

# 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

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Illustrated with Photographs from the Picture Production

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### Birdman.

About eight o'clock in the evening of the same day a motorcar deposited at the Hotel Monolith a gentleman whose weather-beaten and oil-stained motorcap and duster covered little clothing more than shirt and trousers and assorted oddly in the eyes of the desk-clerk with the rather meticulously turned-out guest known to him as Mr. Arthur Lawrence and to the management of the hotel as Mr. Alan Law incognito.

Eventually persuaded, the clerk yielded up the key to Mr. Lawrence's suite of rooms, together with two notes superscribed with the same nom de guerre.

Alan's impatience was so great that he could hardly wait to examine these communications until he was quit of the public eye.

The first proved to be a characteristic communication:

"Dear Ulysses—Thanks for the jail delivery. I got in this morning just in time to motor over to Jersey in hopes of seeing your finish as a bachelor; instead, I was favored by being made an involuntary witness to your spectacular ascent, following your almost equally spectacular high-dive.

"But to business: my time is limited; in half an hour more I am to double in black-face for the purposes of the author of this melodramatic farce which you, no doubt, call the history of your grande passion.

"I mean to say—well, several things, to-wit: When I saw you snatched out of the North river I was engaged in trailing a pale-faced villain in a motorcar concerning whom you probably know far more than I; he on his part was busy being a bold, bad kidnaper; Rose was in his power, as we say in such cases. His intentions, however, were nothing more blameworthy than to return her to the arms of her dotting parent. I know, because I slouched after 'em, even to the house of Seneca Trine. Later I sleuthed some more, following a furtive young man from the house of Trine to the office of the general manager of the New York Central, where he made arrangements for a special to convey the said Trine and retinue to Chicago and points West. It leaves at three this afternoon. I was unable to ascertain whether or not Rose is to participate in this begira, but I know I shall. On the chance of being useful, I have bribed the train crew to let me impersonate the porter. So, should you be moved to follow and succeed in catching up with us, and observe anybody who looks rather off-color in the party—don't shoot: the said party will be me.

"Yours for the quiet life.

"TOM BARCUS."

The second note yielded a communication written on notepaper of the simplest elegance in a woman's hand—a hurried scrawl:

"They are taking me West by special train—I don't know where or why. A servant has promised to see that this reaches you. Save me!"

Over this Alan wrinkled an incredulous nose. The hand of the hand of Rose, but the phraseology was not in her spirit. He examined it more closely and thought to detect beneath its semblance of haste a deliberate and carefully guided pen. He picked up the envelope to compare the handwriting of the address with that of the enclosure—and shook out a tray of hearts.

This last was covered, as to its face, with a plainly-written message.

"With the compliments of Seneca Trine to Alan Law. We are due in Chicago at eleven tomorrow morning

and leave immediately for the Pacific coast via Santa Fe route."

Comparison between this and the message purporting to be from Rose distilled the conviction that the same hand was responsible for both.

Alan shrugged. So he was to be lured away from New York and Rose by this transparent trick, was he? No fear!

He glanced at his watch, finding the hour far too early to attempt what he had in mind.

With plenty of time on his hands, he gave the matter serious consideration and concluded to take no chances; it was just possible that Trine had taken Rose with him on his western trip, after all. In such case the only possible way of overtaking the special would be by air line.

Promptly Alan called up the aviation fields at Hempstead Plains and got into communication with a gentleman answering to the surname of Coast: the same birdman who had come to Alan's rescue with his hydro-aeroplane.

Their arrangements were quickly consummated, Coast agreeing to wait for Alan with his biplane in Van Cortlandt park from midnight till daybreak, prepared if need be to undertake a transcontinental flight.

Thereafter Mr. Law proceeded to rehabilitate himself in decent clothing and his own esteem; after bathing, he dined alone in his rooms, from a tray; after dining he slept soundly for three hours—and may be thought to have earned at least that much rest through having been for four hours a passenger in a hydro-aeroplane lost in fogs that wrapped Long Island and all the adjacent territory in an impenetrable shroud.

Nor had this been all. Leaving aside all that had led up to Alan's rescue by Coast: the forced landing of the hydro-aeroplane for lack of fuel had taken place on the south shore of the Great South bay; a search of hours had followed before a boat was found to convey Alan and the aviator to the mainland; and a motor run of several hours had followed that, conveying Coast to his Hempstead hangars and Alan on to his hotel in New York.

Another man would have needed twelve hours in bed at the least to compensate for such a day; Mr. Law awakened in a lamb-like temper when called at eleven-thirty.

At midnight he committed an act of burglary, calmly and with determination breaking his way into the house of Seneca Trine through the area windows and basement.

In this nefarious business nothing hindered and none opposed him. But for a single lighted window in the upper tier (but not, he noted, the window to Rose's bedchamber) and one or two lights which he found burning dim in the kitchen offices and other servants' quarters on the lower floor he would have thought the house empty. The silence of an abandoned place informed it all—below the upper story. But he was not to be satisfied with such negative evidence; he explored the dwelling minutely, room by room, story by story, passing with little interest through apartments by every sign dedicated to the tendency of his mortal enemy, intent on one object only—to find Rose Trine, that one woman whom he loved, or else make sure she was not there.

He negotiated that last flight of steps which led to the topmost floor with extraordinary stealth, advised thereto by a sound, or rather a series of sustained sounds, which had theretofore been inaudible to him. Possibly they had not till then existed; possibly the man servant whom he found snor-

ing in a chair outside a closed door had not fallen asleep and begun to snore until the moment when Alan set foot upon the lower step of that final ascent.

Turning the head of the stairs, Alan paused for a little, speculatively intent on this man who must somehow be disposed of before he might solve the secret of that shut and guarded door.

Aside from actual violence no solution offered to the puzzle—and violence was abruptly forced upon him.

No sound warned him of the door that opened at his back as he stood watching the sleeping guard. A piercing shriek was the first intimation he received that his presence had been discovered. It served as well to move him instantly into action: a single glance over his shoulder showed him the figure of a maid-servant in cap and gown, her mouth still wide and full of sound—and Alan fell upon the guard like a thunderbolt. The man had barely time to jump up and recognize the alarm: then a fist caught him on the point of his jaw, and he returned promptly to deep unconsciousness.

No time now for qualms of compunction on account of the savage ruthlessness of that blow; no time even to search the fellow for a key to the closed door: already the maid was taking the stairs in full flight and cry, four steps and a howl like a warlock's to every jump.

Backing off, Alan took a short run, cleared the prostrate body of the guard with a leap, and flung himself full force against the door, his shoulder striking a point nearest the lock. With a splintering crash it broke inward. Without dignity or decorum he sprawled on all fours into the presence of Judith Trine.

"Poor Mr. Law!" she cried, with a mocking nod, "always disappointed! I'm so sorry—truly I am!"

"Oh, spare me your sarcasm," he begged resentfully. "It's ridiculous enough, this whole mad business—"

"But I am not sarcastic," she insisted with such sincerity that he opened his eyes in wonder. "Believe me, I am sorry for once it is I and not Rose whom you find locked up here! For, you see, I am locked up, by way of punishment—thanks to my having had pity on you once too often—while my father decamps mysteriously for parts unknown—"

"You don't know where he's gone, then?"

"Do you?" she asked sharply.

"In a general way. By special train to the West—"

"Taking Rose?"

"So I'm told."

The woman choked upon her anger, but quickly mastered it.

"He shall pay for this!" she asseverated.

"Your father? I wish him nothing more nor less than your enemy," Alan assured her civilly. "But since it seems that he has gone, and Rose with him, if you'll forgive me, I think I'll be going—"

"Alone?"

That one word, uttered with all the significance that this woman knew so well how to infuse into her tone, checked him suspiciously on the threshold.

"Why—yes."

"You wouldn't care for a companion du voyage?" she suggested.

"Oh—really?" he protested.

She held up an arresting hand. "Listen!" she begged.

From the street below came the unmistakable rattle of a policeman's locust on the sidewalk.

"That damned maid," Alan divined thoughtfully.

"The same," Judith agreed with ominous calm. "Has it struck you that you may have some trouble getting away without my permission?"

"I'm not so stupid as not to have thought of that," he countered.

"Then be advised—and take me with you."

"In what capacity, please? As enemy or ally?"

"As ally—you're right; we can't be friends—until we overtake that special train. After that, by your leave, I'll shift for myself."

"It's not such a bad notion," he reflected: "with you under my eye, you can't do much to interfere—"

"If I promise—" she suggested.

"I'll take your word," he agreed simply. "But you're in for a lot of hardship, I'm afraid. The one way to catch up with your father is by aeroplane—and I've got one waiting."

She nodded intently. "Don't consider me as a woman when it comes to hardship," she hinted obliquely.

"I've no reason to, going on what I know of you."

"Give me one minute to find my coat and hat."

In less than that time she was at his side in the hallway.

The police entered by the front door as the two crept out of the area window.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### Via Air Line.

Not once in the course of the next sixteen hours but a thousand times Alan questioned (and, it will readily be allowed, with all excuses) his sanity in permitting himself to be influenced to humor Judith's insistence and make her a party to this wild aerial cross-country dash.

Between whiles the plane flew fast and high, cutting a direct line, as the crow flies, athwart the eastern and western states.

Chicago they raised as a smudge on the northern horizon about one o'clock in the afternoon; thereafter some little time was lost in descents to ascertain the identity of the many railroad lines that criss-crossed the swimming

landscape. Only at the third cast did they succeed in picking up the line of the Santa Fe. And it was some hours later, though still daylight, when they picked up the special train, flying like a bunting across the levels.

There was scant room for doubt that it was the train they sought. Specials are not common. Moreover Alan contrived with considerable difficulty to focus binoculars upon the rear platform of the car, and caught a fugitive glimpse of a white-coated figure with a black face that was watching the biplane in the same manner, that is, with glasses.

The man in the white coat, Alan assured himself, was positively Barcus.

And hardly had he comforted himself with this assurance when his sardonic destiny struck the motor dumb.

In response to his look of dashed inquiry the aviator merely shook a weary head and muttered the words: "Engine trouble."

Swiftly the earth rose to receive the volplaning mechanism. Under Coast's admirable handling it settled down al-



Escape of Alan and Judith.

most without a jar, on the outskirts of a city whose name Alan never learned.

For the biplane was barely at a standstill before he was out and, reeling with the giddiness that affects men after long flights, making his way as best he might toward the manager's office connected with a trainyard immediately adjacent to the spot where they had come to earth.

Lavish disbursements of money won him his way against official protests that what he demanded was an impossibility. Within twenty minutes, leaving Coast to follow on when and as best he might, Alan and Judith were spinning through open country in the cab of an engine running light, with only clear track between it and the special.

The several hours that ensued before the rear lights of the special were brought to view were none too many for the task imposed upon Alan of overcoming the scruples of the engineer and fireman.

Another minute, and less than fifty feet separated the two—the special train and the light engine, both hurtling through the light at top speed.

With a word to the engineer Alan crept out along the side of the boiler, with only a greasy handrail and a narrow foothold between himself and what meant death, or something closely resembling it, should he be shaken off by the tearing wind and the swaying of the locomotive.

It seemed an hour before he worked himself up to the cowcatcher—now within four feet of the rear platform of the special.

On this last he could see a woman's figure indistinctly silhouetted against the light through the door, and beside her a man in a white coat, clinging for dear life to the knob of the door—holding it against the frantic efforts of some persons inside to tear it open.

Another hour of suspense dragged out—or such was the effect—while the light engine with intolerable slowness bridged those four scant feet.

At length it was feasible to attempt the thing. Rose (he could see her strained white face quite plainly now) was half over the rail of the car ahead, ready to jump.

His heart failed him. It was too hazardous a risk. He dared not let her take it.

Something very like a shot sounded from the train and something very like a bullet whistled past his cheek, and proved the signal for several more.

Strangely, that knowledge steadied his nerves. Straining forward and holding on to a bar so hot that it scorched his palm, he offered a hand to the girl on the rail.

Her hand fell confidently into it. She jumped. His arm wound round her as she landed on the platform of the cowcatcher. He heard her breathe his name, then hurriedly passed her between himself and the boiler to the footway at the side. The fireman was waiting there to help her. Alan turned his attention to Barcus.

To his dismay he found that the engine was losing ground. The space was widening rapidly as Barcus released the knob and threw himself over the rail.

By a miraculous, flying leap, the man accomplished that incredible feat and gained the platform.

An instant later ten feet separated the engine from the special, as the engineer applied the brakes.

And this he did none too soon: for at the same time Marrophat and another appeared on the rear platform and opened a hot, but, thanks to the widening distance, ineffectual fire.

The engine ground slowly to a halt as the rear lights of the special train swept from sight round a bend.

(Continued in next issue.)

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Shook Out a Tray of Hearts.