

CHECKERBOARD LOVE

JOSEPH McCORD

CHAPTER I

Audrey Swan had assumed an undignified pose for a young woman of two and twenty summers. Even if there were no one to see and she was partially screened by the trailing branches of a huge willow. She lay flat on her stomach with her sandaled feet aloft, blue slacks tumbling to her knees and exposing a pair of slim bare legs. Her determined little chin was almost touching the limp pool under a bank of Briar Creek and her right arm was immersed in it very nearly to the shoulder.

"A swell break for the fish!" jibed a drawing voice from across the stream. "Thought I'd taught you better."

Audrey scrambled into a sitting position. "Oh!" was her startled ejaculation. Then she delighted, "Hiya, Jeff!" With that cordial greeting, she smiled. Her nose quivered. It had a ridiculous fashion of doing that when registering pleasure, in addition to being small and slightly turned up.

Meanwhile, her grinning critic had sauntered down to the water's edge. A tall young man he was, with a brown face and hair that shone like brass as the sunlight bathed it. His hands were thrust in the pockets of a garishly checked green jacket. A shirt of the same color lay open at the throat. White ducks somewhat ruffled and a pair of leather sandals made up the rest of his informal attire. "Gave you a ring at the house, he volunteered—but your mother thought you'd

gone for a walk. Right away I figured you'd be mooning at the old trysting place. I must be psychic that way."

"That's what you think," Audrey retorted. "I came out here to read where it's cool . . . just stopped to chivvy a couple of minnows. I didn't even know you were back. Aren't you coming across?"

"Definitely. If I have to swim. Our tree still in service?"

"I wouldn't know. I suppose so." There was a sudden pensive expression in the girl's hazel eyes as she watched Jeffrey Castle turn and stride along the bank. A moment later she glimpsed his checked jacket through the foliage as he picked his way across a fallen tree trunk that long had done service for a bridge. Almost at once he came up and dropped down cross-legged in front of her, dark eyes alight with pleasure.

"Gee, it's good to see you, Cygie! You're sweeter than ever. Maybe I should clasp your hand . . . been a long time, you know."

"Yes. It has. But I think it would look pretty stupid to sit in a pasture shaking hands."

"One up on me as usual," Jeffrey lurched swiftly to his knees and before Audrey realized his design, drew her to him and kissed her. "You did hint," he accused amiably as he felt her stiffen in his embrace.

"I did not!"

"Don't let's argue, darling. It's too warm and we've too much to talk about," he soothed. "I must have kissed you before. The sensation is faintly familiar."

"At kid parties. When we didn't know any better."

"Well, I'm educated now. And travel does broaden one."

"So it seems. How's Europe?"

"Didn't you get my cards?"

"Rather. They weren't exactly informative." Audrey watched her companion speculatively as he stubbed his cigarette and tossed the butt into the water. When he gave no indication of further conversation, she ventured: "Everybody's expecting that you'll go into your father's office. It will be nice for both of you."

"Yeah?" There was a cynical look in Jeff's brown eyes. "Between pals, Cygie, I'm on a spot. You know the old gentleman gives most of his professional time to the circuit. Of course there's always some practice drifting into the office—routine

stuff from old clients and what-not. But Miss Annie can do the job a heap better. In fact, I doubt if I know enough law to win her confidence."

Audrey was forced to smile at that conceit and the picture it brought to mind, of elderly Anna Dadds who had been in Judge George Castle's office almost as long as anybody could remember.

"As a matter of fact," Jeff continued moodily, "I don't get much steamed up over the law. I suppose it's a good enough foundation."

"For what?"

Before he could answer a feminine voice came floating across the creek. "Oh, Mr. Jeff, please!" The call came from a young woman in a maid's cap and white ruffled apron.

"What is it, Christine?"

"The operator has been trying to get you, sir. It is a long-distance call."

"O. K. Be there in a minute. Botheration," he grumbled as he got to his feet.

Audrey was hugging her knees, staring at the trim maid strolling back leisurely toward the Castle house.

"What was it you said about the old trysting place?" she inquired dreamily.

"Nothing," Jeff growled. "I say, how about a little drive after dinner?"

"I don't believe I can . . . this evening."

"Fine," he grinned. "I'll come for you at eight." With that he started in direction of the bridge.

Audrey continued to sit motionless, thinking. It was good to see Jeff again. Almost two years since he had been back home, his last year in college followed by another doing Europe in the grand manner. That's what it was to be the only child of wealthy parents, instead of the one child of moderate circumstances. Jeff seemed to have changed very little, but Audrey had felt a vague disappointment. His plans for her indicated that he expected the two of them to drift into the old intimacy of long-ago vacations. Apparently he didn't realize that things were different now.

The Swans' rambling old house stood on a sixty-acre tract that once had been a portion of the Castle land, separated now by the winding reaches of Briar Creek. Judge Castle was a wealthy man in his own right and he had married money. Clipped hedges enclosed the formal gardens with their fountains and occasional pieces of statuary.

Young Jeffrey Castle was nine—Audrey's senior by less than a year—when he first chanced to see the "new girl" from the next house. Audrey proved to be a pleasant discovery. She was active and muscular, could throw a ball or hurl a stone with far greater accuracy than Jeffrey and could ride his restive pony at top speed without the benefit of saddle or stirrup.

Audrey's passion for books was another bond and the two friends spent many an hour in the Judge's library—when he was absent—lying prone on the big bearskin rug before a crackling fire—heads together over some illustrated volume, or reading apart as their fancies dictated. It was in one of these bookish sessions that Jeff chanced to discover that a young swan was a cygnet. From that day, Audrey was "Cygie." Today, it had been strangely pleasant to hear Jeff use the old name so naturally.

Jeff's first remark, after he had settled Audrey comfortably in his low-seated roadster, and started the motor, was a complacent: "Knew you wouldn't let me down. Where to, by way of celebrating the stranger's return?"

"How about the Ridge?" Audrey was prepared for that one. It meant a quick turning off, no parading through town. "It's still light enough to enjoy the view, I think."

Jeffrey said no more until he pointed the long hood of his car into the straight stretch leading to the Ridge. Cutting down his speed to—for him—a moderate rate, he asked abruptly: "Listen, girl friend, did I ever make love to you in any of my absent-minded moments?"

"It got by me if you did," was the cautious reply. "Why?"

"Merely mulling over what you said this afternoon. Sounded as if I was a rejected suitor or some such . . . that you were trying to let me down easily. We've been pals for so long that I couldn't quite make myself believe you were trying to tell me that we were washed up. That wasn't your idea by any chance, was it?"

Audrey drew a long breath. "It's like this, Jeff, you're not here on vacation this time. You'll have to carry on as one of the Castles. It's a putrid thing to say, but I'm not sticking to my neck. And it's not altogether on my account . . . if you know what I mean."

"I know what you think you mean," Jeff considered. "It's the bunk."

"That's sweet of you. But you know better. Everybody's been used to seeing us pal around together as kids. But now they'll start rubbing their hands together. I've been around here more than you have. I know."

"Yeah? Now that you bring it up, I must have read a heart-twister like that. Maybe it was

in a movie. Something about a wistful little girl who never sniffs, lives on the wrong side of the tracks, and she comes from . . ."

"Poor but honest parents," Audrey helped.

"Poor but honest parents," Jeff repeated dutifully. "Of course she isn't good enough for the boy's folks who are tottering around proudly under a load of jack, most of which they never earned. Slush is right! Candidly, Cygie, you make me sick."

"Sorry. But you get the idea. Only the girl doesn't apologize for her folks. Her dad's quite the nicest Britisher that ever shoved off to the mainland. Just the same, he's horsy. That makes a lot of eyebrows go up. Oh, I'm aware it would be perfectly all right if Dad owned a big racing stable and grabbed the Derby and the Belmont Stakes so often that it bored him. But he's only a trainer . . . although he is a darned good one. And I'm sort of an exercise boy myself."

"You still make me sick, darling. You never were much good at dissembling. What's the man's name?"

"You wouldn't know him."

"I got that phone call," Jeff observed. "A girl friend in the city. Maybe that will fit in with your new complex."

"I think it's splendid."

"Her name's Olive Cooper . . . nice femme. Met her in Switzerland. Traveling with her mother who's also a pleasant person. Odd, you know, but my itinerary sort of fitted in with theirs, so we saw quite a bit of each other. There were a good many little things I could do for them and they seemed to appreciate it no end."

Audrey smiled to herself in the gloom. "You didn't have to build up such an elaborate defense. Of course you all came back on the same boat and of course they invited you to call."

"You're a big help, Cygie, but I insist on finishing my story. I found we not only have a lot of mutual friends, but Dad has done considerable business with Olive's father. Well, I rounded up some folks on the way home for a little house party over this week-end."

I thought it would be rather nice, after talking to Mother, if . . ."

"If you gave Olive a call. I think so, too."

"Yeah? Well, I merely put the call through. Mother did the inviting. But Olive will be here Friday. So I'm counting on you."

"For what?"

"Dinner that evening," Jeff informed imperturbly. "I want you to help me show Olive a good time. There will be a couple of other girls in the bunch, but one's married and the other might as well be, and they'll have their destinies along. So that leaves . . ."

"You," Audrey furnished before he could finish.

"That's right. Also a school pal . . . Vic Quinn. You'll find him as comfortable as an old shoe. And you'll like Olive. She's keen on horses and is bringing her riding things."

Audrey sat motionless. At length she said hesitatingly: "I guess you can't help being sweet, Jeff, but you do make me feel like a little rotter. The only excuse I can drag out is the one about being a woman. I know it's outmoded."

(Continued Next Week)



MILLER-JONES
famous
CONSTELLATION
Silk
HOSIERY

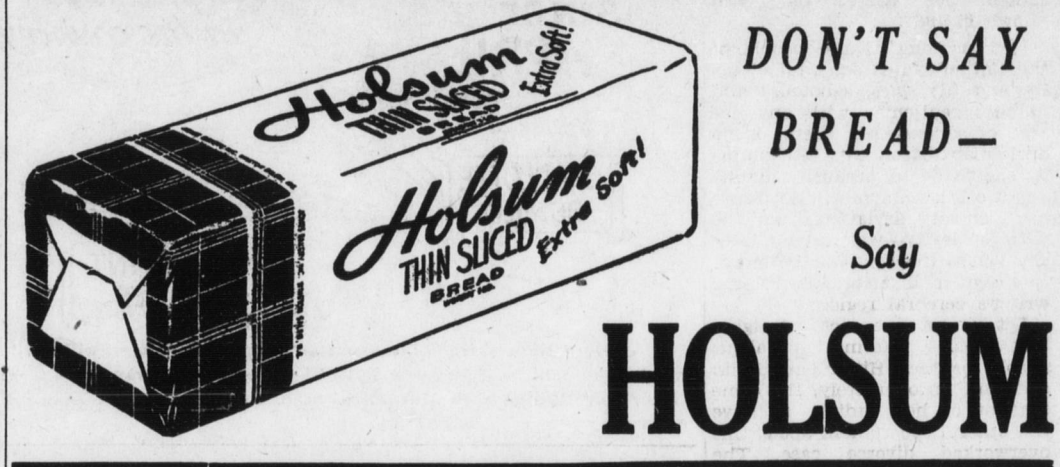
Sensational Value!

Lustrous 3-Thread Tisha; smooth textured, firmly knit with hair-line seams. Every pair first quality. All the newest colors.

79¢

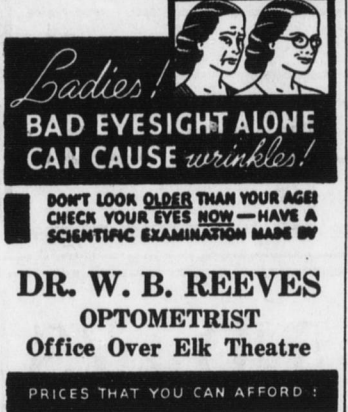
For long wear with smart looks we say Em-Jay Service weight . . . 69c
For sheer chic and economy try our Budget Chiffons . . . 59c

MILLER-JONES
SHOES . . . HOSIERY
E. MAIN ST. ELKIN, N. C.



Holsum
THIN SLICED
BREAD

DON'T SAY BREAD—
Say
HOLSUM



Ladies!
BAD EYESIGHT ALONE CAN CAUSE wrinkles!

DON'T LOOK OLDER THAN YOUR AGE! CHECK YOUR EYES NOW—HAVE A SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION MADE BY

DR. W. B. REEVES
OPTOMETRIST
Office Over Elk Theatre

PRICES THAT YOU CAN AFFORD!



JACQUELYN BODDIE
FAMOUS AUTO STUNT DRIVER


THOSE EXTRAS IN SLOWER-BURNING CAMELS MAKE A GRAND DIFFERENCE TO ME. MY THROAT LIKES THE EXTRA MILDNESS—AND MY POCKETBOOK LIKES THE EXTRA SMOKING

GET THE "EXTRAS" WITH SLOWER-BURNING CAMELS
THE CIGARETTE OF COSTLIER TOBACCS

EXTRA MILDNESS
EXTRA COOLNESS
EXTRA FLAVOR

In recent laboratory tests, Camels burned 25% slower than the average of the 15 other of the largest-selling brands tested—lower than any of them. That means, on the average, a smoking plus equal to

5 EXTRA SMOKES PER PACK!



Ask Any Flagship Pilot About This Raincoat!

Chosen Over All Others by American Airlines for

- Utmost Protection
- Light Weight
- Smart Style

It's A Genuine Waterproof **ALLIGATOR** \$7.50

You don't need to be a Flagship Captain or First Officer to wear this famous Alligator raincoat! We have it in your exact size and color preference, smartly styled, thoroughly comfortable, absolutely waterproof! And the price is so modest there's no need to compromise on a raincoat of lesser quality. Better get yours now, because . . . it's sure to rain!

Other Alligator Raincoats \$5.75 to \$26.50

ELKIN CLOTHING COMPANY
QUALITY MEN'S WEAR
Fred Sale — Phone 361 — Zimmie Thorpe

HOMES AND LOTS FOR SALE

IN

Shugart Farm

\$300.00 cash and \$20.00 per month will build you a new home on a lot 100' x 285' located in the Shugart Estate property, one mile from Elkin and a half mile from Jonesville, on the new Winston-Salem highway No. 67, just a few feet outside of city limits of Jonesville. No city taxes. This pays for your house and lot, built by plans and specifications drawn by a competent architect and approved by the FHA. The FHA inspects this house during construction to see that it is built according to the plans and specifications as approved by them. In this way you will get a good house and a well located lot. The lot also has been approved by the FHA. You can pay half of your \$300.00 payment down and the other half when you move into the house. I will have plans and specifications on the property at three to five o'clock Saturday afternoon, October 19, 1940, then you can inspect the lot and the house that goes on it. If interested in a nice home come out Saturday afternoon and discuss the matter anywhere from three to five o'clock P. M. with John C. Graham. He will have the plans and specifications for 3 houses which have been approved by the FHA.

LOTS FACE ON WINSTON-SALEM HIGHWAY NO. 67. ALL LOTS ON HIGHWAY RESTRICTED TO HOMES COSTING NOT LESS THAN \$2,000.00 AND FOR WHITE PEOPLE ONLY. ALSO OTHER RESTRICTIONS.

LOTS AND HOMES CAN BE BOUGHT ON EASY PAYMENT F. H. A. FINANCED AND YOUR PAYMENTS WILL BE ABOUT PLAN. ALL HOUSES CAN BE THE SAME AS RENT.

So Why Pay Rent?

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION BE AT THE SHUGART FARM JUST EAST OF MR. WILL SHUGART'S HOME SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19th FROM 3 TO 5 P. M., OR WRITE:

Joe W. Johnson
WACHOVIA BANK BUILDING WINSTON-SALEM, N. C.