

CHECKERBOARD LOVE
JOSEPH M'CORD

CHAPTER X
Synopsis

Audrey Swan, nicknamed "Cygie," is the only daughter of a highly respected horse trainer whose farm adjoins the estate of Judge Castle. The Judge's only son, Jeffrey, has been Audrey's friend since childhood. He is educated to go into his father's law office in Parville but marries Olive Cooper, who scoffs at the idea and flatly refuses to live in the beautiful country house the Judge buys as a wedding present for the young couple. Jeff's college friend, Vic Quinn, falls in love with Audrey, who does not reciprocate. Vic substitutes for Jeff in Judge Castle's office while he is away. When he hears of Jeff's decision not to return, Vic goes to ask Audrey if she objects to his remaining, as the Judge has offered him a partnership. He is with her when she learns that her father has lost his life saving a drowning child. Audrey asks Vic to notify Jeff. Jeff is in the midst of an argument with Olive about going to the funeral.

"Skip that, please, Olive. It's silly."

"Oh, yes? It should be, but it isn't. Do you suppose I haven't been able to see why it was so hard for you to tear yourself away from that odious town and why you are always running back there on the slightest provocation? I've done everything I can to make you consider your self-respect, but this is intolerable." Tears suddenly filled her dark eyes. "Don't go, Jeff! I'm asking you not to."

"I'm sorry, Olive, but I'll have to go down there. I mean I'm going." He went out into the hall without looking back. And closed the door after him.

The brief services were about to begin when Jeffrey entered the little chapel the next morning and dropped unobtrusively on a bench at the rear. Almost at once he discovered Audrey and her mother. A man and a woman sat with them, relatives probably, but strangers. Vic Quinn was there. The little room was well filled, but Jeffrey saw no sign of his father or mother and it made him resentful. It wouldn't have hurt him to come. After all, the

Swans were their nearest neighbors.

When Jeffrey filed out with the others, nodding to an occasional acquaintance, he stood irresolutely on the sidewalk until a hand was laid on his arm and a quiet voice said: "Glad you made it, old man."

"Oh, hello, Vic. Sad business, this."

As they moved off, Jeff remarked: "I rather expected I'd bump into the folks here. Maybe it's just as well."

"Your father is up in the city, Jeff. He said he would be back this morning, but he hadn't shown up when I left the office."

"Humm . . . m. If I were sure I wouldn't barge into him, I'd run out and say hello to Mother. But I guess I'll be shoving back. As he opened his car door, Vic said quietly: "Jeff, if you can arrange it, try to see Audrey before you leave. I am sure she'd appreciate it very much."

"Think so?" There was almost an eagerness in the question.

"I know it. I called you the other night at Audrey's request." It cost Victor something to say that, much as he tried to banish the realization.

"Oh! Then I will drop in on my way back. Thanks."

It was several hours later that Jeffrey drove up to the Swan home. Until he glanced back at the stables standing without sign of life, he had not realized how different the place would be after this. It was a relief to see that there were no cars parked on the drive. It was still more of a relief to have Audrey open the door to him. Her face was still colorless, but she managed a smile of welcome.

"Cygie!"

"It was good of you to come, Jeff."

After Anthony Swan's death, the management of the family's affairs seemed to pass involuntarily into the hands of Attorney Quinn. There was no one else to whom Martha and Audrey could turn and Victor was always available.

Anthony had left a modest amount of money and securities and the farm was unencumbered. It was Martha's idea to convert all the stock and equipment into cash and perhaps sell all the land except that occupied by the

house and stables. She wanted to remain in the home during her lifetime.

But Victor had another suggestion. "I imagine it would be a good idea to get rid of your horses," he agreed. "I don't know anything about values, but I presume you can get pretty nearly what they're worth. At the present time, you will lose on the land. What had you planned to do, Audrey, to keep yourself busy?"

"Why, nothing," she answered. "Just stay here with Mom."

"Then why don't you carry on for your father? On a small scale."

"I hadn't thought of that," Audrey mused. She turned to Martha. "What do you think of that, Mom?"

Mrs. Swan was crocheting and she worked without looking up. "It sounds like a good plan," she said, when she came to the end of a row. "You'll never be satisfied if you don't have horses to fool with. I know that. And I think your father would have liked it."

"Then we'll call that settled," Victor decided. "When you get ready for action, I'll be glad to help."

"We'll wait until after the first of the year," Martha offered unexpectedly. "Friday will be Christmas. It will be just another day for us, Mr. Quinn, but I'd be pleased if you would have dinner with Audrey and me. If you're going to be in town."

"Thank you, Mrs. Swan. I shall be glad to come." He was more than repaid for the simple answer by Audrey's eyes.

After considerable thought, he decided upon a modest gift for each of his hostesses, something to which no sentimental value could be attached. He was glad that he had when the mail brought him a little parcel—a woolen muffler from Mrs. Swan, a dozen fine handkerchiefs from Audrey.

The dinner, too, was saved from being a momentary ordeal when Audrey took occasion to tell him in a matter-of-fact fashion: "You're sitting in Dad's place, Vic. We thought it would be easier."

If only he could have read a particular meaning into that! By this time he might have hoped for some encouragement in his suit. But Tony Swan stood between him and his desires as inexorably as death itself. The affair had been grimly ironical from the beginning. Falling so desperately in love with a strange girl. All their contacts shadowed by another man. And a man now married and supposedly out of the picture. There was many an occasion when he could have echoed Jeffrey Castle's sentiment with whole-souled fervor—it was terrible to be a gentleman.

At this same time, Jeffrey was being put to it to uphold a reputation of that sort. For Olive had undertaken to punish him for his Parville trip by remaining coldly aloof. Jeffrey had done his best to ignore her attitude and to maintain a friendly footing, although some instinct warned him that he would be making a mistake in going too far in the matter of a reconciliation. An abrupt surrender would make the future more difficult than ever, and if there must be another unpleasantness he was in favor of postponing it as long as possible. This might be a propitious time to go after that job on his own. Accordingly, he presented himself at the general offices of the corporation and sent in his name. He waited nearly an hour before a secretary advised that Mr. Harrison could give Mr. Castle a few minutes.

"Well, Castle," he said, "what's on your mind this morning?"

"A job," was the businesslike reply. "Olive has told me that you believe you can find something for me. I'd like to get to work."

After dinner that evening Jeffrey strolled into his wife's boudoir. "I've got some news that may soothe your nerves," he said. "Well?" Olive reached for a cigarette and lighted it. She felt that it would emphasize her attitude of complete indifference.

"Nothing startling, dear. Your old man's going to work. Had a good confab with your dad this morning. I'm starting in on Monday. Have my pail packed, will you?"

"What are you going to do?" Olive's dark eyes narrowed a trifle.

"I don't know. Going to take the usual course for salesmen . . . a matter of studying, more or less."

"What did Father offer you? How much?"

"No figure named. He did intimate, though, it would be the same as the other recruits get. Doesn't want any hard feelings."

"In other words, you gave him a story of wanting to work up from the foot of the ladder without any favors."

"Not at all. That's the story he gave me."

"You seem to be going out of your way to humiliate me of late."

"For Pete's sake! I can't loaf all my life, Olive, and I don't intend to! Besides, it was your idea in the first place . . . where are you going?"

"I'm going down to have a little talk with my father. He doesn't seem to understand. Quite."

Audrey Swan opened the door leading into Judge Castle's outer office. "Good morning, Judge Castle. I was looking for Mr. Quinn."

"Why, bless my soul! Come in, Audrey, come in. I haven't seen you for a long time." He brought a chair to the side of the desk with a courtly gesture. "Sit down, my dear, and let me look at you."

"Mother asked me to stop in with some papers that Mr. Quinn wished to see. He has been very kind about looking after things for her."

"Of course. He should be." Judge Castle's face grew suddenly grave. "Life brings bitter trials to all of us. Do you mind if I speak of your father, my dear?"

"Of course not," she replied in some surprise.

"He had one child, the same as I. I have watched you grow up, my dear, and I am confident that your father would tell me that you never had caused him an hour's grief."

"I hope that's true," Audrey said softly. "About my father."

"I had one child, too," the Judge remarked grimly. "I said that before, but you can draw your own conclusions."

"Aren't you just a little hard on Jeffrey?" Audrey asked, astonished at her temerity. "After all, he married the woman he loved. I will never believe that he willingly gave up his prospects here with you."

"Nevertheless," said the Judge stubbornly, "his place is here. I have been reminded of it daily by seeing young Quinn in the place that should be Jeffrey's. Not that I grudge him his opportunity. Not only am I exceedingly fond of

him, but I have found him invaluable. He is a very remarkable young man, Audrey."

"He is nice."

For the first time, the Judge's face relaxed. His eyes twinkled under their shaggy brows. "Is that the best you can say of him? You should be nice also . . . to him. And you should find it easy. By the way, did you notice the door as you came in?"

"The door?"

"Yes. The outer one. There's a rather new sign on it. It says, Castle and Quinn, Attorneys at Law."

"Oh! Isn't that splendid!"

"He's earned it. I need someone here who can take complete responsibility of the local practice, and it did not take Quinn long to show me that he could do that to my satisfaction." The Judge chuckled.

"I am very glad for him," Audrey remarked quietly, getting to her feet. "I wonder if I may leave the papers here. I must be running on."

"Certainly, my dear." He extended his hand and held hers for a moment when she gave it to him. "Audrey, I wish very much I might have had a daughter like you. If I can ever be of any service to you or your mother, you have only to let me know. Please convey my respects to her." (Continued Next Week)

ESTIMATE
The U. S. Department of Agriculture has estimated the 1940 cotton crop at 12,686,000 bales, nearly a million bales above the 1939 crop of 11,817,000 bales.

Mattie Mae Powell
NOTARY PUBLIC
Building & Loan Office
Main Street

Here is a Value
2 Latest 1940 ROYALS
For Less Than the Price of One
\$39.95
ROYAL
HARRIS ELECTRIC COMPANY
Phone 250
Elkin, N. C.

LAUGH AT WINTER!
SAVE MONEY!
ELIMINATE DRUDGERY!
INSTALL A MODERN
STOKOL
AUTOMATIC STOKER
FOR CONSTANT, CONTROLLED HEAT!
STOKOL, the engineered stoker, saves you hundreds of trips to the basement because it fires your coal burning furnace automatically, economically, and with little attention. Don't put up with another winter of uncertain heating—install your Stokol now while prices are low—terms to suit you. No complicated alterations to your present furnace—new bin feed model feeds from any angle. 20,000 installations prove Stokol superiority.
WITH A
STOKOL
YOU CAN FORGET YOUR HEATING PLANT
Elkin Plumbing & Heating Company
PHONE 254
ELKIN, N. C.