

# JOANNA

*The Story of a Modern Girl and a*

# Million Dollars

By H. L. GATES  
CHAPTER I.

## Miss Twenty-Seven of the Silks

"**B**E good, little girls! Dab your noses and put on your smiles. Good Morning is coming."

It was a wonderfully sweet voice, and solemn. But there was the flavor of a laugh hidden in the mock solemnity. That was a trick of Joanna's. She had adopted it from someone. Joanna adopted all tricks of manner that promised to be successful additions to her own original store of them.

Obediently, the young women who flanked Joanna behind the silk counter, a bevy of sheer, sinuous young persons made in variations of the incongruous pattern of the day, dabbed their noses, softened the craftiness of their too-wise eyes, and shaped smiles about their grotesquely scarlet lips. It was each day's preparation for what was a daily ceremony—the ten o'clock visit to the silk counter of "Good Morning."

"Good Morning," it may be explained, was, in a more definite way, Mr. Leroy Harkness, an imposing gentleman of sleek grooming risen to the dignity of a long-tailed coat, and tremendously impressed by his responsibilities as arbiter of the world's events and, incidentally, the autocratic Buyer who rules the destinies of the silk department. Promptly at ten o'clock each morning—the store opened at nine—Mr. Harkness, freshly magnificient, tapped his fingers on the spread of the silk counter, encompassed each of the young women behind it with a friendly, condescending glance, and said to them collectively: "Good Morning."

There was much rivalry among the servitors of satin as to which of them first would see "Good Morning" down the aisle and announce his coming. And if, by any chance, "Mr. Good Morning's" eyes rested a little longer on one rouged face than on another among his silk counter nymphs, why, there was a full day's scandal ahead.

It happened often; too often. Joanna herself had been bothered a bit, of late, because "Good Morning" had fallen into the habit of looking at her, more and more speculatively. The morning before she had decided she could not ignore that meaningful look in the Buyer's eyes any longer, and had tilted her chin at him. She was prepared to do it again.

**B**UT, strangely, "Good Morning" was not approaching in his usual languid majestic manner. His expression was stern, as if he carried new matters of importance. He didn't stop at the next counter, but came right along.

"Good Lord," exclaimed the young person on Joanna's right. "He has a grouch. Somebody's in for it!"

Joanna struck her pose. Joanna had many poses, one for every circumstance. For "Good Morning" she had rehearsed a way of elevating her chin, putting one hand to the back of her head so that her elbow and forearm would show off well, and fixing the other on her hip. The effect in her mirror had been extremely satisfactory. But her hand fell from her hair and the one at her hip flopped down suddenly.

Mr. Harkness had no good mornings for any of them. He walked directly to where Joanna stood and stopped, abruptly facing her. There was neither smile nor smile in his half closed eyes. Once he had interrupted an unfortunate shoplifter and had looked at the trembling young woman in just that manner.

"Miss Jonna," he said, his words sharp and evenly cold, "have the goodness to go at once to Mr. Graydon's office. You are to be spoken to, by Mr. Graydon himself, at once, if you please."

Pencils dropped to the floor behind the silk counter unnoticed. Eyes stared. Blank faces turned upon the startled girl. And she stared into the fatuous face of the man across the counter as if he had woven her in some evil spell.

Mr. Harkness was no longer. "Mr. Good Morning." He was an ogre; the serif of a tyrant and heart of a tyrant's summons. He stood there, cold, immovable, piercing. Waiting, waiting for Joanna, Joanna of the gold brown hair that had watched him on other mornings, to hurry away at this unheard of bidding!

For, so far as the record was remembered at the silk counter, no other girl employee had been sum-

**T**HE buyer's fingers began to drum, warningly, on the counter. A summons to the office brooked no delays. He didn't know what the summons was about, nor why, nor how the Old Man so much as knew the name of the important Joanna who, despite that gold brown hair and the captivating poses, was, after all, only "No. 27 in the silks." Graydon, owner of the city's largest department store, was not the sort who knew certain ones of his hundreds of young women clerks by name. A few of the managers were that sort; not Graydon.

"I believe I said 'at once,'" Miss Twenty-Seven. "Mr. Harkness repeated, icily. "I should advise that you interpret that as meaning 'now'." And then he added the after thought that brought quiver to the grotesquely scarlet lips: the quiver that the girl bit at and repulsed viciously: "I fancy, Miss, that the other young ladies will conduct the counter satisfactorily until you return from your interview."

Joanna could have choked him for that. Even in her trouble she remembered the different tone of him and the different light in the eyes of him on the morning of the day before when she flushed under his fawning. He knew, she reflected, that she was going up to the taunting dignity of being dismissed by the owner. His code demanded that he have no consideration for even such a one as she, if she were to go into the owner's black book. But Joanna was Joanna.

"So sweet of Mr. Graydon to send you along for me!" she murmured. "We were discussing you just last evening, you know—Mr. Graydon and I. We was telling him what a nice little boy you are—and shall you run along now, or shall you show me the way?"

If she was going to be discharged she'd leave behind her something to be remembered by! She'd wanted a long time to shoot something like that at the supercilious "Mr. Good Morning." She glared in the smothered gash which choked in the throat of the girl standing next her. Harkness snorted, in the way buyers have before the ridicule of their young ladies, and turned away. He would banty no words; not with one about to achieve disgrace through the Old Man himself.

**A**T the first sound of the shop girl's voice, the secretary became immediately vocal. Joanna affected disdain, and failed in the pretense miserably. The flit of her slender shoulders was

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