

Watch the Curves

By RICHARD HOFFMANN

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WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

Following his father's criticism of his idle life, and the withdrawal of financial assistance, Hal Ireland, son of a wealthy banker, finds himself practically without funds but with the promise of a situation in San Francisco, which he must reach, from New York, within a definite time limit. He takes passage with a cross-country auto party on a "share expense" basis. With five other members of the party, an attractive girl, Barry Trafford; middle-aged Giles Kerrigan; Sister Anastasia, a nun; and an individual whom he instinctively dislikes, Martin Crack, he starts his journey. Barry's reticence annoys him. To Kerrigan he takes at once, but he distrusts Crack. He finds his intimacy with Kerrigan ripening, and makes a little progress with Barry. Through a misunderstanding, at a stopping place, Hal is directed to Barry's room, instead of his own. Barry drops her unfriendliness and they exchange kisses. Next day he tells her he loves her. She answers that she mustn't love him, without giving any reason.

CHAPTER V—Continued

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Crack's light-blue eyes sought Hal's—hopeful, it might have seemed, of some sign of pleasure, though not counting on it. Hal wondered again why, under their lazy hopefulness, the eyes should seem to know something that gave them faintly mischievous amusement, seemed also to weigh the possibility of Hal's knowing what it was. "Hi there," said Hal, nodding; there was always something stopped his being quite civil to this quiet, narrow little fellow.

"Happened to see you come down here," Crack said, addressing himself to Hal without hurry. "And thought y'wouldn't care if I came." He paused, as if on the chance Hal would say it was all right. Then he turned to Kerrigan, less amiably. "After you're through this round, I'll buy one."

"Nice of you," said Kerrigan, "but we got this bottle between us. Welcome to help yourself."

"Oh," said Crack. "Well, thanks. Maybe just a little one."

And here it was spoiled between Hal and Kerrigan; Hal's rising heart turned dully toward bottom again, toward the fretful confusions that hedged and tripped and badgered his longing for Barry and the wonder of her straight, golden loveliness. He could have escaped through Kerrigan for the time; but now there was only the bourbon, and he knew beforehand it wouldn't be any good to him.

They went back, with a pretense of relish, to items in the day's journey. Crack sat unobtrusively enough, sipping his drink as if it were some not unpalatable medicine, half attentive to what was said, half concerned with his own drowsy speculations. Under his gentle fingers the golf ball moved round a ring of wet on the table. He looked from one to other of them as they talked, except when Hal said something especially enthusiastic; then Crack would watch him through part of Kerrigan's next speech, as if wondering what had made Hal say that or as if too indolent to turn his head away when he would be turning it back again in a moment. Then in a pause, without stirring himself, he said to Hal, "I bet you know Broadway way pretty well—livin' in N'York."

"There's a couple of other things to do in New York, you know," said Hal, looking at him briefly.

The inviting smile stayed on Crack's fair-skinned face and in his youthfully knowing eyes; the golf ball was motionless under his finger.

"But if you want good-lookin' babes and a good time, Broadway's a pretty good place to get 'em," he said.

"I've heard it was," said Hal, and felt a hypocrite.

Kerrigan drew breath to speak, but Crack—watching Hal—ignored him, saying, "Did you ever go to a place called the Wrong Door?"

"No," said Hal dully; and made himself add, "What's that?"

"Well, it's sort of a—"

"A joint, on West Fifty-third street," Kerrigan interrupted, with a short nod. "You a friend of Jed Silver's?"

Crack's smile was modest, his eyes uncertain, as if he'd been paid a compliment he didn't deserve. He barely glanced at Kerrigan, at his golf ball, then shyly at Hal as he said: "Well, I sorta know Jed. He's sorta nice to me sometimes, when I'm in N'York."

"See him this last trip?" Ferrigan asked in perfunctory interest.

That pleased Crack sufficiently so that he turned his indolent smile to Kerrigan. "Yeah," he said. "Was up there—talkin' with him an' all couple nights before we started." He turned back to Hal. "He's got a—"

Without triumph Kerrigan interrupt-

ed him again: "Guess you didn't know they raided his place in June, stripped the fixtures out, and put Silver on ice to wait for his rap—and not only for dry-law violation either."

Crack flushed, and a sharp restiveness stood caged in the drowsy blue of his eyes. "No," he said quickly, down at his golf ball, "I didn't know it."

"Must have been a grand guy to get himself jailed in New York," Hal said to Kerrigan.

"Just a big crime-baby," said Kerrigan in quiet pre-occupation.

Crack's quiet persistence—insinuated even when he was silent—recognized no finality at the table. In a moment, "Say," he said to Hal, "it'd be fun to lay over more'n one night in some of these towns—to get acquainted. Comin' up the road tonight, it looked like there was talent here."

"Guess you could find any amount of it here or anywhere else," said Hal tastelessly, "if you felt like it."

Crack's immature, faintly smiling lips were undecided between embarrassment and assurance. He had the air of making remarks not so much for the direct reply as for the indirect reaction. "You—" he said insecurely, hopefully, "it don't seem like you felt like it very much."

Hal gave him an honest, impersonal look and said flatly, "I don't." Even as he turned to Kerrigan, he knew Crack's speculation was still lazily upon him. But then Kerrigan's expression was different; he was watching Crack with a severe vigilance that seemed outright inimical. Hal looked back quickly, to see what it was; the uncertain smile hadn't altered much; there was only reticent mischief in it again for his saying, "I guess maybe you got other things on your mind."

Hal barely heard the remark, "Nothing on my mind," he said, "except to make five hundred miles tomorrow."



"I Bet You Know Broadway Pretty Well—Livin' in N'York."

He glanced at his watch. "Late, Colonel," he added to Kerrigan. Kerrigan was still watching Crack as if he'd seen him tuck an ace up his sleeve.

"You don't think maybe—" Crack began with diffident care: "you don't think maybe you'd feel different if they wasn't somebody that's—"

"Button it up, slipstream," said Kerrigan.

"What?" said Crack, startled.

"I know what you're going to say," said Kerrigan quietly: "you button it."

Crack closed his fist loosely round the golf ball, flushed again, swallowed slowly, and blinked once or twice as if his eyes stung. "I wasn't talking to you," he said, his voice cracking once, warmed out of shiftlessness. "You might's well keep out of my business."

"If it was your business," said Kerrigan, his voice firm and too quiet. "I'd keep out of it surely. Plug your exhaust, splash, bear?"

Moisture appeared round the new intensity of Crack's eyes, and bluish besieged the roots of his straight, mouse-colored hair. The immobile face seemed to want to grimace but not to know how.

"Keep out of it," he suddenly recited on a warning rise of tone. "Keep out of my business, you dang — old drunk."

Hal, starting to his feet, had one astonished glimpse of Kerrigan's face—

older, less ruddy, gravely compliant, essentially inattentive to Crack's venom. Hal's chair bouncing over backward made Crack whip round and rise all in one startled motion, as if he had forgotten Hal was there. He was stumbling away sideways before he'd well caught his balance, his golf ball on the jump over the floor, as Hal went for him. Then the feel of his throat was between Hal's thumbs, fingers over lapped at the back, and it was the best thing he ever remembered having in his hands. His teeth tried to push one another back into their aching roots for that moment of fine squeezing. Somebody careened hard against him from the side and an arm, like the loop of a jerked hawser at his midriff, swung him away, ripping off his hold. The dark, certain young man from behind the bar stood close beside him, watching him pant through his open mouth as if he'd had fifteen minutes' hard wrestling.

"Listen, friend," said the young bartender, quiet, unsolicited, unresentful; "kill him outside, will you?"

Hal, looking at him, grew steady at once, without surrendering a single good fragment of his hate. The young man's hand was spread on Hal's moving chest.

"Colonel," said Hal in smoldering steadiness, "if it'll do your experience-museum any good to watch me, I'll be glad to kill him."

"Brother, listen," the young man went on surely, "we got a little business here, see? And it won't help it none to have bodies on the premises. I want you to kill him all right, if you want; but some place else, friend, hey? Some place else."

"All right," said Hal. "Let me talk to him."

The bartender's hand came down, and Hal walked toward Crack. "You'll apologize," he said.

He heard Kerrigan breathing beside him; he was sorry to make him stand listening to this.

Crack's close-set eyes were frightened not by what Hal might do to him but by the realization of what he himself had done. He nodded his head quickly several times, saying: "I—I'll apologize. I'll apologize."

"You'll kneel on the floor to do it," said Hal. Crack glanced at the floor as if to see whether there was something especially vile he had to kneel in, but his eyes came quickly back to Hal's, for fear of missing something.

Hal waited. Crack knelt awkwardly, watching Hal for some sign of an extra way to please him. Then he turned his reluctant look to Kerrigan.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I take it back. I shouldn't have said it. I'll always be sorry I said it. I shouldn't take liquor. It was that. It makes me crazy. I do things I'm sorry for—I—I hope you'll forget it. It was an awful thing to say—terrible." He seemed to be inwardly frightened just thinking about it.

Hal heard Kerrigan say, "Get up." Then he looked at him, smiling an attempt at unremorseful apology, and said, "Finish our drinks, shall we?" He hoped they could get out of this place, having drunk and paid and said good night leisurely—all before the complete, trembling backwash of fury took him, before Kerrigan or the competent young chap at the bar should see how badly he would tremble.

CHAPTER VI

Saturday

It was a grander breadth into which the Iowa morning lighted them. Hal had pictured how it would be in the car this day: restraint, uneasiness, with periodic attempt to force aside a loaded atmosphere. But, as Rasputin's honest, sturdy speed rushed them westward, it was not at all as Hal had pictured it. A sentence of his father's that muddy morning in New York, drew his rueful smile. "Another thing you need to get over is this cheerful idea that any little world you're in revolves around you." And it was a new sort of pleasure to Hal to close away his prepared moodiness and join himself with the closer companionship in which the morning started.

"Well, here we are again," said Mrs. Piuspiper in a tone of comfortable settling to pleasure. "It seems like we fit together into one big family, don't it?"

John Piuspiper broke off his monotonous humming of the tune that might, once, long ago, have been "The Arkansas Traveler." "Say," he said cautiously, leaning a little between Hal and Kerrigan, "where did you fellows go to last night?"

"Down the street—to one of Joe's places," said Kerrigan, as if the memory of it were genial pleasure to him.

"Next time," John submitted, excitement under his caution, "if there's nothin' private you two got to talk over, would you maybe let me—let me—"

"Bet your lodge emblem," said Kerrigan in quick benevolence; and the implication that he spoke for them both in such a gesture underscored Hal's good sense of their nearer intimacy, tacitly established last night, tacitly acknowledged and savored this morning. That was something Crack had done for him.

There had been no mark on Crack's throat this morning, over the small opening of the lapels; and Hal would forget that he had last night paid the narrow, insinuating little soul the compliment of wanting to strangle it out of the narrow, old-fashioned little body. Crack's apology last night had worn a certain horrified, bewildered sincerity; and if Kerrigan forgave the little mongrel, Hal needn't dignify him by hate.

It didn't matter. All that really mattered was Barry—her blue eyes washed clean of last night's fear, freshly lighted by the loveliness that gave its life to her lovely body. She was there in the car, secure and warm and whole for him to come to. Whatever it was that had held her back, made her throw in his way such an irrelevant obstacle as last night's calling of Sister Anastasia, it couldn't—even if it were to return—stand against a necessity as enveloping, as foreordained as the coming of summer to a wintry year. There was ripened power, even, in Hal's discovery that he was no longer curious about the source of her restraints, her fears, her withdrawals. And for another time he had learned not to let himself be baffled by the shadowy children of his perverse fancy.

Even the straight road was quickened under Rasputin's steady wheels, and towns that the map forecast along the red stripe of the route succeeded each other in their brick actuality before they were expected. Between the towns the straight road shimmered in the heat ahead, as if under pale water; the farmsteads of small white house and big red barns accepted the blazing sun in stolid memory of winters past and present.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Popular Gordon Setter

Always Gentleman's Dog

There is little question that the Gordon, like all setters, comes of very old stock, writes Frank F. Dole in the New York Herald-Tribune. His markings would seem to show that he was one of the early varieties in England. He is marked exactly like the black and tan terrier and as were some of the old setting spaniels from which setters were produced. As in the terrier, the markings of the Gordon are closely defined and there is no suggestion of a running over of colors.

The Gordon setter has always been a gentleman's dog. He takes his name from a British nobleman, who, although not the founder of the breed, had much to do with its early development. This was the duke of Gordon, who lived at the beginning of the Nineteenth century.

The Gordon is a heavier dog than the English or Irish setter, and makes up in strength what he may lack in speed. It is true that the Gordon does not work rapidly enough to do much in field trials. The English and Irish setters, being lighter dogs, cover the ground more rapidly and where speed counts and the number of coverts flushed means everything, the Gordon is forced to take second place.

As an all-round good hunting dog, a beautiful animal and a loyal pal, there is none that surpasses the black and tan Gordon setter.

A Key to Heredity

Mysteries of heredity may be solved by the discovery of a giant chromosome in the salivary gland of the yeast fly. This chromosome, which is 70 times normal size, makes possible the identification of genes, the units controlling heredity. The length of the ordinary chromosome is estimated to be 15-100,000ths of an inch, which gives some idea of the minuteness of each gene. A complete set of genes is contained in each cell and arranged in long strips on each chromosome. Scientists estimate that between 2,000 and 3,000 genes are contained in each cell of the yeast fly.—Montreal Herald.

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MORE people could feel fine, be fit and regular, if they would only follow the rule of doctors and hospitals in relieving constipation.

Never take any laxative that is harsh in action. Or one, the dose of which can't be exactly measured. Doctors know the danger if this rule is violated. They use liquid laxatives, and keep reducing the dose until the bowels need no help at all.

Reduced dosage is the secret of aiding Nature in restoring regularity. You must use a little less laxative each time, and that's why it should be a liquid like Syrup Pepsin.

Ask your druggist for a bottle of Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, and if it doesn't give you absolute relief, if it isn't a joy and comfort in the way it overcomes biliousness due to constipation, your money back.

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