

The Trey O' Hearts

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

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Illustrated with Photographs from the Picture Production

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SYNOPSIS.

The 3 of Hearts is the "death sign" employed by Seneca Trine in the private war of vengeance which, through his daughter Judith, a woman of violent passions like his own, he wages against Alan Law, son of the man (now dead) whom Trine held responsible for the accident which made him a helpless cripple. Rose, Judith's twin and double, loves Alan, and learning of her sister's campaign against him, leaves home and joins her fortunes to his. Under dramatic circumstances Alan saves Judith's life and so wins her love; but failure to shake his constancy to Rose kindles Judith's jealousy and settles her in her homicidal purpose. She is largely responsible for a shipwreck in Nantucket's sound, from which Rose and Alan escape with their friend Barcus, Judith pursuing in a chartered schooner with a crew of cut-throats.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mr. Thomas Barcus picked himself up from the bottom of the lifeboat where he had been violently precipitated by the impact of grounding, blinked and wiped tears of pain from his eyes, solicitously tested his nose and seemed to derive little if any comfort from the discovery that it was not broken, opened his mouth . . . and remembered the presence of a lady.

"Poor Mr. Barcus!" she said gently. "I'm so sorry. Do forget I'm here—and say it out loud!"

Mr. Barcus dropped his hands and dropped his head at the same time. "It can't be did," he complained in embittered resignation; "the words have never been invented . . ."

In the bows Mr. Law (who had barely saved himself a headlong plunge overboard when the shoal took fast hold of the keel) felt tenderly of his excoriated shins, then, rising, compassed the sea, sky and shore with an anxious gaze.

In the offing there was nothing but the flat, limitless expanse of the night-bound tide, near at hand vaguely silvered with the moonlight. In the distances blending into shadows; never a light or shadowy, stealing sail in that quarter to indicate pursuit.

"Where are we?" he wondered aloud. "Ask me an easy one," Barcus replied; "somewhere on the south shore of the cape—unless somebody's been tampering with the lay of this land. That's a lighthouse over yonder."

Alan took soundings from the bows. "Barely two feet," he announced, withdrawing the oar from the water, "and eel-grass no end."

"Oh!" Barcus ejaculated with the accent of enlightenment; and leaving the motor, turned to the stern, over which he draped himself in highly undecorative fashion while groping under water for the propeller.

"That's the answer," he repeated; "there's a young bale of the said eel-grass wrapped round the wheel, which, I suppose, means I've got to go overboard and clear it away."

"If you've nothing better to do, my critical friend," he observed as he stooped to hack and tear at the mass of weed embarrassing the propeller, "you might step out and give us a

hand. I tell you, no!" In desperation Alan rammied a hand into his trousers pocket. "Will a dollar influence your better judgment?" he suggested shrewdly.

that's been uttered by any party to this lunatic enterprise since you have within earshot of me, Mr. Law," said Mr. Barcus. "Respectfully submitted."

"The verdict of the lower court stands approved," Alan responded gravely.

"But there's no sense in Miss Trine wading," Barcus suggested. "We're web-footed as it is, and she's too tired."

"Well, what then?"

"We can carry her, can't we?"

CHAPTER XIX.

"Gee!" he grunted frankly, when after a toilsome progress from the boat, Rose at length slipped from the seat formed by the clasped hands of the two men. "And it was me who suggested this!"

The girl responded with a quiet laugh of the most natural effect imaginable—until it ended in a sigh, and without the least warning she crumpled upon herself, and would have fallen heavily, in a dead faint, but for Alan's quickness.

"Good Lord!" Barcus exclaimed, as Alan gently lowered the inert body of the girl to the sands. "And to think I didn't understand she was so nearly all in—chaffing her like that! I'd like to kick myself!"

"Don't be impatient," Alan advised grimly; "I'm busy just at present, but . . . Meantime, you might fetch some water to revive her."

It was an order by no means easy to fill; Barcus had only his cupped hands for a vessel, and little water remained in them by the time he had dashed from the shallows back to the spot where Rose lay unconscious, while the few drops he did manage to sprinkle into her face availed nothing toward rousing her from the trance-like slumbers of exhaustion into which she passed from her fainting fit.

In the end Alan gave up the effort. "She's all right," he reported, releasing the wrist whose pulse he had been timing. "She fainted, right enough, but now she's just asleep—and needs it, God knows! It would be kinder to let her rest, at least until I see what sort of a reception that lighthouse is inclined to offer us."

Barcus nodded. His face was drawn and gray in the moon-glare. "Thank God!" he breathed brokenly, "you're able, I'm not."

He sat down suddenly and rested his head on his knees. "Don't be longer than you can help," he muttered thickly.

He had come to the headland of the lighthouse itself before the ground began to shelve more gently to the beach; and was on the point of addressing himself to the dark and silent cottage of the lightkeeper when he paused, struck by sight of what till then had been hidden from him.

The promontory, he found, formed the eastern extremity of a wide-armed if shallow harbor where rode at moorings a considerable number of small craft—pleasure vessels assorted equally with fishing boats. And barely an eighth of a mile on, long-legged wharves stood knee-deep in the water, like tentacles flung out from the sleepy little fishing village that dotted the rising ground—a community of perhaps two hundred dwellings.

Nor was this all—even as Alan here in view of the village he heard a series of staccato snorts, the harsh tolling of a brazen bell, the rumble of a train pulling out from a station. And then he saw its jewel-string of lights flash athwart the landscape and vanish as its noise died away dimly.

Where one train ran another must. He need only now secure something to revive Rose, help her somehow up the beach, and in another hour or two, of a certainty, they would be speeding northward, up the cape, toward Boston and the land of law and order.

Such thoughts as these, at least, made up the texture of his hopes; the outcome proved them somewhat too presumptuous. He jogged down a quiet village street and into the railroad station just as the agent was closing up for the night.

A surly citizen, this agent, ill-pleased to have his plans disordered by chance-fallen strangers. He greeted Alan's breathless query with a grunt of ingrained churlishness.

"Nah," he averred, "they ain't no more trains till mornin'. Can't y' see I'm shuttin' up?"

"But surely there must be a telegraph station—"

"You bet your life they is—right here in this depot. An' I'm shuttin' it up, too."

"Has the operator gone for the night?"

"He's going. I'm the operator. No business transacted after office hours. Call round at eight o'clock tomorrow mornin'. Now if you'll just step out of that door, I'll say g'd-night to you."

"But I must send a telegram," Alan protested. "I tell you, I must. It's a matter of life and death."

"Sure, young feller. It always is—after business hours."

"Won't you open up again—"

Alan delayed long enough only to make a few inquiries, drawing out the information that, for one who had not patience to wait the morning train northbound, the quickest way to any city of importance was by boat across Buzzard's bay to New Bedford.

Addressed to Digby, his man of business in New York, it required that gentleman to arrange for a motor-car to be held in waiting on the waterfront of New Bedford from 3:00 a. m. until called for in the name of Mr. Law, as well as for a special train at Providence, on similar provisions.

But now, though he was all unconscious of the fact, he went no more alone.

His shadow in the moonlight kept him company upon the sands; and above, on the edge of the bluffs, another shadow moved on parallel course and at a pace sedulously patterned after his.

"I'll take that money-belt of yours, young feller," Mr. Breed announced, "and be quick about it—not forgetting what's in your trousers pocket!"

In the passion of his indignation Alan neglected entirely to play the game by the rules. The indifference he displayed toward the weapon was positively unprofessional—for he knocked it aside as if it had been nothing more dangerous than a straw.

And in the same flutter of an eyelash he launched himself like a wildcat at the throat of Mr. Breed.

Before that one knew what was happening he had gone over the stern and had involuntarily disarmed himself as well.

The other two men made a sad business of attempting to overpower Mr. Barcus. In less than a minute they were both overboard.

"And just for this," Alan said before getting out of earshot—"I'm going to treat my party to a joy-ride in your pretty powerboat."

He concluded this speech abruptly as Barcus brought them up under the quarter of the power cruiser.

Within two minutes the motor was spinning contentedly, the mooring had been slipped, and the motorboat was heading out of the harbor.

Within five minutes she had left it well astern and was shooting rapidly westward, making nothing of the buffets of a very tolerable sea kicked up by the freshening southwesterly wind.

"My friend," observed Alan, "as our acquaintance ripens I am more and more impressed that neither of us was born to die a natural death."

Back against the loom of the Elizabeth Islands through which they had navigated while he nodded, shone the milk-white sails of an able schooner. Sheets all taut and every lurch of canvas fat with the beam wind, she footed it merrily in their wake—a silver jet spouting from her cutwater.

He viewed the schooner with no more display of emotion than resided in narrowing eyelids and a tightening of the muscles about his mouth.

"Much farther to go?" he inquired presently, in a colorless voice.

"At our present pace—say, two hours."

There was neither a policeman nor a watchman of any sort in sight.

Sheer luck smiled on him to this extent, that in turning his eye lighted on a four-foot length of stout, three-inch scantling, an excellently formidable club.

But soon, disarmed, his case was desperate—and there were two already ready safe upon the dock and others madly scrambling up to reinforce them.

Wildly he cast about for some substitute weapon, he leaped toward a small pyramid of little but heavy kegs, and seizing one, swung it overhead and cast it full force into the midriff of his nearest enemy; so that this one doubled up convulsively, with a sickish grunt, and vanished in turn over the end of the wharf.

His fellow followed with less injury. But Alan had no time to wonder whether the man had tripped and thrown himself in his effort to escape a second hurtling keg, or had turned coward and fled. It was enough that he had returned, precipitately and heavily, to the schooner.

The keg, meeting with no resistance, purged him even to the deck, where the force of its impact split its seams.

None of the combatants, however, Alan least of all, noticed that the powder that filtered out was black and coarse.

In the same breath he heard a friendly voice shout warning far up the dock, and knew that Barcus was coming to his aid.

A glance over-shoulder, too, discovered the cause of the warning; two men who had thus far escaped his attentions were maneuvering to fall upon him from behind. The bound required to evade them brought him face to face with Judith as she landed on the dock.

"Oh," she cried, "I hate you, I hate you—"

"So you've said, my dear, but—" His final words were not audible even to himself. In his confidence (now that Barcus was taking care of the others) and his impatience with the woman, and in his perhaps unworthy wish to demonstrate conclusively how cheap he held her, Alan had tossed the pistol over the end of the wharf.

It was an old-fashioned weapon, and the force with which it struck the deck released the hammer.

Instantly the .41 cartridge blazed into the open head of a broken powder keg.

And with a roar like the tramp of doom and a mighty gust of flame and smoke the decks of the schooner were riven and shattered; her masts tottered and fell . . .

man an old employe of her father's by the name of Marrophat. Marrophat! Alan remembered that one.

He could only trust in his skill as a driver, and skill is the lesser factor in such a race.

For his own part, he drove like an exceptionally cunning madman. . . . And then, quite clearly, he recognized the time and the place and the character of the road that lay before him as the car sped like a dragon-fly down a slight grade.

From the bottom of the grade it swung away in a wide, graceful curve, bordered for some distance by railroad tracks on a slightly lower level.

He had guessed the fiendish plan of the other driver only too truly.

As they approached at express speed the stretch where the road par-

alleled the tracks Alan sought to hug the left-hand side of the road, but in vain.

Roaring, with its muffler cut out, the passing car swept up and buffeted him, bringing its right forward wheel up beside the left rear wheel of his car, then more slowly forging up until, with its weight, bulk and superior power, it forced him inch by inch to the right, toward the tracks, until his right-hand wheels left the road and ran on uneven turf, until the left-hand wheels as well lost grip on the road metal, until the car began to dip on the slope of the tracks.

There followed a maniac moment, when the world was upside down. Alan's car slipped and skidded, swung sideways with frightful momentum toward the railroad tracks, caught its wheels against the ties, and . . .

The sun swung in the heavens like a ball on a string. There was a crash, a roar . . . There was nothing—oblivion.

The car had turned turtle, pinning Rose and Alan beneath it.

"Alan!" she gasped. "You are not killed?"

"No—not even much hurt, I fancy," he replied. "And you?"

"Not much—"

The deep-throated roar of the locomotive bellowing danger silenced him. He closed his eyes.

Then abruptly the weight was lifted from his chest. He saw a man dragging Rose from under the machine, and saw that the man was Marrophat. And almost immediately someone lifted his head and shoulders, caught him with two hands beneath his arm pits and drew him clear of the machine.

And the face of his rescuer was the face of Judith Trine.

The crash he had expected, of the car being crumpled up by the oncoming locomotive, did not follow.

As he scrambled to his feet, his first glance was up the track, and discovered the train slowing to a halt.

His next was one of wonder for the countenance of Judith Trine as she stood, at a little distance, regarding him; her look almost illegible, a curious compound of passions coloring it—relief, regret, hatred, love . . .

His third glance descried beyond her the figures of Marrophat carrying Rose in his arms, stumbling as he ran toward his car on the highroad.

He moved precipitately to pursue, but found his way barred by Judith.

"No!" she cried violently. "No, you shall not—"

Her hand sought the grip of a revolver that protruded from her pocket.

With a short, hysterical gasp, he began to laugh.

The hot blood swanted her exquisite face like red fire. She caught her breath with a sob, then flung wildly at him:

"Well, if you just know—it's true. I can't bring myself to kill you. I would to God I could. But I can't. For all that, you shall die—I could not save you if I would! And this I promise you—you shall never see Rose again before you lie!"

And while he stood gaping, she swung from him and ran, quickly covering the little distance between him and the car.

As she jumped into this and dropped down upon the seat beside her half-conscious sister, Marrophat swung the car away.

It vanished in a dust-cloud as a throng of railroad employes surrounded and assailed him with clamorous questions.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



The Face of Judith Was Distinctly Revealed.



Two Men Shadowed Him.

eventually brought her to with the aid of a few drops of brandy.

Between them, they helped her up the beach, past the point, and at length to the door of the hotel, where—reanimated by the mere promise of food—Rose disengaged their arms and entered without more assistance; while Barcus was deterred from treading her heels in his own famished eagerness, by the hand of Alan falling heavily upon his arm.

"Wait!" the latter admonished in a half-whisper. "Look there!"

Barcus followed the direction of his gesture—and was transfixed by the sight of a rocket spearing into the night-draped sky from a point invisible beyond the headland of the lighthouse.

The two consulted one another with startled and fearful eyes.

As with one voice they murmured one word: "Judith!" To this Alan added gravely: "Or some spy of hers!"

whether abed or at the hands of those who dislike us; but rather to be hanged as common pirates."

"You have the courage of ignorance," Barcus replied coolly; "if you'll take the trouble to glance astern I promise you a sight that will move you to suspend judgment for the time being."

At this Alan sat up with a start.

Back against the loom of the Elizabeth Islands through which they had navigated while he nodded, shone the milk-white sails of an able schooner. Sheets all taut and every lurch of canvas fat with the beam wind, she footed it merrily in their wake—a silver jet spouting from her cutwater.

CHAPTER XX. Hell-Fire.

But by this stage in his history Mr. Law had arrived at a state of mind immune to surprise at the discovery that he had once more failed to elude the vigilance and pertinacity of the woman who sought his life.



Dug into His Money Belt.

trial shove. Don't strain yourself—just see if you can move her."

The boat budged not an inch—but Mr. Law's feet did, slipping on the treacherous mud bottom with the upshot of his downfall; with a mighty splash he disappeared momentarily beneath the surface—and left his temper behind him when he emerged.

As for Mr. Barcus, he suffered like loss within five minutes; when, with much pains and patience having freed the wheel, he climbed aboard and sought to restart the motor. After a few affecting coughs it relapsed into stubborn silence.