

JOANNA

THE STORY OF A MODERN GIRL AND
A MILLION DOLLARS

Beautiful JOANNA MANNERS, a New York clerk, was given \$10,000 by an unknown benefactor, is lured by her fiance, JOHN WILMORE, celebrated architect, for CONSTANCE CONSTANTINE, whom she loves. Villa Ametis in France.

While JOSEPH BRANDON, wealthy nephew of his banker, ANDREW EGLESTON, inspects the structures being erected for Joanna, the fortuitous meeting of the two sets her heart. She is unmoved. Yvonne had played for him.

In Brandon's library hangs a large oil painting of a girl who resembles

JUDY BETTY WEMOUTH, asks him to distract the attentions of

WHEN Brandon hears that Joanna and Kenilworth are going to the clubhouses on La Grange, he follows. After a bold stand, Brandon confronts Joanna.

By H. L. Gates

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Test

WHEN the domineering figure loomed at her table Joanna looked up, curiously. When she recognized the unmasked face she started. The relieved greeting she would have given and one close to her, who might provide intimate companionship through the rest of such an exciting adventure, trembled for an instant at her tongue. But something in Brandon's face numbed her lips.

She rose to her feet, hand up, over hear breath, with a faint recoil.

The fear that she had never shaken off, crashed down upon her in a tumult—the unformed, unutterable

fear that came to her when he first touched her fingers at the table across from Eggleston in the bank when she had written her first check against her mysterious money.

"I am here?" she breathed. "I didn't know—have you been—?"

"I have only arrived," he said, his words suave but irritatingly ironic. "I am happy to find you—alone!"

Joanna knew, from his tone and his manner, that a climax portended. A climax of some sort; something associated with the night, with her, with whatever Brandon had stood for in his relationship to her since that day in the bank.

She sank back into her chair. Her face blanched. Her brain ached with the knowledge of an animal that in some mysterious fashion it has been caught in a trap. Before he spoke again she laughed, a short unmusical laugh, as if she were amused by the foolishness of her feeling, the utter ridiculous about it.

"I am alone only by chance," she said coolly. "I was here with Kenilworth. He has been . . ."

"I know," he broke in. "Some mountain bandits have taken charge of him and returned you here—so that everyone may know that for your relaxations you choose a so-

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SHED got to her feet silently and, when he had bowed his acknowledgment of her ascent, walked with him to the circular stairway that led to the mezzanine. At the door of the private banquet room he stood aside that she might enter ahead of him. A waiter met him at the door.

"We shall not be served," Brandon said to the man, "but, as I shall leave the door open, perhaps you will stand near to discourage loitering on the balcony."

Joanna faced him when he stepped across the threshold.

"Don't spend your wits in skirmishing," she challenged him. "What is it?"

He ignored her challenge for a moment while he lighted a cigarette, first offering her his platinum ash.

When he had evened his light to his satisfaction he went to the fireplace and dropped the burnt match into it.

For another moment he puffed calmly. Then he turned to face the girl.

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He threw the cigarette into the fireplace and faced her across the table.

"Be pleased to understand the import of what I am about to say," he breathed. "You have wondered where your money came from; you have wondered why it was given you. I am about to solve for you, at least a portion of your mysteries.

"I control the source of your money. I guard its secret and its reason and its purpose. I am the one to whom you have made your

who leaned back against the table in the center of the room.

"Would you mind," he asked, softly, deliberately, "telling me what is your general impression of me? Not an analysis of my character, please, but an expression of the quality of your regard for me?"

She replied without hesitation. "I am here to tell you, at last, that the play is over. As you have put your mask aside for the rest of the night, so your interesting little masquerade must be dropped. You came up here, I imagine, to color an amour. Instead you are about to discover—

that you know you are dishonest—dishonest with me, and with Yvonne who loves you. Is that the answer you want?"

"Not exactly, but it will serve. Suppose I should ask you to become my wife?"

"You used to tell me that, you might do that, some day. I've always had an answer ready. I'd never marry you because I could never love you. If I could love you, I wouldn't marry you because, by all the laws of decency, you belong to Yvonne whom you allowed to love you before you decided to laugh at her for her pretension that she would be worthy of you."

He examined his cigarette flame, and then drew in its smoke.

"That establishes our position toward each other," he observed, and was silent for another interval. "But the situation is that you are going to marry me, never-the-less, because you will have to."

She swayed. Her slender white hand went to her throat again. She knew he was not talking idly. She had gone through one sort of battle with Kenilworth, now, she sensed, she was at the beginning of another, and, in some unsuspected way, a more desperate one. She waited for him to hit at the door.

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