, I gave them the slip some time ago."

"I'm glad. But now, please, Garrett, won't you give this up . . . ?" She said more, much more, continuing to plead with him in a fever of

distress, able only to comprehend one thing, that she must somehow avert the encounter he desired. But her rapid, stumbling accents were all meaningless in his understanding, which seemed to reel, dumfounded by this revelation of the incredible. She had said enough to bring him face to face with the hideous, infamous fact that she still held him blood-guilty, still honored and believed Blackstock. He struggled to shake his wits together and think coherently, but to little purpose. All the world was mad and topsy-turvy—a mad, mad world, wherein all truth was false, faith was treachery, justice parodied, honor deep dishonor. For a little he felt that his reason hung in the balance, teetering between wild laughter and still wilder tears. If man can be hysterical, Coast was near to it.

And Katherine, witness to his excitement as evidenced in the working of his features, his shifting gaze, his hands so tightly clenched that the nails (she thought) must be biting deep into his palms, saw presently that he no longer listened to her.

She ceased to speak and waited, hoping against hope for what she deemed the best.

He was (so ran her thoughts, distracted, like wild things in a panic) not reasonably to be held in strict account for his attitude toward her or for his actions. In such men as he there must inevitably be something lacking, something like an abiding consciousness of right and wrong, the ability to distinguish between them; that rudder of the soul. In simple charity she must accord him patience.

If her eyes told her he was more a man than the Garrett Coast of old (and she saw him now in the fullest flush of health and vigor, sun-browned, weather-seasoned, glowing with strength and vitality) her mental vision clothed him with an aura of abnormality like a shroud, awful and repellent. He figured in her sight a

murderer, a man who could strike to death an unarmed and defenceless friend, for a trifle. Nothing might ever avail to erase that fact from her consciousness.

Unconsciously she drew a pace or two away. The action roused him. He lifted to hers haggard eyes set in a haggard face; and their look was one of discernment. She knew instinctively that he divined her thought, that he knew why she had drawn away from him. And so pitiful he seemed that before she knew it her mood melted and knew only compassion for him.

"Oh, Garrett," she cried impulsively, "I am so sorry!"

Visibly he took command of himself. "I'm sure of that," he said slowly; "and I don't want to distress you. My coming here was pure accident, as I've said; and presently I'll go and . . . Blackstock need never know I've set foot on the island—since you wish it."

"Oh," she cried, half sobbing, "thank you—thank you!"

"But first I want you to tell me one thing."

"Yes—anything!" she promised gratefully, heedless of his sober scrutiny.

"Are you happy?" he demanded forthwith; and held his breath for on her answer everything he prized depended. "Are you happy with him—Blackstock?"

It was like cold water in her face. She gasped and drew herself up, straight and slim, defiant. "What right have you to ask me that?"

"None but that of a man who loved you once, and who, though he may not, loves you still—whatever you may think him, Katherine."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Burnise. Smarty—Every tree has a bark, but do you suppose any would bite? Downrite—The dogwood.

# STATE CAPITAL CHAT

## Work Of Pardon Board.

The Board of Pardons has disposed of the following cases:

Those pardoned are: Angelo Tomasco, Philadelphia, voluntary manslaughter; William Coher, Cameron, felonious attack; Thomas Gallagher, Philadelphia, fraudulent voting; Ward Ketchem, Columbia, larceny; Ernest James, Philadelphia, encouraging minors to violate parole.

The death sentence of William C. Schrader, the Millin county murderer, was commuted to imprisonment for life.

The applications refused are those of Andrew Mabin, Philadelphia, assault and battery; Grace Raab, Erie, larceny.

A rehearing was granted to John Maxwell, Philadelphia, murder second degree.

The cases continued are those of Jimmy Coura, Schuylkill, burglary; Alphonso Cutair, Jr., Philadelphia, murder; Daniel J. Adams, Northampton, horse stealing; David Murdie, Delaware, murder second degree; George Wright, Lehigh, larceny.

Held under advisement: Frank Endrukut, Philadelphia, murder; Louis Miller, Lackawanna, felonious attack.

## Officers To Be Named Promptly.

Prompt appointment of recruiting officers as directed in the general order issued from National Guard headquarters is expected of regimental commanders so that when the inspection by the regular army officers begins next month the organizations of the Guard will be in possession of the ground work of the system. The inspectors of small arms practice will be required to inform themselves thoroughly on the regular army regulations as to recruiting and the regulations issued by the War Department for the militia.

A circular of instructions will be issued by Adjutant General Stewart for information of commanders and recruiting officers. Forms will also be issued which the recruiting officers will be required to keep intact and ready for instant use should the organizations of the Guard be called into national service. The forms and their use will form basis of inspections this spring.

## Deny Crop Failure Reports.

Although the 1912 peach crop is already reported ruined the apple yield predicted as certain to fail and the wheat as sure to be killed by the unprecedented cold weather of the last week, State officials whose business it is to keep in touch with the conditions prevailing in the agricultural and horticultural regions of the Commonwealth say they believe nothing of the sort. Many of the reports are declared by folks on Capitol Hill to be "scares" and they are inclined to show more or less mirth over the peach crop failure so early in the year.

## Start Survey Work.

Engineers of the State Highway Department have started work on the surveys of the old southern road between Pittsburgh and Gettysburg in spite of the cold weather, and it is planned to push the work as rapidly as possible. The work has been divided between two corps of picked men, all of whom are eager to make a record. The data gathered will give the State authorities the first complete information about the lines of the old road and the engineering conditions to be met in its reconstruction.

## Child Labor Delegates.

The Governor has announced the appointment of the following delegates to represent Pennsylvania at the eighth annual conference of the National Child Labor Convention in Louisville, Ky., January 25-28. Miss Annie E. McCord, John W. Anthony, Rev. George B. Richards, Miss Harriet Rosebaum and C. D. Scully, all of Pittsburgh; Daniel E. Crane, of Sewickley.

## Request Road Improvements.

State Highway Commissioner Bigelow gave hearings to delegations from Luzerne and Bradford counties who asked early construction of State main highways in their districts. Senator Sterling R. Catlin headed the Luzerne party, which desired improvement of highways running across the county. The Bradford party asked for early construction of the route from Towanda to the New York line.

## Canal Basins Commission Named.

The Governor announced the appointment of the following named persons to be members of the Commission for the Improvement of the State Canal Basins at the Port of Erie: Clarence L. Thompson, Frank E. Grant, Frank Connell, G. Irving Blake and L. Ph. McCreary, all of Erie.

## Building Societies To Report.

Banking Commissioner William H. Smith issued a call for a report from each of the 1,609 building and loan associations of the State of its condition at the close of its last fiscal year.

## Gets Prison Inspectorship.

Governor Tener announced the appointment of Thomas B. Foley, of Pittsburgh, to be a member of the Board of Inspectors of the Western Penitentiary, vice Thomas A. Dunn, who resigned because of pressure of private business.

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