

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-stern" employed by Seneca Trine, an aged and crippled monomaniac, in the private war of vengeance which he wages against Alan Law, son of the man (now dead) who was innocently responsible for the accident which rendered Trine a helpless invalid for life. Alan falls in love with Rose, Trine's daughter, and his love is returned. Judith, Rose's twin and double, but a woman of violent passions and erratic temper, promises her father to compass Alan's death; but under dramatic circumstances, Alan saves her life and so, unwillingly, wins her love. Judith then turns against her father and successfully opposes his efforts to cause Alan to be assassinated by his aides and mercenaries. After many adventures Alan, Rose, Judith and Barcus, Alan's best friend, escape to the mountain country of southern California and there leave Trine helpless and friendless through causing the death (in self-defense) of his two first lieutenants.

CHAPTER LI.

The New Judith.

From sleep as from drugged stupor Judith Trine awakened, struggling back to consciousness like some exhausted diver from the black depths to the star-stricken surface of a night-bound pool.

At first she could by no means recognize her surroundings. This rude chamber of rough plank walls and primitive furnishings; this wide, hard couch she shared with her still slumbering sister, Rose; the view revealed by an open window at the bedside; a fair perspective of tree-clad mountains through which a wide-bosomed canyon rolled down to an emerald plain, conveyed nothing to her intelligence.

A formless sense of some epochal change in the habits and mental processes of a young lifetime, added to her confusion.

What, indeed, had become of the wild thing, Judith Trine of yesterday? Surely she had little enough in common with this Judith of today, in whose heart was no more room for envy, hatred, malice or any uncharitableness, so full was it of love which, though it was focused upon the person of one man, none the less embraced all the world—even her sister and successful rival in that one man's affections.

This change had not come upon her without warning. She had been almost insensibly aware of its advent through the gradual softening of that old Judith's hard and vengeful nature in the course of the last few days. But now that the revolution was accomplished, she hardly knew herself—she hardly knew the world, indeed, so differently did she regard it—not without something of the wide-eyed wonderment of a child to find all things so new and strange and beautiful.

And this was the work of Love! Now the chain of memories was quite complete, no link lacking in its continuity. She recalled clearly every incident that had marked the slow growth of this great love she had for Alan Law, from that first day, not yet a month old, when he had escaped the fiery deathtrap she had set for him and repaid her only by risking his life anew to save her from destruction, down to this very morning when the stream from a hydraulic nozzle had swept over the brink of a three hundred-foot precipice a crimson racing automobile containing two desperate men bent upon compassing the death of her beloved.

By that act of sheer self-defense the world was richer for the loss of two black-hearted blackguards, and Alan Law might now be considered safe from further persecution—since there now remained not one soul loyal enough to Seneca Trine to prosecute his private war of vengeance against Alan. And though that aged monomaniac had means whereby he might purchase other scoundrels and corrupt them to his hideous purposes, Judith was determined that he should never again have any opportunity so to do. Though Alan, she knew, would never lift his hand to hinder her father's freedom of action, she, Judith, meant to take such steps as his persecution called for. If there were any justice in the land—if there were any alienists capable of discriminating between Trine's apparent sanity and his deep-rooted mania—then surely not many days more should pass into history without witnessing his consignment to an institution for the criminal insane.

She, Judith, would see to that, and then . . .

The woman stghed once more.

Then Rose and Alan would marry and live happily ever after.

But what of Judith?

She made a small gesture of resignation to her destiny. What became of her no longer mattered, so that Alan were made happy in such happiness as he coveted.

And now the thought stirred her sharply that what was to be done must be done quickly, if at all.

And the almost level rays of the declining sun, striking in through the open window, counseled haste if Judith were to accomplish her intention of leaving this place and finding her father again before nightfall.

With the utmost care she rose from the bed, crept to the door of the room now recognized as the quarters of the

foreman of the hydraulic mining outfit) and out into the room adjoining.

And there, pulling the door to gently behind her, she paused and for many minutes stood in tense contemplation of the man she loved—Alan Law, asleep in a chair beside a table, his head pillowed on his folded arms. This was leaving taking between them—and he would never know.

Far better so: Judith felt she could not trust herself to say farewell to him without breaking down and confessing the utter wretchedness that threatened to overwhelm her each time she forced herself to face the thought that this parting must be final.

Like a thief she stole across the creaking floor to Alan's side, hesitated, bent her head to his and touched her lips to his cheek—a caress so light that he slept on in ignorance of it.

Then, as she lifted her head and stood erect, bosom convulsed with silent sobs, she looked squarely into the face of Rose.

CHAPTER LII.

The Old Adam.

A long minute elapsed before either woman moved or spoke.

Transfixed beside Alan's chair, steady 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.

Remarking 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 him 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 afraid of losing him while I live and love him—very well, then!"

With a passionate gesture Judith threw 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 its holster and turned away.

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

Somewhat, 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 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 mind 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 screamed, 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,



Lightning Kills Trine and Strikes Down Alan and Rose.

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.

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 pleasant 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 darsay we'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.

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 desperate enough.

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, careomed 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,

inky cloud shouldering up over the mountains to the music of distant rumblings.

Nor was this all; a considerable degree of restlessness was surely pardonable in one who, from her window, watched a carriage-drive populous with vehicles (for the most part motor cars) bringing to the hotel gayly dressed men and women, the guests invited to the wedding of Rose Trine and Alan Law.

Within another ten minutes the man Judith loved with all her body and soul would be the husband of her sister.

She had told herself she was resigned; but she was not, and she would never be. Her heart was breaking in her bosom as she sat there, watching, waiting, listening to the ever heavier detonations of the approaching thunderstorm and to the jubilant pealing of a great organ down below.

The had told herself that, though resigned, she could not bear to witness the ceremony. Now as the moment drew near when the marriage would be a thing finished, fixed, ir retrievable, she found herself unable to endure the strain alone.

Slowly, against her will, she rose and stole across the floor to her father's chair.

His breathing was slow and regular; beyond doubt he slept; unquestionably there was no reason why she should not leave him for ten minutes; even though he waked it could not harm him to await her return at the end of that scant period.

Like a guilty thing, on feet as noiseless as any sneak thief's, she crept from the room, closed the door silently, ran down the hall and descended by a back way, a little-used staircase, to the lower hall, approaching the scene of the marriage.

Constructed in imitation of an old Spanish mission chapel, it contained one of the finest organs in the world; at this close range its deep-throated tones vied with the warnings of the storm. Judith, lurking in a passageway whose open door revealed the altar steps and chancel, was shaken to the very marrow of her being by the majestic reverberations of the music.

Since they had regained contact with civilization in a section of the country where the Law estate had vast holdings of land, the chapel was thronged with men and women who had known Alan's father and wished to honor his son. . . .

Above stairs, in the room Judith had quitted, Seneca Trine opened both eyes wide and laughed a silent laugh of savage triumph when the door closed behind his daughter.

At last he was left to his own devices—and at a time the most fitting imaginable for what he had in mind.

With a grin, Seneca Trine raised both arms and stretched them wide apart.

Then, grasping the arms of his chair, he lifted himself from it and stood trembling upon his own feet for the first time in almost twenty years.

This, then, was the secret he had hugged to his embittered bosom, a secret unsuspected even by the attending surgeon; that through the motor accident three days ago he had regained the use of limbs that had been stricken motionless—strangely enough, by a motor car—nearly two decades since.

Slowly but surely moving to the bureau in the room, he opened one of its drawers and took out something he had, without her knowledge, seen Judith put away there while she thought he slept.

Then, with this hidden in the pocket of his dressing gown he steered a straight if very deliberate course to the door, let himself out, and like a materialized specter of the man he once had been, navigated the corridor to the head of the broad central staircase and step by step, clinging with both hands, negotiated the descent.

The lobby of the hotel was deserted. As the ceremony approached its end every guest and servant in the house was crowding the doorway to the chapel. None opposed the progress of this ghastly vision in dressing gown and slippers feet, chuckling insanely to himself as he tottered through the empty halls and corridors, finding an almost supernatural strength to sustain him till he found himself face to face with his chosen enemy and victim.

The first that blocked his way into the chapel, a bellboy of the hotel, looked round at the first touch of the claw-like hand upon his shoulder and shrank back with a cry of terror—a cry that was echoed from half a dozen throats within another instant.

As if from the path of some grisly visitor from the world beyond the grave, the throng pressed back and cleared a way for Seneca Trine, father of the bride.

And as the way opened and he looked up toward the altar and saw Alan standing hand in hand with Rose while the minister invoked a blessing upon the union that had been but that instant cemented, added strength, the strength of the insane, was given to Seneca Trine.

When Alan, annoyed by the disturbance in the body of the chapel, looked round, it was to see the aged maniac standing within a dozen feet of him; and as he looked and cried out in wonder, Trine whipped a revolver from the pocket of his dressing gown and swung it steadily to bear upon Alan's head.

At that instant the storm broke with infernal fury upon the land.

A crash of thunder so heavy and prolonged that it seemed to rock the very building upon its foundations, accompanied the shattering of a huge stained-glass window.

A bolt of bluish flame or dazzling

brilliance slashed the sky like a flaming sword pistol in the hand of a discharged the band struck him dead. As he fell the woman struck two others and the woman who made his wife.

CHAPTER

Again three days later, returning from the funeral of her father, Judith was more suited to a sickroom, than to a charge of Alan.

He remained as usual in absolute coma.

But he lived, and died—must soon rest.

Kneeling beside his bed, Judith prayed long and earnestly.

When she arose she tapped upon the door.

Tom Barcus and sister Rose entered the recessed where they conversed in spite of the subject of their conversation possibly have called at the Barcus announced with awkwardness, "I've come to tell you three days—ever since in fact—and kept it knowing whether I yet or not."

He paused, eyeing her unhappily.

"I am prepared," he said calmly.

"You're nothing of a counterer, argument couldn't be. It's the thing imaginable. . . ."

"Well?"

"You understand, Alan must never know killed by that lightning."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," the man answered, "you see, he thought—I'm sure it if you can bring your him go on believing who was killed, but skating so close to makes no difference: knew and the Judith beginning is gone as though she and not killed."

After a long pause he said quietly: "I understand it possible you don't if I were to consent tion, lend myself to I must maintain through to come—Alan would wife?"

"Well, but—you see wife. . . . Oh, don't bat. I'm telling you nished truth. You . . . No, listen to me ber that day in New substituted for Rose, to elope with her, and him to Jersey City, and married by a priest Wright—and Marrophi, at the critical moment Man the party?"

"Well?" she demanded the man per from his coat pants offered it.

"Read that. It was as best man, just money. Seeing it was Alan and knowing he of mind to be bothered I slipped it into my all about it temporary came to find it, I lost reading it. But read the typewritten message blurred and most indecipherably! None the less, she the substance of its."

"WHY DIDN'T YOU SOONER," it ran: "ROSE IMPOSSIBLE WRIGHT INFORM MARRIAGE TO WEEK HAD GONE TO MARROPHAT INTERDITH LEGALLY WOULD HAVE YOU SOONER HAD YOU WHERE TO ADDRESS TO HEAVEN THIS BEFORE TOO LATE"

The message was name of Alan's confidential business in New York.

When Judith looked alone in the room, patient on his couch.

Slowly, almost forced to his bedside and into the face of her brother.

And while she looked fluttered, his respiration faint color crept into his—and his eyes opened looked into hers.

His lips moved and of recognition: "Judith!"

With a low cry of the girl sank to her knees his head with her arms.

"Judith," she whispered, "face in his bosom, so to more . . ."

A pause; and then "Then, if I was aren't Judith, you must in our wife!"

She said steadily: "His hands fumbled closed upon her head until her eyes his.

And for many minutes so, looking deep into woman.

Then quietly he said: "THE END"