

JOANNA

Story of a Modern Girl and a Million Dollars

Beautiful JOANNA MANNERS, clerk in the bus, is about to appear before her employer, MR. GRAYDON, who delivers an order for a diamond bracelet, the owner of whose identity she is not to know, has \$100,000 on deposit at the Metropolitan Bank, and will give her a personal check. Graydon convinces her there are no obligations and has his hands full with the girl.

JOANNA's old friend, DREW EGGLESTON, Graydon's old friend, offers to share her fortune with JOHN WILMORE, her fiance, but he is determined to earn his own way.

At a brilliant social affair, the FRANCIS MANNERS, the husband of the woman who introduces her to YVONNE COUTANT, famous society divorcee, whose partner, RODDY, she will try to win for Joanna. He knows Bradon's secret.

JOANNA goes to the ball, where she meets MR. DOROTHY MARKS, MR. PENDLETON and LORD TEDDY DORMINSTER, who loses no time in courtship of Joanna.

JOANNA arrives at Eggleston's home. After she leaves, he stands for a long time before a large old painting of a girl who resembles Joanna.

By H. L. Gates
CHAPTER XXI
The Golden Girl

A VILLAINOUS beam of midday sun found a crevice between the rose-hued drapes that were intended to keep it out from whatever secrets were within their windows, and made straight for the face that was almost lost in a mound of pillows—pillows of exquisite lace, and silk from golden looms.

The vagrant beam gloried in its discovery, in the shimmer it aroused in gold-brown hair, in the velvet white and the startlingly youthful contours of the face so invitingly nestled to its caress.

Brown lashes fluttered under the sun ray's provocation and a bare white arm, velvet like the face, crept out from some place underneath the shimmering hair. The slender form outlined under the web-like coverlet was also of a silken lace that may have been priceless, stirred and straightened, revealing the symmetries that were just curving away from boyishness.

A voice that was drowsy, but not without its note of petulance, asked: "What time is it?"

Out of the unnatural darkness of the room made by the drawn curtains, another voice, clearly that of a patient servant, answered: "It is not quite 10 o'clock, Mademoiselle. Shall I open the curtains, Mademoiselle?"

Again the sleepy voice from the depths of the huge, soft bed: "If you please, Martha."

Martha, very neat and prim in gray morning garb, rose from the edge of the chaise lounge, where she had perched silently through two hours of waiting for the beautiful form in the bed to stir, and pulled the curtain ropes. Like a yellow flood the transfiguring Riviera sun burst through the nest of broad windows that curved out from the room in a semi-circle, all shut off together by the heavy shell pink drapes. Bewildering, exotic odors of orange, mimosa, and clematis filled the room with the sunshine, each separate fragrance seeming to bring up from the calm Mediterranean down below some ineffable perfume of March morning romance. When Martha turned from the windows the voice from the bed, not sleepy now, but alert, rippled:

"It ought to be dreadfully cross with you, you know, for letting me sleep so late," it said in mock severity. "But I suppose you will say that I looked so comfortable you hated to disturb me."

Martha, American from head to toe despite her 'mademoiselle' and her French ribbons and ruffles, looked down on the girl in the big bed, a gleaming, glittering bed of golds and pinks and blues mounted on a dais under a gorgeous canopy of gold lace against pink taffetas. Martha seemed to hover, for a moment, at the edge of a scolding, but dutifully remembered, that after all, the girl in the bed, whose eyes were twinkling up at her, was 'Mademoiselle' and she was Martha. So all she said was:

"Mademoiselle did not return from Prince Michael's until 3 o'clock this morning."

"That's so," agreed the voice, emphatically, as if suddenly reminded. "There was an affair last night, wasn't there? And something happened. I know something happened, because something always does when Michael feels the urge. And Michael was urged, last night, Martha. Very urged. While you run my bath I will try to remember what about. Maybe it was me. If so, I will tell you about it while I splash."

While Martha busied herself with the taps over the pink marble pool in a glistening shower-room, the girl in the bed sat up, drew up her knees until her elbows could rest on them and her chin on her wrists. Her brow wrinkled a little, as if trying to remember. The warm sunshine wrapped the cuddled figure in yellow splendor. Thin shadow lines from the diamond patterned bars of the clematis trellis outside the windows romped through the filmy, diaphanous chiffon of the girl's pajamas and twisted about her like mischievous fairy arms. Suddenly the puckered brow cleared and a laugh that was as vibrant as music rippled at red lips.

Martha turned off her taps, satisfied at last that the water was just warm enough—her mistress ever refused to brave a cold shower—and went up to the bed, a flaming yellow robe of transparent silk over her arm, tiny satin boudoir mules in her hand. While she knelt at the bed dais to slip the mules on bare feet, and then stood to receive the slim form in the fold of the robe, the voice promised:

"If you haven't made the water too cold, Martha, I'll tell you what it was that happened last night as soon as I'm in. If it's cold you shan't know a thing."

When the robe had fallen and the pajamas had been tossed, rolled into a ball, at Martha's head, and the splashing in the marble pool was begun, Martha was merrily informed:

"I stole Prince Michael, Martha."

Actually took him right out of Yvonne's arms, almost.

that is, figuratively speaking or something like that, and ran away with him. Mad flight over the boulevard by the sea at midnight, across Monaco and up the stone road into the Alps. Ooh! Martha, you made it almost too cold. Please turn on a little more warmth! It was thrilling, Martha, that wild ride through the moonlight, all alone with the Prince—alone except the driver and he didn't count, of course. And Michael was in a real moonlight mood, too. Because, there, now it's too hot. Why don't they make water just right!

"Because, Martha, we were running away to be married in Genoa at dawn and all that sort of thing, and we were to come back and face the Grand Duke Nicholas in his villa at Nice and say, 'Lo and Behold, Sir! If there's ever another thing in Russia here's a new princess to hang on it!' That's what happened last night Martha, because Michael had the urge."

Martha's eyes widened and she laughed at her. "Oh, I shall keep his eyes engaged; don't fear Martha. He is much too experienced to examine the corners of a young lady's chamber. Or to show it, at any rate."

When young Lord Dorminster appeared at the bedside Joanna ignored the cloud that hinted his dissatisfaction with his long solitude in the boudoir sitting room, and frowned up at him without so much as giving him a fingers.

"What a terrible man you are," she accused him, "to begin to invent me so early in the morning. Invent me some good reason at once or go away."

"But you told me last night that I might come. At nine, we agreed. You promised to ride to San Remo. It's a gorgeous morning, too."

Joanna considered him judiciously. "Do you know," she said, "you are the most beastly thing I could imagine! You have the most disagreeable habit of reminding one in the morning of what foolish thing she says at night. That's not fair, Teddy. Things are so different in the morning!"

"You say you don't expect me to forget all those things you said to me last night so soon as this morning?" he demanded, incredulous.

"Of course," she assured him. "I have, anyway. What did I say last night, Teddy? Here, sit down. You mustn't stand over my bed like that. Hold my toast. If you're good you can feed me a bite now and then. What did I say last night, Teddy?"

"You said that you were really becoming fond of me and that after a little while you'd talk seriously with me—about our future, you know."

"I really said that? Give me a bite of toast and let me think how to explain such a distraction."

He was gloomily silent while she disposed of a tiny nibble of her toast. His morseness was so amusing she had to laugh at him, and she reached a finger to his lips, careless of the dropping away from her arm of the robe Martha had wrapped about her. "There now!" she said, "I remember. I had just had a glass of burgundy with Roddy Kenilworth. When he wants me to be very generous Roddy always inveigles me up to a sip of burgundy. I detest Roddy for that, but I did promise him I'd play tennis with him this morning. That was such a good promise, Teddy, it delighted him so, that I gave it to you too. If a promise is good one should repeat it, don't you see?"

"No, I don't see," he declared, still morose. "But Roddy's out of it because I'm on deck and he isn't. But it's the other thing you told me that I hope you haven't forgot."

"You mean about my getting fond of you? That doesn't require any immediate making good, does it, Teddy? All right then, we won't forget that. I'm terribly fond of you and maybe I'll marry you, who knows?"

She considered him a minute and

"He turned on me very fierce and solemn and just thundered at me. 'You knew we didn't have our passports. Why didn't you remind me?' He must have seen my lips getting crooked because he said, then, 'Joanna Manners, you're a fraud!' But I'm not a fraud, am I, Martha?"

"No, indeed, Mademoiselle!" Martha replied, but even her mistress detected more of hope than conviction in her tone. For one brief instant, while the faithful maid held the thin, yellow robe the slender little body was enfolded in her arms. The warmth and pulses of it went straight to her heart, and she wished that she could be sure that the girl she had served through a hectic, galloping year, was not—a fraud!"

The events of that tempestuous year had reached flamboyant climax; the distraught, mystified mistress Martha had sent down the stairs to her first triumphs in Yvonne's house off the Avenue had become the Golden Girl around whom a vortex raged, a glittering, luring feather of paradise in a world of money and madness. And down the secret recesses of Martha's soul there was a fear that she wished wasn't there. Perhaps this fear would have gained a little comfort or, perhaps, it might have been stirred anew, if she could have seen a hard, unpleasant shadow that passed swiftly across brown eyes when her mistress caught the note of prayer in her maid's assurance that she was not what the disappointed Prince Michael had dubbed her. But the shadow had gone completely when Joanna was propped again in her mountain of pillows. The sweetness was still in the voice when it commanded:

"Now you may bring me some tea."

For a moment the maid hesitated then announced: "Lord Dorminster has been waiting, Mademoiselle, for much more than an hour. He is in your sitting room."

Joanna was all resentment immediately. "Why didn't you send him away? What in the world does he mean by sitting on my doorstep? I mean sitting in my sitting room, at this hour of the day?"

"He assured me that Mademoiselle had told him he might be come for her at nine. He is in riding clothes."

"Well, I shan't pile out now for anybody. Put something around me that I won't show through and bring me in. I won't even give him any tea, but I'll make him hold my tray."

Martha spread a hasty glance around the room—a room that was all gold and pink, a spacious setting for the great golden bed, with its ceiling of limpid mirrors. There were countless feminine things about, lovely and expensive. Joanna saw Martha's roving glance and

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