

# CHECKERBOARD LOVE

## JOSEPH M'CORD

### CHAPTER XI

**Synopsis**  
Audrey Swan, nicknamed "Cygne," is the daughter of a highly respected horse trainer whose farm adjoins Judge Castle's estate. 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 refuses to live in their beautiful country home—Judge Castle's wedding present. While Jeff is away, his friend, Vic Quinn, in love with Audrey, substitutes for him. Judge Castle closes his door to Jeffrey and makes Vic his partner. Jeff, tired of loafing, approaches Olive's father, Harvey Harrison, for a job, and agrees to start at the bottom, advancing only on merit. This does not please Olive, and she goes to talk to her father. In the meantime, Audrey has been talking to Judge Castle, and is just taking leave of him.

"I will. Thank you very much." And Audrey made her escape in some confusion.

When Olive Castle went downstairs to have her "understanding" little talk with her father, she found Mr. Harrison alone in his library seated in an easy chair reading a scientific magazine. He seemed unaware of her presence until she uttered an apt, "Daddy!"

"Yes?" He did not raise his eyes, but his daughter lost no time in coming to the point. "Will you please tell me what all this is about Jeffrey? He has been telling me some fantastic story about starting to work for you . . . as a beginning salesman! It's positively ridiculous! Starting out that way . . ."

"I don't see why, my dear. He admitted to me that he knew nothing about the business. On that basis, I scarcely could start him out as a department head. Harrison inverted his magazine on his lap, reached for his pipe lying on the table, and lighted it. "I believe it was your idea that I find a job for him, wasn't it?"

"Of course it was! Anything to get him away from the notion of settling down in that village office of his father. But I took it for granted that his education would fit him for some sort of an executive position with an office of his own. I won't endure it, I'm not sure Jeffrey will either, if he finds that he has to depend on his little pay envelope for his spending money. He has expensive tastes and practically nothing with which to back them up."

Harvey Harrison sat up with a jerk. There was a cutting edge to his voice that Olive seldom heard. "Let me tell you something, young woman. I have made two generous marriage settlements on you. It is too late to

do anything about it, except to warn you now that there'll never be a third. I have a great admiration for Castle. Your empty-headed set seems to think that marriage is some sort of a game with side trips to Reno thrown in. If you have something like that in the back of your mind again, understand once and for all that you're going to do the dirty work. You'll hire the lawyers and pay the bills. No more of it for the old man. I've some regard for my station, too."

For several weeks after that there was an armed truce between the younger Castles. For the most part, the topic of Jeffrey's new job was tacitly ignored. Several times he had spoken admiringly of the corporation that had its agents in almost every civilized country on the globe. He was enjoying his work, too. Olive was waiting for a time to put the situation to a test.

It came one Friday afternoon when there was a suggestion of spring in the air, a day when any lover of the outdoors would be longing for freedom. Dressed in a becoming sports costume, Mrs. Castle appeared in the lobby of the Harrison Products offices and smilingly inquired of the information clerk where she could find the sales department.

Olive had pictured the general sales manager as a wizened elderly gentleman with sharp features, who talked in terms of discounts. She was rather startled when she was ushered into the presence of a huge man with a smiling florid face, who hoisted himself from between the arms of his swivel chair with some effort. "How do you do, Mrs. Castle?" he boomed hospitably. "Is there something I can do for you?"

"Just a little bit of a favor," she explained coaxingly. "It's so beautiful out this afternoon that I have arranged for a foursome of golf at the country club. But I'll simply have to borrow my husband. Do you mind?"

"Oh, I see." Mr. Michelson was slightly taken aback. "Why, I should think we can let you have him."

"You are a nice man! Now if you'll tell me where I can find him, I won't bother you another second. Thank you so much."

"I was just going out to the main room," he explained. "If you will make yourself comfortable here I'll ask Mr. Castle to come over."

Jeffrey appeared almost at once. He was in his shirt sleeves, his vest was unbuttoned and he had a pencil behind one ear. "Hello!" he said in mild surprise, closing the door. "What's up?"

"Get your things. You're going out with me," his wife directed briefly.

"Going out? What's happened? Anything wrong?"

"Nothing serious. You're going out to the country club to fill in a foursome. Please hurry. We haven't any too much time."

"But this is Friday, isn't it?" Jeffrey looked puzzled.

"What of it?"

"Saturday's my half holiday. Not Friday."

"Don't always be tiresome. It's all right with your boss. You have his permission."

This brought a steady stare from Jeffrey's brown eyes. "Let's get this straight," he suggested quietly. "Are you telling me that you came down here to tell Michelson you were taking me golfing?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Well, it was kind of you. But naturally I'm not going. What would he think of me . . . not to mention the other guys here? No, thanks."

"Consideration for me comes last all the time now, doesn't it? You don't worry about what anybody thinks of me. Are you coming? It's the last time."

"Is the car out front?" I'll take you down."

"I'd much rather you didn't." She hurried out, leaving him standing where he was.

Jeffrey followed more slowly, without glancing in the direction of the stenographer who was staring curiously.

Out in the hall he met Michelson returning. "Hope you have a nice game, Castle. I wouldn't mind going eighteen holes this afternoon myself."

"Funny thing," Jeff returned in a flat voice. "Mrs. Castle got her dates mixed. Thought this was Saturday. Good joke, wasn't it?"

With the advent of spring, life seemed to get back more nearly into its old cycles for Audrey Swan. Jim Sweet had taken over the cultivation of the farm in capable fashion, the coming of mild weather also brought a number of riding pupils, and the loose boxes in the large barn opened their doors to arriving equine boarders. Once more there were horses grazing in the big pasture and taking their turns at exercising on the track.

In the house, Martha Swan went about her usual tasks. There was the spring house cleaning to supervise and her flower garden to be put in order with the aid of faithful Julia.

"This is no party at all," Mrs. Castle smiled. "It's only a little family dinner. And I believe it is served."

That explanation lingered oddly in Audrey's mind as Judge Castle seated her while Victor was performing the same courtesy for his hostess. Only four places set at the square table. Candles at each corner giving a subdued light, touching the dull polish on the table top, the rich but simple service. A maid waited on the guests tonight. The butler was not in evidence. It was a family dinner.

After a quiet period of conversation in the Judge's library afterwards, the two guests took their departure with Victor driving Audrey home in his car. It was Victor who voiced the thought that was uppermost in both their minds when they found themselves alone. "You know, Audrey, there was something rather pathetic about our little party, pleasant as it was."

"I know," she agreed in a low voice. "They were both trying to be gallant, but they're lonely."

"Quite different from our last dinner there. It will be a year next week."

"You thought of it, too?"

"Rather. It was a very important night for me. I met a Miss Swan there and I've never been able to get her out of my mind since."

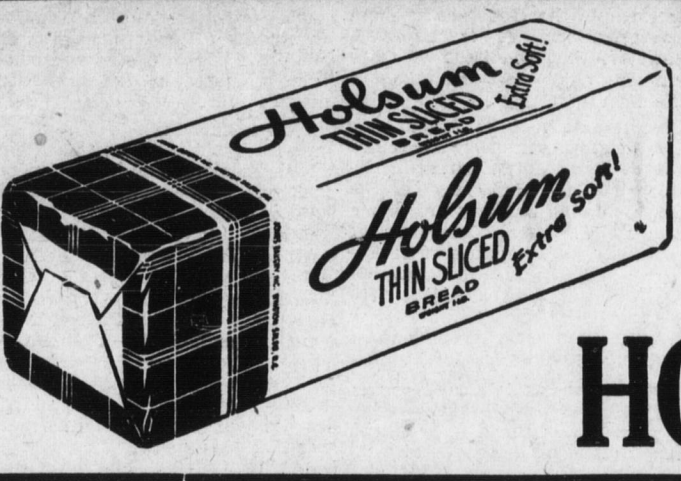
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### TODAY—(TUESDAY)—

IT'S ONE LONG, LOUD L-A-U-G-H!

Welcome back, Bill and Myrna! And thanks for your new funfest . . . it's simply hilarious!

William Powell Myrna Loy

I LOVE YOU AGAIN

with Frank McHUGH Edmund LOWE

Directed by W. S. VAN DYKE II

Screen Play by Charles Lederer, George Oppenheimer and Harry Kurnitz

A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture

News - Short — Admission 10c-30c

### WEDNESDAY—(Christmas Day)—

**'Quarterback'**

With Wayne Morris - Virginia Dale

Serial - Short — Admission 10c-15c

### THURSDAY-FRIDAY—

The year's slap-happiest, scrap-happiest comedy of young love!

Paramount Presents

JOAN BLONDELL DICK POWELL

"I WANT A DIVORCE"

with Gloria Dickson - Frank Fay

Directed by RALPH MURPHY

News — Admission 10c-30c

### SATURDAY—

Most spectacular outdoor thriller since "Northwest Passage"!

WOMING!

Starring WALLACE BEERY with LEO CARRILLO Ann RUTHERFORD Leo BOWMAN, Paul KELLY Joseph CALLEJA Marjorie MAIN

Serial - Shorts — Admission 10c-30c

### MONDAY—NEXT WEEK—

THE MADE-FOR-HAPPINESS HIT!

Mickey and Judy at the new high peak of their musical-comedy talents! Cast of hundreds in the joyously bigger successor to "Babes in Arms"!

LAUGHTER! MELODY! SPECTACLE!

MICKEY ROONEY JUDY GARLAND

**STRIKE UP the BAND**

with PAUL WHITEMAN and Orchestra

JUNE PREISSER WILLIAM TRACY

Screen Play by John Munk, Jr. and Fred Finklehoffe

Directed by BUSBY BERKELEY

Produced by ARTHUR FREED

A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture

News - Short — Admission 10c-30c

### WEDNESDAY—(NEXT WEEK)—

**"The Five Little Peppers In Trouble"**

ALSO BEGINNING NEW SERIAL

Admission 10c-15c

Admission 10c-15c

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