



## The Race Girl: A Moretti Racing Family Saga

**James Herbert Harrison**

JHH

(463pp)

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*The Race Girl is a complex saga about ambition, betrayal, and true love.*

Race cars, star-crossed lovers, and financial intrigue fuel James Herbert Harrison's high-octane novel *The Race Girl*.

Beginning with a Las Vegas car crash and the revelation that Alex, the twenty-year-old playboy scion of the Moretti Motorsport racing family, and sixteen-year-old Amanda, the youngest daughter of Moretti Motorsport's biggest sponsor, Byron Cook, are having a clandestine affair, the novel launches into a complex saga of ambition, betrayal, and true love. In the crash's aftermath, the Italian-born Moretti patriarch, Andy, finds himself running damage control as his son's recklessness causes Moretti Motorcars to fall from the cusp of qualifying for Formula 1 to the center of a worldwide public relations scandal exacerbated by fleeing sponsors. In press conferences, hospitals, courthouses, and family homes, the novel tracks the divided loyalties and bitter feud of the Moretti and Cook families over three years.

Blistering, tension-infused motor races at America's biggest racetracks enliven the pages, but *The Race Girl's* primary focus is on behind-the-scenes drama. Alex struggles with his paparazzi-adored racer girlfriend Evelyn and his burgeoning feelings for Amanda. And Evelyn's nagging agent Louis has his own plans for cashing in on her celebrity status. Departing from his wife and daughter's wishes, Byron mounts a yearslong legal case against Alex. Meanwhile, Amanda's jealous older sister Allison develops her schemes to curry favor with her father and take revenge on Alex for scorning her.

Stuffed with these and other subplots, the novel becomes convoluted. It takes huge leaps in space and time as well: a paragraph describing a character's thoughts about an impending trip is followed by a paragraph recounting what he did after the trip, sans transition or sense of continuity. This results in reading whiplash, with audiences forced into constant catch-up mode.

In addition, characters accumulate with rapidity, and too few are developed as distinct individuals. Instead, people are often reduced to caricatures of heroes and villains. Further, their exchanges are stilted and homogeneous in tone, covering broad ground in generic strokes—as when, over the course of a short, unremarkable conversation, strangers fall in love. In a similar vein, when Alex speaks, he sounds gullible, wise, reckless, and prudent by turns, and his contrasting attributes are not reconciled. Further, the narrative flits between the inner thoughts of various characters, switching from one to another within short spaces, muddying its work even more.

A dramatic novel about passions run amok, *The Race Girl* follows as two powerful families square off when their shared interest in race cars is overshadowed by a love affair between their two youngest children.

WILLEM MARX (April 26, 2024)

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