

The TREY O' HEARTS

BY LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

NINTH INSTALLMENT

The photo-drama corresponding to the installments of "The Trey O' Hearts" may now be seen at the leading moving picture theaters. By this unique arrangement with the Universal Film Mfg. Co. it is therefore not only possible to read "The Trey O' Hearts" in this paper, but also to see each installment of it at the moving picture theaters.

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AS A CROW FLIES.

SYNOPSIS.—The 3 of Hearts is the "death-slug" employed by Seneca Trine in the private war of vengeance which, through the agency of his sister Judith, a woman of violent passions like his own, he wages against Alan Law, son of the man (now dead) who was unintentionally responsible for the accident which rendered Trine a helpless cripple. Alan is in love with and is in turn loved by Rose, Judith's twin and double, but in all else her opposite. Judith vows to compass Alan's death, but under dramatic circumstances she saves her life and so, unwillingly wins her love. Thereafter Judith is by turns actuated by the old hatred, the new love, and jealousy of her sister, Rose. The latter is kidnapped by her father's orders and conveyed to a low dive in the slums of Jersey City, from which Alan rescues her after accidentally setting the tenement on fire.

I—JAILBIRD.

The period of restraint in durance vile suffered by one Thomas Barcus in consequence of conduct riotous, unseemly, and in general prejudicial to the public peace of the New Bedford waterfront at half-past four in the morning, proved in the upshot far more brief than had been fondly hoped, not only by his just judge, but, singularly enough, by the misdemeanant himself.

Taking everything gravely into consideration, including a person anything but prepossessing, the judge reckoned that, in default of a fine of one hundred dollars, a ten-day layup for repairs and expences was not too much to mete out to the risoner at the bar.

He was sentenced at 10 a. m. and it was little short of 10 p. m. when his post-prandial repose was "disturbed by the rattle of a key in the lock of the door to his cell.

Sitting up, Mr. Barcus rubbed his eyes and combed his hair with his fingers.

"What did I tell you?" he observed resignedly. "It begins again already."

Conducted with every evidence of disesteem on the part of his jailors to the office of the warden, he was acquainted with the fact that his fine had been paid by no one less than the judge himself; then present in portly and solicitous person.

"If only you had told me you were a friend of Mr. Digby's," the judge hastened to say as soon as the two were ensconced in the privacy of the judicial limousine, "I would have known better how to guide myself in this unfortunate affair."

"And if you will be good enough to indicate how I may serve you . . ."

"Digby didn't offer any suggestions in his wire, gaffer?"

"One moment; I have it here."

"Naturally I'd like a bath and a change of clothes," Barcus pursued while the judicial breast-socket was being explored; "and I could do with transportation to New York by the first train out of this God-forsaken hole, and—"

"This is what Mr. Digby says," the judge interrupted, laboriously deciphering the message by the light of a match: "Please see to immediate release of one Thomas Barcus, probably in jail in your jurisdiction for rioting on waterfront this morning. Pay his fine and instruct him to report to me in New York at earliest feasible hour. Give him all the money he wants and look to me for remuneration."

"Eh?" Barcus interrupted, sitting up smartly; "what's that last again?"

Patience the judge repeated the sentence from the message.

"Thanks. Please don't read farther. You might come to something that would spoil it. It's almost so beautiful as it stands," Barcus observed. "Law was me five thousand or so liquidated damages—but I'll be reasonable. Frisk this burg for a fifth of that sum before train time—and I promise to ask nothing more!"

His private comment was: "I've suspected that his was a fairy-tale all along. Now I know it is!"

And this phase of incredulity persisted in coloring the complexion of his mind until the moment, some hours later, when the train connecting at Providence with the Midnight Express for New York pulled out of New Bedford bearing a transformed Barcus—almost impenetrably disguised in a bath, a shave and a haircut, an outfit of clothing originally tailored for a gentleman of discriminating taste, but no whit less disguised in the sense of affluence that goes with the possession of one thousand dollars in cash.

Not until a sound night's sleep had topped off the beginning of his rest in jail did Barcus come down to earth.

He demonstrated his return to common-sense by making a round breakfast in Grand Central station before looking up the residence of Digby in the telephone directory.

The information he garnered from the voice that answered the name of Mr. Digby over the telephone shook only momentarily Barcus' innate conviction that intimate acquaintance with battle, murder and sudden death was the inevitable reward of association with this friend of his heart.

"Alan being married to Rose Trine in Jersey City at this very minute!" he breathed skeptically as he emerged from the booth memorizing the address of the alleged officiating clergyman. "I don't believe it; it's too sudden."

Forthwith he engaged a taxicab to convey him to Jersey City, at top speed, for an exorbitant reward.

And when, from the forward deck of a ferry-boat, he beheld a dense volume of smoke advertising a conflagration on the Jersey shore, not far from the waterfront, he shook a moodily sagacious head.

"If Alan isn't mixed up in that, somehow," he declared, "he's missing a bet for once—and I'm a sorry failure as a prophet of woe and disaster!"

There was as much intuitive apprehension as humor responsible for this remark; witness the fact that, on landing, he risked the delay required to turn aside and have a look at the fire.

It proved to be situated in the heart of a squalid slum—a wretched tenement of the poorest class, whose roof had already fallen in and whose walls were momentarily threatening to go by the time Barcus arrived on the scene.

At a considerable distance from him a small disturbance had broken out—a clamor of protesting voices lifting about the rumor of the mob—as a number of men, case-hardened roughs one and all, began to force their way in a V-shaped wedge through the throng, making toward its very heart,

the point on the fire-lines nearest the burning building.

What this meant, Mr. Barcus had not the slightest idea. But his attention was first distracted by the maneuver, then fixed by the face of a man who was following in the hollow of the V—an evil white face that seemed somehow vaguely familiar.

A cry was audible—"Firebug! Lynch him! Lynch the firebug!"—and at this the mob turned as one man and streamed away in pursuit of an invisible quarry, who chose to attempt his escape by a route directly opposite to that which would have led him within view of Mr. Barcus.

Startled, and of a sudden persuaded that there might have been more in his "hunch" than was sanely to be credited, Barcus started up and was on the point of stepping out of his cab, if with a rather aimless purpose, when he was stayed by sight of that evil white face returning the way it had come—still in the hollow of the flying V, which now made faster progress, thanks to the disorganization of the mob by the chase of the alleged incendiary.

And now, Barcus saw, the man of the white face was not alone. There was someone with him—someone whose head was banded and face concealed, but who seemed to be feminine.

And so, Barcus argued, why might it not be Rose Trine, suffering new persecution at the hands of her unnatural father's creatures?

He was too far away to make sure and attempt any interference; but he pointed White Face out to his chauffeur as the V reached a touring car on the edge of the mob and the woman was lifted in (unresisting and apparently in a dead faint), and when the touring car swung round and picked up its heels, the taxicab of Mr. Barcus trailed it as unostentatiously as if it was a pertinacious shadow.

Ten minutes later, from the rear deck of a ferry-

In that quarter it was presently lost to the sight of Mr. Barcus, engulfed in light folds of base that were creeping in from seawards to dim and tarnish the pristine brilliance of that day.

II—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 motoring-cap 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 due 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

Coast agreeing to wait for Alan with his biplane in Van Cortlandt park from midnight till day-break, prepared if need be to undertake a trans-continental 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 hydroaeroplane 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 hydroaeroplane 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 hazards and Alan on to his hotel in New York.

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.

He negotiated that last flight of steps which led to the topmost floor with extraordinary stealth,

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 reproachfully.

"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."

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

III—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 excuse) his sanity in permitting himself in being 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. It was some hours later, though still daylight, when they picked up the special train, flying like a hunted thing across the levels.

There was scant room for doubt but 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 almost 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 disbursement 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 night 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 teasing 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 fall 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.

Someone had opened one of the side windows and was emptying a revolver at him.

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 cow-catcher. 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.

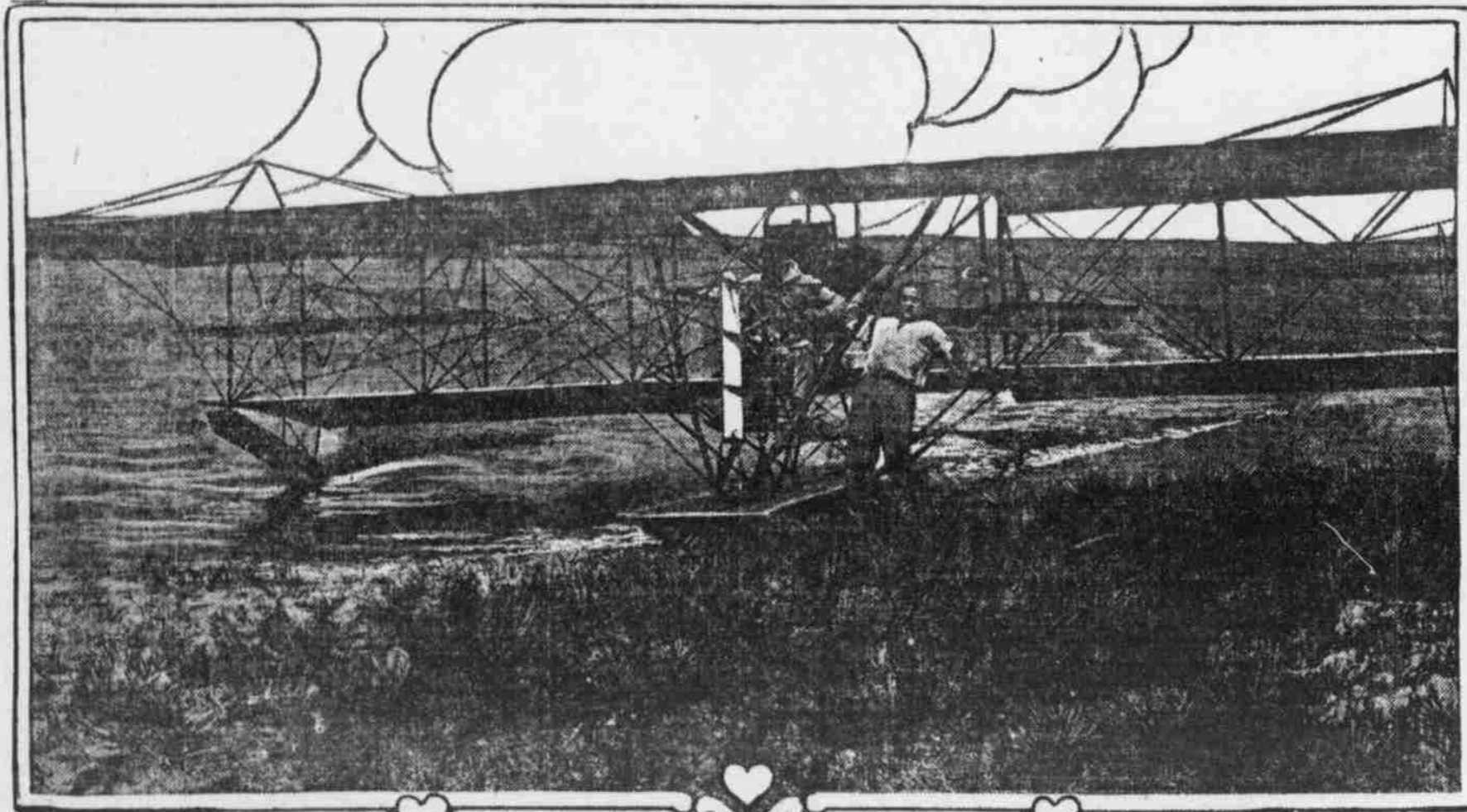
By a miraculous, flying leap, the man accomplished that incredible feat and gained the platform.

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.

(To be continued.)



Alan is Saved by a Hydroaeroplane.

boat in midstream—a boat bearing back to New York not only the touring car of White Face, but the cab of Mr. Barcus—the latter gentleman formed one of a small but interested audience witnessing an incident of uncommon character.

He saw a young man, hatless, coatless, almost shirtless, tear down to the edge of one of the Jersey wharves, his heels snapped at by a revving rabble, jump aboard a square-rigged vessel which lay moored there, and execute a maneuver of despair by climbing up the rigging in a hopeless attempt to escape his persecutors. They were too many for him, and what was worse they were headed by a squad of police apparently as grimly bent on compassing the destruction of their quarry as was the mob.

And they swarmed up the rigging after him without a moment's hesitation.

Hotly pressed, the fugitive climbed higher and still higher, until at length he gained the topmost yard; with three policemen not half a dozen feet below him and popping away for dear life.

None the less, there was no telling when some accident might wing a bullet into the young man; and it was evident that he so decided.

For, inching out to the end of the yard, he waved his hand toward his persecutors with a gesture of lighthearted derision that unmistakably identified him as Alan Law to Mr. Barcus, and forthwith dropped to the water, feet foremost.

Alan took the water neatly, came up uninjured and clearheaded, and without an instant's hesitation struck away toward the middle of the Hudson.

As this happened the police ran to the stern of the square-rigger, unmoored a dory that was riding there, and threw themselves into it.

During the (to Barcus, at least) breathless suspense of that chase, the ferryboat dory stolidly farther and still farther away from the scene. Barcus could not tell whether, as it seemed, the police-laden dory was really overhauling Alan, or whether the illusion of perspective deceived him.

At all events, it seemed a frightfully near thing when the interruption befell which alone could have saved Alan.

Out of the very sky dropped a hydroaeroplane, cutting the water with a long, graceful curve that brought it, almost at a standstill, directly to the head of the swimmer, and at the same time forced the police boat to sheer widely off in order to escape collision.

Immediately the swimmer caught the pontoon of the hydroaeroplane, pulled himself up out of the water, and clambered to the seat beside the aviator.

Before he was fairly seated the plane was swinging back into its fastest pace.

With the ease of a wild-geese it left the water, mounted the long grade of an air lane, described a wide circle above the bluffs of Weehawken, and swept away southwards.

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 sleuthed 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 heist, but I know I shall. On the off-chance of being useful, I have bribed the traincrew 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 was 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 Trey 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!

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 hydroaeroplane.

Their arrangements were quickly consummated,

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 snoring 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.

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 overhead 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.

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?"

"Why—yes."

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

"Oh—really!" he protested.