

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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(Continued from Thursday.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Come inside," Law suggested, "and introduce me to the brakeman. I presume I've got to fix things up with him."

"If there's really any doubt in your mind as to that," Barcus said, rising, "I don't mind telling you're right."

He paused as Alan entered the car before him and was greeted by a storm of vituperation that fairly blistered the panels of the Pullman. Mr. Seneca Trine, helpless in his invalid chair, thus celebrated his introduction to the young man whom he had never before seen whose life he had schemed to take these many years. His heavy voice boomed and echoed through the car like the sounding of a tocsin.

Alan made no effort to respond, but listened with his head critically to one side and an exasperating expression of deep interest informing his countenance until Mr. Trine was out of breath and vitriol; when the younger man bowed with the slightest shade of mockery in his manner and waved a tolerant hand to Barcus.

"He has, no doubt," Alan inquired, "his own private cell aboard this car?"

"Yes, suh!" Barcus agreed, aping well the manner of his apparent caste and color. "Ain't dat de troof?"

"Take him away, then," Alan requested wearily—"if you please."

"Yes, suh!" Barcus replied, with nimble alacrity seizing the back of the wheeled chair and swinging it round for a spin up the length of the car.

Before Trine had recovered enough to curse him properly, the door to his drawing room was closed and Barcus was ambling back down the aisle.

His grin of relish at this turning of the tables on the monomaniac proved, however, short-lived. It erased itself in a twinkling when Judith shouldered roughly past him, wearing a sullen and forbidding countenance, and flung herself into the drawing room with her father.

The cause of her temper was not far to seek: at the far end of the car Alan was bending solicitously over the chair in which Rose was resting. One of his arms was around her shoulder. Her face was lifted confidently to his.

Barcus mused morosely on his apprehension of trouble a-brew, simmering over the waxing fire of that strange woman's jealousy. He didn't like the prospect at all. If only Alan and Rose hadn't been so desperately in love that they couldn't keep away from one another! If only Alan had been sensible enough to outwit the woman and leave her behind when he started in pursuit of the special! If only there had not been that light engine in pursuit—as Barcus firmly believed it must be—loaded to the guards with Trine's unscrupulous hirelings!

No telling when they might catch up!

The fear of this last catastrophe worked together with his fears of Judith to render that night a sleepless one for Barcus. He spent it in a chair whence he could watch both the door to the compartment Judith had chosen for her own (formerly Marrophet's quarters) and the endless ribbons of steel that swept beneath the tracks.

But nothing happened. He napped uneasily from time to time, waking with a start of fright, but always to find nothing amiss. Ever Judith stopped behind that closed door, and ever the track behind was innocent of the glare of a pursuing headlight.

Nor did anything untoward mark the progress of the morning—unless, indeed, Judith's protracted sessions with her father behind the closed door of the drawing room were to be counted ominous.

Ever since lunch-time the girl had been closeted with her father; Barcus had been getting some well-earned and sorely-needed rest in his quarters; Alan standing his watch on the observation platform, in company with Rose; and the train booming along through an uncouth wilderness of arid mountains, barren mesas, and sun-smitten flats given over to the desolate genius of sagebrush.

Whatever had been the tenor of the communication between father and daughter, Judith eventually emerged from the drawing room in an ominous temper. Barcus, coming drowsily away from his compartment at the same time, was jarred wide awake by sight of the foreboding countenance she wore; and after a moment of doubt followed her back to the lounge at the rear of the car.

He got there in time to see her at rigid standstill, staring steadfastly at the two figures so close together on the observation platform. But on his appearance Judith shook herself together, snatched up a magazine, and plunged wrathfully into an easy chair, burying her nose between the pages of the publication with every indication of deep interest in its text.

Mr. Barcus, however, had learned the lesson of bitter experience to the effect that the outward bearing of Miss Judith Trine was no sure index

to her inward humor—unless, that is, it might be taken to indicate the direct contrary of its semblance; though even this was no reliable rule. Reminding himself of this, he therefore invented a morbid interest in another magazine—round the edge of which he kept a wary eye upon the young woman.

For all her exasperation, Judith contained herself longer than might have been expected. Her continued show of placidity, indeed, lulled Barcus into a dangerous feeling of security. Persuaded that she meant to behave, he gradually ceased to watch her as narrowly as at first, and lost himself in a morose reverie whose subject was the seemingly permanent mourning into which he had plunged his face and hands for the purposes of his masquerade—staining them a shade of ebony upon which soap and water and scrubbing had no effect whatever. And he had invented a most excruciating method of revenging himself upon the druggist who had taken advantage of his confidence and sold him the ineradicable dye—when he was roused by the sudden flight of a magazine across the car, missing his head by a bare two inches, and the bang of a chair overturned by Judith as she jumped up and flung herself furiously toward the door.

Just what had happened on the observation platform Barcus didn't know, but he could readily believe that the lovers had just indulged in some especially provoking and long-drawn-out caress.

He overhauled Judith none too soon. In another moment she would have had her sister by the throat—if her purpose had not been to throw Rose bodily overboard, as Barcus suspected. Happily, he was as quick on his feet as Judith on hers; and almost before he had grasped the situation, he had drawn her—had seized her arms and drawn them forcibly behind her back, at the same time swinging her round and endeavoring to propel her back through the doorway.

It was a man-size job. For the ensuing five minutes he had his hands full of violently resentful and superbly able-bodied young woman. Only with the greatest difficulty did he succeed in wrestling her up the aisle and to the door of her compartment, where an even more furious resistance for some additional minutes preface the ultimate closing of the door upon the maddened Judith. Even then he might not draw a free breath: there was no way of locking that door from the outside; and he dared not leave go the handle, lest the girl again fly out and renew the battle.

Waving aside Alan's proffer of assistance, he acidly advised that gentleman to return to his post of duty and not let his infatuation blind him to what might at any moment loom up on the track behind them. Barcus stoutly held the door against the girl's attempt to pull it open and through another period when she occupied herself with kicking its panels as if hopeful of breaking a way out. A long pause followed. He heard no sounds from within. And wearying, he wondered what the devil she was up to. Then her voice penetrated the barrier, its accents calm and not unamiable:

"Mr. Barcus!"

"Hello!" he replied, startled. "What is it, Miss Judith?"

"Please let me out."

"Not much."

"Oh—please!"

Struck by the fact that she hadn't lost her temper on hearing his refusal, he hesitated. It was very true that he couldn't stay there forever, holding on to that knob.

"Will you be good if I let you out?"

"Perfectly."

"No more shenanigan?"

"I promise."

"Word of honor?"

"If my word of honor means anything to you—you have it."

"Well . . ." he said dubiously.

In the same humor he turned and released the knob; promptly Judith opened it wide and swept out into the corridor, her mood now one of really fetching mockery.

"Thank you so much!" she laughed into his face of discomfiture; and dropping him an ironic curtsy, she turned forward and swung into the drawing room occupied by Trine.

"Wonder what she put that on for?" he speculated, with reference to the ankle-long Pullman wrapper which Judith had seen fit to don during her period of captivity. "Heaven knows it's hot enough without wearing more clothing than decency demands . . ."

But you never can tell about a woman . . . I bet a dollar I've made a blithering ass of myself—letting her loose at all!"

He took his doubts aft, communicating them to Alan and Rose.

And his long conference with Alan and Rose on the observation platform afforded Judith ample opportunity in which undetected to suborn the train crew to treachery.

Whether she did or not, this is what happened in the course of the next hour: the special was forced to take a

sidling to make way for the California Limited, east-bound; and when this had passed, the engine of the special coughed apologetically and pulled by out, leaving the Pullman stalled

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Hand Car.

"Well!" Mr. Barcus broke a silence whose eloquence may not be translated in print—"can you beat it?"

"Not with this outfit," Alan admitted gloomily.

"But—damn it!—we've got to."

"Profanity—even yours, my friend—won't make this Pullman move without an engine."

"All the same, we can't stop here like bums on a log, waiting for that gang of thugs to sail up in the light engine and cut our blessed throats."

Mr. Law answered this unanswerable contention only with a shrug. Then, stepping out on the forward platform of the Pullman, he cast a hopeless eye over the landscape.

Raw, rugged hills hemmed in the right of way, hills whose vast flanks were covered with dense thickets of mesquite, chapparal, sagebrush and cacti, the haunt of owls and rattlesnakes and—solitude. No way of escape from that pocket in the hills other than by the railroad itself.

He lowered his gaze to the tracks and sidling—and started sharply.

"Eh—what now?" Barcus inquired with interest.

"Some thoughtful body has left an old hand car over there in the ditch," Alan replied. "Maybe it isn't beyond service."

"With me supplying the horsepower, I suppose!"

"Horse isn't the word," Alan corrected meticulously; and escaped the other's wrath by dropping down to the ballast and trotting over to the ditch, where the hand car lay.

"Looks as if it might work," he announced. "Come along and lend me a hand."

"Half a minute," Barcus answered, dodging suddenly back into the car.

When he reappeared, after some five minutes, Rose accompanied him, and Barcus was smiling as brilliantly as though nothing whatever was wrong with his world.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, old top," he explained; "but I was smitten with an inspiration. There didn't seem to be any sense in letting the amiable Judith loose upon this fair land, so I found a coil of wire in the porter's closet and wired the handle of the drawing room door fast to the bars across the aisle. It'll take her some time to get out, now, without assistance."

Ten minutes more had passed before the two grimy and perspiring gentlemen succeeded in placing the hand car upon the tracks.

"It's a swell little hand car," Barcus observed grimly; "no wonder they threw it away."

"What's the difference how it looks, as long as it will go?"

"But will it?" Barcus doubted.

Somewhere far back along the line a locomotive hooted mournfully.

"It's got to!" Alan replied, helping Rose aboard. "If we can only get out of sight before they get here—"

"Don't worry," Barcus advised: "that's a freight whistle."

For once, in a way, it fell out precisely as Mr. Law had planned and prayed.

Constrained to pull up in order to remove the obstruction from the track, the train crew of the freight choked down its collective wrath on being pre-

sented with a sum of money. In the hopes of further largesse it lent its common ear to Alan's well-worn tale, which had so frequently proved useful in similar emergencies, of an eloping couple pursued by an unreasonably vindictive parent; and had its hopes rewarded by the price Alan bargained to pay in exchange for exclusive use of the caboose as far as the next town.

So that it was not more than ten minutes before Rose was settled to rest in such comfort as the caboose afforded, while Alan and Barcus sat within its doorway and smoked.

Neither he nor any other aboard the freight suspected for an instant that, in the box car next forward of the caboose, a woman in man's clothing lay perdu, now and again chuckling implicitly to herself in anticipation of the time and the event she was biding with such patience as she could muster.

The whistle of a locomotive overtaking the freight sounded the signal for her to take action on her cherished plan.

Rising, she glanced out of the open door. A curve in the track below the freight, laboring up a steep grade, enabled her to catch a glimpse of a headlight, followed by a string of lighted windows, indicating a single car: the special, beyond a doubt.

Without hesitation, since the train was not running at speed, she dropped out to the ballast, wheeled smartly

about, caught the handbar at the end of the box car as it passed and swung herself up between it and the caboose.

A trifle later the freight gained the summit of the grade and began to run more smoothly.

Climbing to the top of the box car she peered keenly through the gloaming, which was not yet so dense that she might not discern two heads pro-

truding from the window of the special's engine, one on either side.

At a venture, she snatched off her coat and waved it wildly in the air.

An arm answered the signal from one window of the pursuing locomotive.

Marrophet, of course!

She turned and peered ahead. The freight was approaching a trestle that spanned a wide and shallow gully.

So much the better!

Dropping down again between the cars, she set herself to solve the problem of uncoupling the caboose.

In this she was successful just as the last car rolled out on the trestle.

Its own impetus carried the caboose to the middle of the trestle before it stopped.

As this happened, Alan and Barcus, already warned of an emergency by the slowing down of the car, and for some time alive to the fact that the special was again in pursuit, leaped out upon the ties and helped Rose to alight.

Already the last of the freight was whisking off the trestle, its crew thus far unconscious of their loss.

And behind them the special was plunging forward at unabated speed.

There was no time to execute their plan of the first desperate instant—to run along the ties to safety on the solid earth: the distance was too great; they could not possibly make it.

With common impulse the two men glanced down to the bottom of the gully, then looked at each other with eyes informed by common inspiration.

Barcus announced in a breath: "Thirty feet—not more."

Alan replied: "Can you hold the weight of the two of us for half a minute?"

Barcus shrugged: "I can try. We might as well—even if I can't."

While speaking, he was lowering himself between the ties.

"All right," he announced briefly.

With a word to Rose, Alan slipped down beside Barcus, shifted his hold to the body of the latter, and climbed down over him until he was supported solely by the grasp of his two hands on Barcus' ankles.

Instantly Rose followed him, slipping like a snake down over the two men till she in turn hung by her grasp on Alan's ankles, then released her hold and dropped the balance of the distance to the ground, a scant ten feet, landing without injury.

A thought later Alan dropped lightly to her side, staggered a trifle, recovered and dragged her out of the way.

Barcus fell with a heavy thump and went upon his back, but demonstrated his lack of injury by immediately picking himself up and joining the others in a mad scramble for safety.

Overhead the special engine, hurtling onward like some titanic bolt, struck the caboose with a crash like the explosion of a cannon. It collapsed upon itself like a thing of pasteboard.

That it had been constructed of more solid stuff was abundantly proved by the shower of timbers, splinters and broken iron that rained about the heads of the fugitives.

For all that, the gods smiled upon them for their courage: they escaped without a scratch.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Detail.

Across the plain purple shadows were sweeping, close-ranked, like some vast dark army invading the land, pouring on over the rampart of mountains in the east.

Within the rim of hills that ringed the plain like the chipped and broken flange of a titanic saucer, silence brooded and solitude held sway—dwarfing the town of Detail that occupied the approximate middle of the sagebrush waste, to proportions even less significant than might be inferred from the candor of its christening.

A platform, a siding, a water tank, a

Wells-Fargo office and a telegraph and ticket office, backed by three rough frame buildings; that is Detail itemized completely.

Shortly after nightfall the steel ribbons of the Santa Fe began to hum. A headlight peered suspiciously round a shoulder of the eastern range, took heart of courage to find the plain still wrapped in peace, and trudged stolidly toward Detail, the engine whose eye it was pulling after it a string of freight cars, both flat and box.

At Detail the train paused. Its crew alighted and engaged in animated argument. Detail gathered that the excitement was due to the unaccountable disappearance of the caboose; none seemed to have any notion as to how it could have broken loose; yet missing it conspicuously was.

In the pause that followed, while a report was telegraphed to headquarters and instructions returned to proceed without delay, one of the trainmen spied a boyish figure lurking in the open door of an empty box car. Cunningly boarding this car from the opposite side, the trainman caught the skulker unawares and booted him vaingloriously into the night.

As the figure alighted and took to its heels, losing itself in the darkness, it uttered a cry of pained surprise and protest which drew a wrinkle of astonishment between the brows of the trainman.

"Sounded like a woman's voice," he mused; then dismissed the suggestion as obviously absurd.

It was not . . .

Shortly after the freight train had gone on its way—before, indeed, the glimmer of its rear lights had been lost among the western hills—a second headlight appeared in the east, swept swiftly across the plain and it turned stopped at Detail.

The second bird-of-passage proved to be a locomotive drawing a single car—a Pullman.

Hardly had it run past the switch however, when the brakeman dropped down, ran quickly back to the switch and threw it open.

Promptly the train backed on to the siding.

As the Pullman jolted across the frogs the brakeman, interposing himself between it and the tender, released the coupling.

By the time that the Pullman had come to a full stop on the siding, the locomotive was swinging westward like a scared jackrabbit—though in such milk-and-water characterization of the traitor passed the lips of any one of the three men who presently appeared on the Pullman's platform and shook impotent fists in the direction taken by the fugitive engine.

When the last of these had run temporarily out of breath and blasphemy a brief silence fell, punctuated by groans from each, and concluded by the sound of a voice calling from the interior of the car—a voice as strangely sonorous of tone as it was curiously querulous of accent.

The three men immediately ran back into the car and presented themselves with countenances variously apologetic, to one who occupied a corner of the drawing room: a man wrapped in a steamer rug and a cloud of fury.

Now when he had drained the muddy froth of profanity from his temper it left a clear and effervescent well of virulent humor: the wrath of the valetudinarian began to vent itself upon the hapless heads of the trio who stood before him.

While this was in process, the person of boyish appearance, who had been keeping religiously aloof and in conspicuous in the background of Detail ever since that unhappy affair with the trainman, stole quietly up to the rear of the stalled Pullman, climbed aboard, and creeping down the aisle unceremoniously interrupted the conference just as the invalid was polishing off a rude but honest opinion of the intellectual caliber of one of the three named Marrophet, who figured as his right-hand man and familiar genius.

"Amen to that!" the boyish person ejaculated with candid fervor, lounging gracefully in the doorway. "There's many a true word spoken in wrath, Mr. Marrophet. Father forgot only one thing—you masterly way with a revolver. From what I've seen of that, this day, I'll go ball that the only safe place for a man you pull a gun on is right in front of the muzzle. There's something downright uncanny in the way you can hit anything but what you aim at!"

"Judith!" exclaimed the invalid. "Where did you drop from?"

"From that freight," Judith explained carelessly, neglecting to elucidate the exact fashion of her drop. "I judged you'd be along presently, and thought I'd like to learn the news. Well—what luck?"

Her father shrugged with his one movable shoulder. Mr. Marrophet grunted indignantly. The others shuffled uneasily and looked all ways but one—at the girl in man's clothing.

"None?" Judith interpreted. "You don't mean to tell me that after I had taken all that trouble—cast the caboose loose in the middle of that trestle at the risk of my life—you didn't have the nerve to go through with the business!"

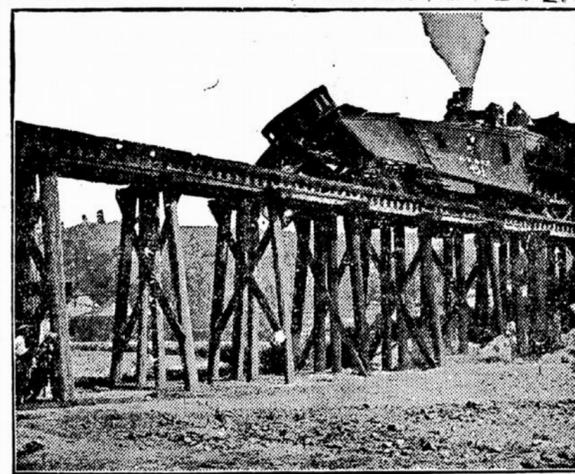
"We went through with it all right," replied Marrophet defensively; "but as usual, they were too quick for us. They jumped out and dropped off the trestle before our engine hit the caboose. We smashed that to kindling wood—but they got away just in time to miss the crash. And by the time we had stopped and calmed down the engineer—well, it was dark and no way of telling which way they had run."

The girl started to speak, but merely dropped limp hands at her sides and rolled her eyes helplessly.

(To Be Continued.)



Judith Uncoupling the Caboose.



Struck the Caboose With a Crash Like the Explosion of a Cannon.