

The Trey O' Hearts

A Novelized Version of the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name
Produced by the Universal Film Co.

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Author of "The Fortune Hunter," "The Brass Box," "The Black Box," etc.

Illustrated with Photographs from the Picture Production

Copyright, 1914, by Louis Joseph Vance

Barcus stood over him, at the wheel, fairly reeling with weariness, his eyes blood-shot, swollen, and half-closed in a face like a mask of fatigue.

"Can't keep this up much longer," he apologized thickly; "stood it about as long as I can. Take your trick and give me forty winks."

Grateful solicitude brought Alan instantly to his side, though he himself was sluggish and stiff and sore in all his limbs.

"You're a brick!" he protested. "Why didn't you call me sooner?"

"No good; I knew the way—you didn't. That is, I did until this accursed fog closed down a couple of hours ago. Now—God knows where

they was one whose solution baffled their utmost ingenuity—one the simple contemplation of which taxed their courage and intelligence to the extreme.

He summed up: "I can't see anything for it but father and Judith are determined to have my scalp, and I'm hanged if I can see how to protect myself without taking a leaf out of their books. What I'm most afraid of is that some time I may forget it's a woman I'm defending myself against. When a fellow's fighting for his very life he can't always stop to calculate the weight of his blows."

The young man sighed, shook his head, laughed uncertainly, and held her closer to him. "Don't fear; I'll find some way out without injuring either of them. I promise you that!" He sealed the pledge upon her lips. And in that moment of their oblivion to the world from some point forward a muffled crash sounded simultaneously with the dull shock of a collision with a smaller vessel, and a strange voice cried out with an accent of high exultation.

Before either Alan or the girl could disengage the decks rang loud with a rush of booted feet pounding aft.

The figures of the boarding party were already taking shape through the fog as Alan sprang toward the companionway to fetch the rifle. And in this action his feet slipped on planks greasy with moisture deposited by the surcharged atmosphere. He went down with a stumbling thump, and an instant later two men fell bodily upon him—active, strong fellows in the dress of fishermen. He was suffered to rise only as a prisoner, helpless in the grasp of two pairs of powerful hands.

He saw Barcus, rudely roused and still dumb with sleepy confusion, in no better case—jerked to his feet and held captive by two more fishermen. A fifth had taken charge of Rose, clamping her wrists in the vise of one big hand.

The sixth and sole other member of the boarding party, likewise in the rough-and-ready garb of a fisherman, was Judith Trine.

Down the side a heavy lifeboat ground its way astern, the loose end of its painter slipping over the rail even as Alan caught sight of it. (So it seemed Barcus had guessed shrewdly!)

Observing this, one of the men in charge of Alan made as if to leave him to the other, addressing Judith for permission to prevent the loss of the lifeboat. She stopped him with a peremptory gesture.

"No—let it go. We're better off without it. Hold that man fast till I fetch a rope. We'll make sure of them both this time!"

Straining forward in the grasp of her guard, Rose implored her sister: "Judith, in pity's name, think what you are doing!"

"Hold your tongue!" Judith snapped viciously. "Another whimper out of you, and I'll have you gagged!"

The balance of her threat, though accompanied by the exhibition of an automatic pistol, was drowned out by the sudden roar of a steamship signal, so close aboard that it seemed almost to emanate from the forepart of the schooner herself.

As it was answered by shrill and hoarse cries of terror or of warning from a dozen throats, Alan found himself released his captors leaping for their lives to the taffrail.

He caught an instantaneous glimpse of the knife-like bow of a great steamer towering above the two-master—sweeping toward it at a speed which raised a smart jet of white under the cutwater.

Someone aboard the schooner, with the voice of a stentor, bellowed a terrified appeal:

"Stop your engines! Shut off your propeller! Stop your—"

Then, like the wrath of God, the steamship overwhelmed the lesser ship; its bow seemed to slice through the schooner as a knife through cheese. And the two halves were fairly driven under water by the frightful force of the blow.

Thunders deafening him, Alan was hurled bodily through the air fully twenty feet.

When he came up he struck out at random, blindly tormented by the vision of Rose caught in the suck of

Accompanied by the Exhibition of an Automatic Pistol.

that gigantic wheel, drawn under, crushed and mangled by the propeller of the vast black hulk whose flank was sliding past, like the face of a cliff, ten yards behind his shoulders.

Aware of several dark objects dotting the surface within a radius of several yards, he swam for the nearest; the head was a woman's, the face turned toward him, the face of Rose.

He gasped wildly: "Keep cool! Don't struggle! Put one hand on my shoulder and—"

What happened then was never quite clear to him; he only knew that he was forced to fight for his very life—that the woman, as soon as he came within reach, flung herself upon him like some maddened animal, clutching



his throat, winding her limbs round his, dragging him down and down.

Primitive instinct alone saved him. He remembered later, most vaguely, the culmination of that duel beneath the waters—remembered freeing an arm, drawing it back, delivering a blow from his shoulder, with all his strength, finding himself free, struggling back to the air.

Then a boathook caught the back of his shirt and dragged him for some distance until two strong hands caught him beneath the armpits and held his head above the water.

He looked up wistfully into the face of Barcus, and, still bewildered, struggled feebly.

The other's voice brought him back to his senses. "Easy, old top! Take it easy! You're all right now—rest a minute, then help me get you aboard."

He obeyed, controlling his panic as best he might; and presently, with considerable assistance from Barcus, contrived to scramble in over the gunwales of a boat which proved to be the stolen lifeboat.

Aside from Barcus and himself it held one other person only—the woman he loved, crumpled up and unconscious in the bow.

He strove to rise and go to her, to make sure that still she lived. Barcus restrained and quieted him.

"There! Easy, I say! She's all right—fainted—that's all! She and I took the water in practically the same spot, and luck threw this blessed boat my way within half a dozen strokes. No trouble at all—in a manner of speaking!"

"But the steamer—"

"Why fret about her? At the pace she was making she couldn't have stopped within half a mile. We'll be all right now—with power to fetch us to land."

"But the others—Judith!" Alan sat up and leaned over the gunwale, searching an oily, leaden expanse spotted only with a few splinters and bits of wreckage. "I left her out there—unconscious—she'll drown, I tell you!"

"And I'll tell you something!" said Mr. Barcus severely. "You'll lie quiet and shut up or I'll dent your dome with the shaft of an oar. Let her drown—and a good job, I say! Don't you know the meaning of 'enough'? Merciful heavens, man, you're the most insatiable glutton for punishment ever!"

But Alan wasn't listening. His face was as lightless as the waters that swam beneath his lack-luster gaze. There was a horror in his heart that numbed even the sense of relief, of deliverance, that penetrated his being like a shock of mortal pain.

Dead! Judith dead! Back there, in the fog and the cold . . . dead by his hand!

CHAPTER XV.

The Masked Voice.

For a matter of twelve hours the fog, leaden, dank, viscous, as inexorable as the dominion of evil, had wrapped the world in an embrace as foul and noxious as the coils of some great, gray, slimy serpent.

Through its sluggish folds the ponderous, power-impelled lifeboat crept at a snail's pace, its stem parting and rolling back from either flank a heavy-hearted sea of gray.

In the bows a young woman rested in a state of semi-exhaustion, her eyes closed, her head pillowed on a cork-belt life-preserver, her sodden garments modeled closely to the slender body that was ever and again shaken from head to feet with the strength of a long, shuddering respiration.

Seated on the nearest thwart, Alan Law, chin in hand, watched over the rest of this woman whom he loved with a grimly hopeless solicitude. He was in no happier case than she, so far as physical comfort went—he was in worse, since he might not rest.

Premonition of misfortune darkened his heart with its impenetrable shadow.

In the stern Tom Barcus presided morosely over the steering gear; and Law was no more jealously heedful of his sweetheart than Barcus of the heavy-duty motor that chugged away so purposefully at its business of driving the boat heaven-knew-where.

Lacking at once a compass, all notion whatsoever of the sun's bearings, and any immediate hope of the fog lifting or chance bringing them either to land or to rescue by some larger and less comfortless craft, Barcus steered mainly through force of habit—the salt-water man's instinctive feeling that no boat under way should

ever in any conceivable circumstance be without a hand at the helm. It had seemed impossible that it could long escape repetition of the disaster, but somehow, it always did escape, and that by a wide margin; never once had it passed near enough to another vessel to see it.

And now for more than an hour the silence had been unceasingly constant, broken only by the rumble of the motor, the muted lisp of water slipping down the side, the suck and gurgle of the wake.

Forebodings no less portentous than Law's crawled in the mind of Barcus. It was as likely as not that the lifeboat was traveling straight out to sea. And gasoline tanks can and oftentimes do become as empty as an official weather prophet's promise of fair weather for a holiday.

More than this, Mr. Barcus was a confirmed skeptic in respect of marine motors; on terms of long and intimate experience with the ways of

"Nothing," Barcus told her. "I shut the engine off—that's all."

Tempers were annoyed in that hour, and Alan was annoyed to think that the rest of his beloved should needlessly have been disturbed.

"What did you do that for?" he demanded sharply.

"Because I jolly well wanted to," Barcus returned in a tone as brusque.

"Oh, you did—eh?"

"Yes, I did—eh! I happen to be bossing this end of the boat and to have sense enough to realize there's no sense at all in our wasting fuel the way we are—cruising nowhere!"

"Well," Law contended, struck by the fairness of this argument, but unable to calm his uneasiness—"just the same, we might—"

"Yes; of course, we might," Barcus snapped. "We might a whole lot. We might, for instance, be heading for Spain, for all you or I know to the contrary. And in such case, I for one respectfully prefer to have gas enough to take us home again if ever this da—blessed fog lifts!"

And for several seconds longer the stillness strangled their spirits in its ruthless grasp.

Then of a sudden a cry shrilled through the fog, so near at hand that it seemed scarcely more distant than over the side:

"Ahoy! Help! Ahoy there! Help!"

So insistent, so urgent was its accent that, coupled with the surprise, it brought the three as one to their feet, all a-tremble, their eyes seeking one another's faces, then shifting uneasily away.

"What can it be?" Rose whispered, aghast, shrinking into Alan's ready arm.

"A woman," Barcus put in harshly. "Judith," the girl moaned.

Alan shook himself together. "Impossible!" he contended. "I saw her go down . . ."

"That doesn't prove she didn't come up," Barcus commented acutely.

"Ahoy! Motorboat aho-o-o! Help!"

"And that," Barcus pursued sadly, "just proves she did come up—blame the luck! Alive she is, and kicking; stand clear. An able-bodied pair of lungs was back of that hail, my friend; and you needn't tell me I don't know the dulcet accents of that angelic contralto!"

Without heeding him, Alan cupped hands to mouth and sent an answering cry ringing through the murk:

"Ahoy! Where are you? Where away?"

"Here—on the reef—half-drowned—perishing with chill—"

"How does my voice bear?" Alan called back.

"What the dickens do you care?"

Barcus interpolated suspiciously.

"To port," the response rang through the fog. "Starboard your helm and come in slowly!"

"Right-o! Half a minute! Alan replied reassuringly.

"Like hell!" Mr. Barcus muttered in his throat as he jumped down into the engine pit and bent over the fly-wheel. Leaping on the forward thwart and balancing himself perilously near the gunwale, Alan strained his vision vainly against the opacity of the fog.

"Can't make out anything," he grumbled, looking back. "Start her up—but slow's the word—and 'ware reef!"

"Nothing doing," Barcus retorted curtly. "The motto is now 'Full speed astern!' as you must know."

"O come! We can't leave a woman out there—in a fix like that!"

"Can't we? You watch!" Barcus grunted malevolently, rocking the heavy flywheel with all his might; for the motor had turned suddenly stubborn.

"Alan!" Rose pleaded, laying a hand upon his sleeve. "Think what it means! I know it sounds heartless of me—and it's my own sister. But you know how mad she is—wild with hatred and jealousy. If you take her into this boat, it's your life or hers!"

"If we leave her out there," Alan retorted, shaking his arm impatiently free, "it's her life on our heads!"

At this juncture the motor took charge of the argument, ending it in summary fashion. With a smart explosion in the cylinder, it started up unexpectedly, at one and the same time almost dislocating the arm of Mr. Barcus and precipitating Alan overboard.

It was not given him to know what was happening until he found himself in the water; he struggled to the surface just in time to see the bows of the lifeboat back away and vanish into the mist.

(Continued in next issue.)

Cures Old Sores, Other Remedies Won't Cure. The worst cases, no matter of how long standing, are cured by the wonderful, old reliable Dr. Porter's Antiseptic Healing Oil. It relieves Pain and Heals at the same time. 25c, 50c, \$1.00

Whenever You Need a General Tonic Take Grove's

The Old Standard Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic is equally valuable as a General Tonic because it contains the well known tonic properties of QUININE and IRON. It acts on the Liver, Drives out Malaria, Enriches the Blood and Builds up the Whole System. 50 cents.

DR. D. T. WALLER, Dentist.

Equipped for Nitrous Oxide and Oxygen administrations, Insuring Painless Extracting and Operating. X-Ray Work a Specialty. Over First National Bank. 18 S. Tryon St., Charlotte, N. C.

Dr. B. C. Redfearn, Dentist.

Office one door south of Bruner's store. Phone 232. Monroe, N. C. At Marshville on first and third Mondays of each month and Matthews second and fourth Mondays.



The Sixth Member of the Boarding Party Was Judith Trine.

we are—by my reckoning, somewhere in Nantucket sound, west of Monomo-y."

Grasping a small brass handle affixed to the wheel box, he jerked it sharply three times, and the automatic horn blared rascally a threefold response up forward.

"Keep that going," he begged. "Three blasts in a row and a minute interval—and if the devil takes care of his own we may possibly escape being run down."

With a sigh, relinquishing the wheel, he collapsed upon the deck and was almost instantly asleep.

The wind had fallen until barely enough air stirred to keep way on the vessel; she moved in silence, a spectral ship upon a spectral sea of long, oily swells and the complexion of lead. Either and you in the obscurity, fog-

signals of other shipping sounded a concert of discordance—the man-power horn of a catboat crying the warning back to the deep-throated whistle of a coastwise steamship and the impertinent drumming of a motor-boat's exhaust with the muffer cut out.

This last boxed the compass, sounding now near, now far, though the complaints of other shipping diminished in volume and died away in the distance, giving place to others still, the plutter-plutter of that motor was never altogether lost; if at times it faded, it seemed certain always to return in even louder volume.

Vainly straining his vision against the blank pallor of the encompassing fog, Alan wondered, worried, dreaded!

At irregular intervals, starting from preoccupation, he would manipulate the brass pull on the wheel-box, provoking the horn's stuttering blasts of protest. But the need for unremitting vigilance and exercise of the fog-signal failed none the less to reconcile Alan to that blatant clamor which so widely and so hideously advertised their whereabouts.

If there were anything still to be feared from Judith and her crew—if, for instance, as Barcus had suggested, they had sought out one of the life-saving stations on Nauset beach, appropriated its power-driven lifeboat and renewed the pursuit, if ever they heard that horn there would beyond question be the devil to pay!

The loneliness of his vigil was eventually relieved by the appearance on deck of the woman Alan loved.

The tableau that greeted her vision as she emerged from the companionway, of the haggard, unshaven wretch at the wheel and the other who lay at his feet, where he had fallen, in a stupor of fatigue, instantly wrung from Rose a little cry of solicitude. And she was quick to do what little she could to alleviate their discomfort. For Barcus she fetched a pillow and blanket from the cabin, and this one suffered her ministrations without once rousing from his slumbers. Then hastening forward, she got the galley fire going and prepared a makeshift breakfast for her half-famished lover.

Warm food and hot coffee—such as they were—lending a little tone to Alan's spirits, he was presently able to discuss their situation with some optimism. Yet nothing could gloss the fact that the problem confronting