

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 Band," "The Black Bag," etc.

Illustrated with Photographs from the Picture Production

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CHAPTER LII.

The Old Adam.

A long minute elapsed before either woman moved or spoke.

Transfixed beside Alan's chair, steadying herself with a hand upon its back, Judith stared at the figure in the doorway, in a temper at once discomfited and defiant. With this she suffered a phase of incredulity, was scarce able to persuade herself that this was truly Rose who confronted her—Rose whose sweet and gentle nature had ever served as the butt of Judith's contempt and ruthless ridicule.

Here was revolution with a vengeance, when Rose threatened and Judith shrank!

It was as if the women had exchanged natures while they slept.

The countenance that Rose showed her sister was a thundercloud rent by the lurid lightning of her angry eyes. Her pose was tense and alert, like the pose of an animal set to spring. In her hand hung a revolver, the same (Judith's hand sought the holster at her hip and found it empty) that her sister had worn and forgotten to remove when she dropped, half-dead with fatigue, upon the bed.

And slowly, toward the end of that long, mute minute, the girl's grasp tightened upon the grip of the weapon and its muzzle lifted.

Remembering this, a flash of her one-time temper quickened Judith. Of a sudden, with a start, she crossed the floor in a single, noiseless stride, and threw herself before her sister.

"Well?" she demanded hotly. "What are you waiting for? Nobody's stopping you: why don't you shoot?"

The upward movement of the hand was checked: the weapon hung level to Judith's breast—as level and unequivocal as the glance that probed her eyes and the tone of Rose's voice as she demanded:

"What were you doing there?"

"If you must know from me what you already know on the evidence of your eyes—I was bidding good-by to the man I love—kissing him without his knowledge or consent before leaving him to you for good and all!"

"What do you mean?"

"That I'm going away—that I can't stand this situation any longer. Marrophi and Jimmy are dead, my father's helpless—and I mean to see that he remains so. Nothing, then, stands in the way of your marrying Alan but me. And such being the case—and because he's as dear to me as he is to you—I'm going to take myself off and keep out of the way."

"For fear lest he find out that you love him?"

Judith's lip curled. "Do you think I'm so witless he doesn't know that already?"

"And so you leave him to me out of your charity? Is that it?"

"Any way you like. But if it's so intolerable to you to think that I dare love him and confess it to you—if you begrudge me the humiliation of stooping to kiss a man who doesn't want my kisses—if you are so afraid of losing him while I live and love him—very well, then!"

With a passionate gesture Judith tore open the bosom of her waist, offering her flesh to the muzzle of the revolver.

A cry broke from the lips of Rose that was like the cry of a forlorn child punished with cruelty that passes its understanding. She fell back against the wall. The revolver swept up through the air—but its mark was her own head rather than Judith's bosom.

But before her finger found strength to pull the trigger the man at the table, startled from his sleep by the sound of angry voices, leaped from his chair with a violence that sent it clattering to the floor, and hurled himself headlong across the room, imprisoning the wrist of his betrothed with one hand while the other wrested the weapon away and passed it to Judith.

"Rose!" he cried thickly, "what does this mean? Are you mad? Judith—"

Dragging the bosom of her waist together, Judith thrust the weapon

into his holster and turned away.

"Be kind to her, Alan," she said in an uncertain voice. "She didn't understand—and I goaded her beyond endurance, I'm afraid. Forgive me—but be kind to her always!"

Somehow, blindly, she stumbled out of the cabin into the open, possessed by a thought whose temptation was stronger than her powers of resistance. What Rose had failed to accomplish might now serve to resolve Judith's problem. . . . None, she told herself, bitterly, would seek to hinder her. But she meant so to arrange the matter that none should see or suspect and be moved to interfere.

Round the shoulder of the mountain, on the road along the edge of the cliff, she was sure of freedom from observation.

And yet, such is the inconsistency of the human animal, the instinct for self-preservation was stronger than her purpose: when a touring car swung round the mountain and shot toward her, she checked herself hastily and jumped aside in ample time to escape being run down.

The next instant the machine was lurching to a halt and the sonorous accents of Seneca Trine were saluting her:

"Judith! You here! What the devil! Where've you been? Where are Marrophi and Jimmy?"

Digging the nails of her fingers painfully into her palms, she breathed deep, fighting down hysteria, reasserting her self-control in so short a space of time that her father failed to appreciate that there was anything uncommon in the midst of the girl.

"Where?" he demanded angrily as she approached the car, "where, I want to know, are Marrophi and Jimmy? Haven't you seen or heard anything of them? They left me at six o'clock this morning, to go after—"

"Dead!" the girl interrupted, sententious, eyeing him strangely.

"I don't believe it!" the old man exclaimed, aghast. "I won't believe it. You're lying to me, you jade! You're lying—"

"I am not," she broke in coldly. "I am telling you the plain truth . . ."

They followed us all morning in that red racer, firing at us all the while. Finally they caught up with us here, about noon—came up this road shooting over the windshield. It was our lives or theirs. We turned the hydraulic stream on them and washed the car over the cliff. If you don't believe me, get somebody to show you their faces."

She indicated with a gesture two forms that lay at a little distance back from the roadside, motionless beneath a sheet of canvas—the bodies of Trine's creatures, recovered by the mining gang and brought up for a Christian burial.

But Trine required no more confirmation of Judith's word. The light flickered and died in his evil old eyes; his stricken countenance assumed a hue of pallor even more intense than was normal with it; a broken curse issued from his trembling, thin, old lips; and his chin sagged to his chest, heavy-weighted with despair that followed realization of the fact that he no longer owned even one friend or creature upon whose conscienceless loyalty he might depend.

The last bitter drop that brimmed his cup of misery was added when Alan Law himself appeared, leaving the miners' cabin in company with his betrothed—Rose now soothed and comforted, smiling through the traces of her recent tears as she clung to her lover, nestling in the hollow of his arm.

To Alan, on the other hand, this rencontre seemed to afford nothing but the pleasantest surprise imaginable.

"Well!" he cried, releasing Rose and running down to the car. "Here's luck! And at the very moment when I was calling my lucky star hard names! How can I ever reward your thoughtfulness, Mr. Trine? It beats me how you do keep track of me this way—happening along like this every time I need a car the worst way in the world!"

"Drive on!" Trine screamed to the chauffeur. "Drive on, do you hear?"

But Judith had stepped up on the running board and was eyeing the driver coldly, with one hand significantly resting on the butt of the weapon at her side. The car remained at a standstill.

Sulphurous profanity followed, a pungent stream of vituperation that was checked only by Judith's interruption: "We've had to gag you once before, you know. If you want another taste of that—keep on!"

"But where's Barcus?" Judith demanded when, after helping Rose into the car and running off to thank their hosts, Alan returned alone to the car.

"Goodness only knows," the young man answered cheerfully. "He would insist on rambling off down the canyon in search of an alleged town where we could hire a motor car—somewhere down there. I tried to make him understand that we had plenty of time, but he was mulish as he generally is when he gets a foolish notion into his head. So I despatched I'll meet him on his way back—or else asleep somewhere by the roadside!"

Taking the seat next to the chauffeur, he gave the word to drive on; and they slipped away from the location of the mining camp, saluted by cheers from the miners.

The road dipped sharply down the mountainside to the bed of the canyon. The car moved smoothly and swiftly, coasting: only now and then was it necessary to call upon the engine for power with which to negotiate an upgrade or some uncommonly long stretch of level road.

Half an hour passed without a word spoken by any member of the party. Each was deep in his or her own especial preoccupation: Alan turning over plans for an early wedding; Rose hugging the contentment regained through her lover's protestations; Judith lost in profoundest melancholy; Trine nursing his rage, working himself up into a silent fury whose consequences were to be more far-reaching than even he dreamed in his wildest moments.

Its first development, for all that, was a desperate one.

The aged monomaniac occupied the right-hand corner of the rear seat. Thus his one able hand was next to Judith, in close juxtaposition to the revolver in the holster on her hip.

Without the least warning his left hand closed upon the weapon, withdrew it and leveled it at the back of Alan's head.

As he pulled the trigger Judith flung herself bodily upon the arm.

Even so, the bullet found a goal, though in another than the intended victim. The muscular forearm of the chauffeur received it.

With a shriek of pain the man released the wheel and grasped his arm.

Before Alan could move to prevent the disaster the car, running without a guiding hand, caromed off a low embankment to the left and shot full-tilt into a shallow ditch on the right, shelling its passengers like peas from a broken pod.

Alan catapulted a good twenty feet through the air and alighted with such force that he lay stunned for several moments.

When he came to, he found Barcus helping him to his feet: a heavy seven-passenger touring car halted in the roadway indicated the manner in which his friend had arrived on the scene of the accident.

When damages were assessed it was found that none of the party had suffered seriously but the chauffeur and Seneca Trine himself. The former had only his wound to show however, while Trine lay still and senseless at a very considerable distance from the wrecked automobile.

Nothing but a barely perceptible respiration and intermittently fluttering pulse persuaded them that the flame of life was not extinct in that poor, old, pain-racked body.

(Continued in next issue.)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

Having qualified as administratrix of the estate of O. C. Curlee, deceased, this is to notify all persons having claims against my intestate to present the same to me duly proven at my residence in Monroe, N. C., on or before November 17, 1915, otherwise this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery.

This 17th day of November, 1914.
WILLIE L. CURLEE,
Administratrix.
Vann & Pratt, Attorneys.

NOTICE.

By virtue of a Deed of Trust executed to the undersigned as Trustee to secure a note executed by Lula McManus and her husband, Jim McManus to the Co-Operative Mercantile Company, an incorporation, default having been made in the payment of said note, I will on Monday, 14th of December, 1914, at 12 o'clock M., at the court house door in Monroe, N. C., at public auction for cash to the highest bidder, sell the following described real estate: Bounded by an adjoining lot 15 in Block 6 on the South, lot 13, M. C. Presson's lot on the East; Lewis Avenue on the North and Second Street on the West being 50 by 150 feet square, fronting 50 feet on Second street and 150 feet on Lewis Avenue and known as lot No. 14 in Block 6 on the plat of "Monroe Annex" and being the same lot as conveyed by C. N. Simpson and wife to Lula McManus by Deed dated 30th April, 1914. Sold to satisfy the provisions of said Deed of Trust.

R. C. WILLIAMS, Trustee.
Nov. 13, 1914.

TAX NOTICE!

The county obligations, are constantly pressing upon me and I must collect the taxes to meet them.

I must collect the taxes, not because I want to push anybody, but because I am compelled to. I have waited as long as I can and must insist upon payment at once.

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NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION.

Having this day qualified as administrator of the estate of J. A. Little, deceased, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to present same to me at my residence in New Salem township, Union county, N. C., on or before the 10th day of November, 1915, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate settlement.

D. L. LITTLE, Administrator of J. A. Little, Deceased.
Stack & Parker, Attys.

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