

# WATCH the CURVES



BY RICHARD HOFFMANN  
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WNU SERVICE

## CHAPTER V—Continued

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 muggy 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.

John Pulsipher 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, excitedly 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. 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 of 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.

Before the sun had finished its pitiless climbing, the road dropped past a gathering of bluffs with a look of Indian fighting and more recent frontier and came to Council Bluffs, to the broad bed of the Missouri river with its flats blackish and dry like emery, and to the end of Iowa. Across the river, there

was the solidity, clamor, and bustle of Omaha—the first metropolis in so many swift miles that Hal for once felt like a countryman, come to gaze at the sights. But black-and-white route numbers under Nebraska's covered wagon marked escape from such frailty; and they started for Lincoln, which Kerrigan assured Hal was not on a longer way and contained something worth looking at.

It did. Straight up into the hot, broad Nebraska afternoon, a slit shaft of gray rose, dry and clean-sided, from the terrace of a square-spread building. And where the high shaft ended in its gold, blunt cap a Sower crooked his bronze arm full-muscled, a fat seedbag slung to the faintly arrogant rhythm of his shoulders, his walk sure and familiar upon the earth that received the strewn handfa's and would give them back to his labor.

After lunch, Barry came to the front seat beside Hal, Doc leaping eagerly to her lap.

"Kerrigan says I'm to sit here," she said.

"Bless Kerrigan," said Hal. "He's an old peach," said Barry softly. "And he likes you a little, I think. I wonder why." Then, more freshly, "Hal, could we drive down to the capitol for one closer look at it?"

"Let's," said Hal. "Won't take a minute. You know the real way to make up your mind about it would be to sleep on your first look and see it again in the morning."

"I've made up my mind," said Barry. "I think it's grand. I could do without some of those names around the outside, and the gold behind that relief of the covered wagon over the door, and I don't think the buffaloes beside the steps are strong enough, but—"

"But outside of that you like it," said Hal, grinning. "When you get to be as old as I, you'll know one look isn't—"

"Get to be as old as—" she said, affecting difficulty with her smile. "Why, darn you, I'm old enough to be your—"

"Daughter, in some ways," said Hal blandly.

"Would you rather I changed places again?" she said. "I'm darned if I'll be put in my place by you—a mere—a mere—"

"A mere will do," said Hal. "I've never been called that before, but I like it."

"What'd you know about life, anyway?" she said, rueful mockery of anger in her eyes.

Hal stopped to watch the slowly passing features of the building and said: "Well, I had a parrot during the psittacosis scare: fear of his getting the fever aged me a great deal."

"A parrot?" said Barry, quickly brightened. "Gosh, how I've wanted a parrot! All my life. Was he fun?"

"An absolute genius," said Hal. "When we get to Los Angeles, I'll telegraph for him and you shall have him." With the others all leaning to the windows, Hal turned to her and held her sobered eyes with all the eagerness which her near, actual presence commanded. "Barry," he said quickly, and very low; "I love you. I haven't told you today, and it's harder because it's more than yesterday—so much more than—"

"That you'd give me your parrot," said Barry, and a brittle stillness held her eyes, a wooden quality the lovely lips that said it.

Hal's look hardened in the shock of that treachery to his tenderness. "At least," he said after a clouded second, "you don't look as though you thought that was so funny. Why the devil did you say it?" Where had that wretched, stealthy shadow come from?

She let out the last of her breath and turned her head helplessly, staring off through the windshield while a little shining wet rimmed her lower lids. Then she leaned partly across him, as if for a last look at the capitol, her hand coming to his and taking tight hold.

"Darling, it's no use," she hurried on, so that he could barely hear her. "I'm not big enough, good

enough, to pretend I don't love you. I never thought this would happen to me—never thought I'd be so scared and cowardly. It would be simple if I were strong—and it couldn't hurt any worse. Darling, we mustn't talk about it now any more. Tonight I'll tell you, my dearest—dearest: I promise I'll tell you tonight."

He kept her hand for another instant of baffled happiness, after her hold relaxed; then she leaned away, turning toward the back and saying quite coolly, "Kerrigan, did you like that statue of Lincoln on the other side?"

They talked or not, as the moment was meant; but either way Hal knew that Barry and he were more profoundly together there—in a closeness that grew mature and strong, ready for more thrilling aspiration. Now she had said she loved him; and with that bright finality, he belted firm his prowess against any mysteries, any obstacles.

At Grand Island they crossed the Platte river—blue water among the biscuit-colored flats where you might still find the fording tracks of the covered wagons; and Rasputin droned away on Route 30 again, with the river hidden low to southward.

The vigilant welcome of Barry's eyes was the fastest for the live things: the fat-bellied little creatures that scurried across the road with tremendous haste but no speed, like small mechanical toys, stirred her soft chuckling, and once a swift bird swooped in a lovely arc to deliver his small, mortal impact against Rasputin's hood; Barry's muffled cry of compassion had Hal's foot hard on the brakes.

"He's dead, surely?" she said, glancing backward.

"Fraid so," said Kerrigan.

"I'll stop if you like," said Hal.

"No," said Barry sadly, "but it seems such a poor death for him."

The sun was lower, but it was still blazing hot when they rushed by the little group that walked a shadeless, long stretch of the road. The farmer's overalls were new, his shirt white; the child asleep in his crooked brown arms wore a fresh dress, and the printed pajamas of the two elder girls following were bright and clean. Hal's thought was of the meanness of having raised that corridor of dust for them to walk in; and as he turned to speak to Barry, Crack's indolent voice came quickly to his ear: "Notice the kid in his arms?"

"Yes," said Hal, with a short, unwelcome nod; he hadn't thought of Crack for an hour.

There was a flat quality in Crack's next speech, as if he had exhausted the matter's interest. "It was dead," he said.

Hal suddenly felt that Crack, if he wanted to, could frighten him, and he turned aside in quick anger to mutter, "D—n it, you don't know that."

"I saw the kid," said Crack in listless obstinacy; "it was dead."

Contempt, low and briefly savage, smoldered under Barry's quick "It was not dead." Her eyes were blazing even after they had left Crack. As if what he had said were personal to her; her pursed lips lay unwillingly together, as if she tasted something turn bitter in her mouth. Crack said nothing.

Hal tried again to capture the certainty that his tainted hatred of Crack was defined within the forgettable episode of last night. It couldn't be a slowly crescent thing, begun at the journey's start. Crack was too insignificant. It must all be Hal's own reaction to a long day of driving, with the trip-window of the speedometer near a fifth fresh start. The temptation to look around at Crack, to see if his distinguished face were still basking in the shy pleasure of things he privately knew—that persistent temptation was part of fatigue, part of his taut impatience for the night's stop and for Barry. So too were these other dim, self-conceived bogies; an unconnected wonder whether Crack might be biding his time for some little weapon of revenge for humiliation; and that old-maid's sense of a thickening imminence stealthily preparing to come upon them, just as on the long horizon there behind, the dark was preparing.

They dined in North Platte. If it wasn't raining afterward, they would try to make a place called Ogalalla, for the night.

Just before they drew up at the hotel, Barry murmured, "I'd like to wash a little, and leave Doc. Shall I meet you down here?"

"Right," said Hal, with the brittle apprehension that unless they hurried something would happen to stop them.

Barry stood there so straight and cool, talking to Kerrigan, while Hal's hasty fingers slipped on the knots of the luggage lashing. And only when the bags were well down

did she go into the hotel and upstairs.

The hall was hot, but Hal's well-used, unadorned room was ten degrees hotter. He washed quickly and hurried down to the car again, half certain that Sister Anastasia would appear to tell him Barry was too tired to go out so late. It was already eleven.

But Barry came alone, hatless, a reticent smile pretending to ignore the seriousness of her brave eyes. "I haven't been long, have I?" she said, quavering his wrist as she came to him.

"Too long," he said. "Anything's too long. It's all too long. I've had twenty-six years without you, and I grudge every d—d moment."

She bowed her head, her lips involuntarily parted to reply. But she didn't. Instead she said, "You've found where the garage is?" And she added quickly, "I don't give a darn where it is. Oh, Hal, be gentle with me; help me."

The garage was just around the corner, and beyond it the town ended nakedly, the street swallowed by the dark plains like a road running into the edge of a flood. The last house was dark; they hadn't to go far to be alone. And when they stopped, Barry parted his hands with hers, leaned back between them, and joined them before her.

"Hal," she said on a very sigh of comfort, "I'll tell you a story."

"I know a story," he whispered against her hair. "Is it about you?"

"It's about a girl much younger than I," she said; "younger in everything."

"Then why should I hear it?"

"Because it is a sort of a test," Barry said. "We don't know each other so—so very well, do we? There's something I need to know



Rasputin Droned Away on Route 30.

before I tell you what I have to tell you. You listen to the story and tell me what you think—and then I'll know."

"Barry, it would keep," said Hal. "Tell me some other time—after we're together, alone, for good."

She pressed his hands harder against her firmness, her head turning so that her smooth cheek ran under his lips. "No," she said, and he could tell from her voice that her eyes must be closed. "Please, Hal—now."

"All right," he said. "As a favor, Barry, which I shall want returned."

"This girl," Barry began at once, but quietly: "this girl lived on the same street I did, at home; I knew her well. It doesn't matter what she looked like, except that she was pretty—perhaps before she should have been. Her father was in the bank, on town boards, a vestryman in the church. She thought she understood him, she loved him very much, and she tried to be everything to him as he was everything to her. She knew he had started humbly in his life and she knew how proud he was of the trust and respect he had built it all up around him and in himself. And she was proud of that for both of them. But she knew hardly anything else about him, except what she saw, because once when she asked about her mother, he made it plain in his gentle way that she wasn't to ask questions, that some day he would tell her everything she needed to know."

Barry's pressure against him relaxed a little.

"One day," Barry went on, as if making sure it should all be as simple and clear for him as it was for her, "her father brought a man to live in their house—a pleasant, quiet sort of man, a good deal younger than her father but older than she. The man was away a good deal, but even when he was at home the girl hardly saw him except at breakfast and dinner; in the evening he used to read his paper while she and her father played cards and talked, as they always had."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

An Early Electric Lamp

One of the earliest electric lamps in general use was the Nernst-Glover, which had a glowing tube that had to be warmed—"lit"—to start the current and that could be "blown out"—by blowing until it cooled the point where it lost its conductivity.—Arvie W. Gordon Madison, Wis., in Collier's Weekly

## CLIFF DWELLERS OF PAST AGES

### Apartment Living Traced Back to 85 B. C.

How many of us have the impression that apartment dwelling is comparatively modern?

No doubt a good many of us. However, surprising as it may seem, apartment dwelling dates back to about 85 B. C., according to official records.

How much further no one can answer, but an exhaustive research by the writer reveals that in 85 B. C. an entire apartment city was built high up in the Andes, a place called Machu Picchu, Peru.

The entire city was built about 7,000 feet above sea level, on a precipice leading up from the Grand canyon of the Urubamba. It was supposed to have been constructed to promote safety. These apartments were built of white granite and divided into one and two rooms per family, with one window and door in each building. This was quite the mode of living in that day.

We also find a troglodyte village in southern Tunisia, with apartment houses built of mud dauber, each apartment being separate from the others and consisting of one room, one door and no windows.

Crude, treacherous stairs, worn by much use, led to the doors from the outside. The life of these inhabitants was much like that of the Pueblo Indians of America and was another instance of apartment dwelling of that period.

We find in the Twelfth century in Kandy, Ceylon, a type of apartment better known today as the homes of the original cliff dwellers. These cliffs were built in the form of individual apartments, one above the other and served as a refuge for the Ceylonese against the invading Malays.

The Ceylonese monarch of that age was so much impressed by the apart-

ment, or cliff dwellers, that he appointed priests to take charge of them, and dedicated lands for their support. That was probably the origin of our present superintendent or resident manager of apartment houses.

Coming to the North American continent, we find at Mena Verda, Colo., a large community apartment, known as "The Cliff Palace," tucked away under an overhanging rock, which afforded protection in the form of a roof.

Entrance was made from the top of the apartment, by a crude ladder, and the individual apartments were built in tiers, rising a few feet per apartment. This is still a famous relic of ancient Indian civilization in southwest Colorado.

What was probably the first example of set-back architecture was discovered at Taos Pueblo, New Mexico, where a large Indian communal house was discovered and housed about 200 Indian families. This house was inhabited by Pueblo Indians and was built of stone and sometimes mud. This communal house was often the subject for artists.—Raymond R. Keane, in the Philadelphia Record.

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