

# JOANNA

## CHAPTER XXI (Continued)

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 arm, tiny satin boudoir mules in her hand. While she knelt at the 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 it. 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 actually, 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 warm! 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. 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! Here is a new princess to hang on to!' That's what happened last night Martha because Michael had the urge."

Martha's eyes widened and she stared at the bare form splashing in the pool. "But, Mademoiselle!" she protested. "It didn't really happen, did it?"

"Don't be silly, Martha. One has to have a passport to cross the frontier from France into Italy, and one just can't smile one's way past those iron minded old fellows that stand on guard. Michael forgot all about that, he was so filled with me, and of course I didn't remind him of it. I had all the romantic thrill of a dash to become a bride knowing I wouldn't have to be a bride at all. Now you may cry me, Martha, but don't rub too hard. I could hardly keep from laughing when Michael lost his argument with the frontier guard and realized he wasn't having any nuptials in the morning."

Martha should have said, merely, "Yes, Mademoiselle!" with a maid servant's reticence, but somehow her mistress was never dignified during that morning bath. So she did not refrain from a prompting, "I should fancy so, Mademoiselle." And her mistress gratified her.

"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 of 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 climaxes; the distraught, mystified mistress Martha had sent down the stairs to her first triumph 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 in the secret recesses of Martha's soul there was a fear that she wished wasn't there. Perhaps this fear would have pleased 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 in my sitting room, I mean sitting in my sitting room, at this hour of the day?"

"He assured me that Mademoiselle had told him he might 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 him 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 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 dissatisfactions with his long solitude in the boudoir sitting room, and frowned up at him without so much as giving him her fingers.

"What a terrible man you are," she accused him, "to begin on 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 judicially. "Do you know," she said, "you are the most beastly thing I could imagine! You have the most disagreeable habit of reminding me in the morning of what foolish thing one says at night. That's no fair, Teddy. Things are so different in the morning!"

"Surely 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 sibble of her toast. His moroseness was so amusing she had to laugh at him, and she reached a finger to his lips, careless of the drooping 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 wanted me to be very generous Roddy always inveigles me up to a sip of burgundy. I detest Roddy too 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 sidled: "I'm glad you are holding my toast, Teddy. You take everything I say so seriously. Now then, get out of here. I'm going to be dressed. And, evidently since Roddy hasn't remembered this morning any better than I do, I shall have Martha bring me my riding toga."

## CHAPTER XXII Gossip

The dressing of Joanna Manners, each morning, when that young person condescended to put herself in the hands of her maids, was an important ceremony. It was not a

matter for Martha alone. Martha had never ceased to be the ever dependable, ever patient personal servant. Capable fingers were required for the toilet rituals of one who was no wa regnant beauty.

Even riding tops needed Celeste and Marie, celeste knew every wave and curl and vagrancy of the shimmering brown hair, and the precise point at which the red two near arch and retreat. Marie was an encyclopaedia of what went with what, and when the ensemble was worthy of its details. Between the necessities of both of them their mistress found ample time, each morning, to scan her daily portion of mail.

Always at hand, there were cards from acquaintances, from jewelers, milliners and florists. To be a parveyor to the needs of the Mademoiselle Joanna was along the Riviera, something like a matep from royalty. It was Marie's duty to put all bills in a bunch, when her mistress had glanced at them, and send them to the bank, in New York. Celeste watched over the engagements her mistress made, and was in a hopeless mess over them. Once, when she was in such a fix, she pleaded with her mistress for help. Joanna told her, "You must learn, Celeste, that I am not to be asked to do anything I say I'll do. It would be thoroughly irresponsible."

So, while Lord Dorminster waited some place on the spacious ground of Villa Amette, Celeste and Marie prepared her for her riding toga and Joanna ran her morning's post through her fingers. Only one letter interested her. When she came to this one she dropped the others into a tray held by Marie, and put the one into her dressing table.

She would put it aside until her maids were finished with her, or until she could dismiss whoever was near at the moment. Then she would close her eyes and sit, very still. Her mind would leap backward and out of her memories summon a procession of things that had happened. She was very careful in her marshalling of this parade. She omitted nothing. In every letter she received with that mark of the bank on the outside she feared there might be the wiping away of all the mystery of her money, or perhaps, its explanation. She knew, although Eggleston had not encouraged her in this belief, that the explanation would come, some day. And, always, she wanted to be prepared for it. Brandon, still a sinister shadow who had ever been in the background, had toyed with her in New York, had smiled ironically, whenever she reproved him, and gradually, had wrapped some sort of a net about her which almost strangled her. Kenilworth had been devoted to her, sentimental, brooding, sometimes earnest and sometimes passionately bitter, but Brandon had never lost his head. Kenilworth had said, that first night in New York, that he was going to "play for her." She had accepted the challenge. He had ceased playing and was frankly struggling to break through her battlements.

But Brandon controlled her. This she must always admit, in the end. Once or twice, she would remember, they had had a conflict. She had drawn upon every item in her store of artifice and had gambled her lure against his mastery, and, each time, she had almost been the victor. Both times she had brought things into his eyes that were revealing, and too dangerous for her to fight against. His obscure, but seemingly malicious power dominated her again, because she would not risk tempting him.

When she had measured herself through the passing of the year, and weighed the meaning of each step and its influence upon her, she would open her letter and read it. As usual, what she feared, was not in the one that Marie had handed her while Teddy Dorminster waited some place out on the grounds. It included, however, a paragraph which she read over and over again.

(To be continued.)

## BALL PLAYER KILLED

ST. PAUL, Minn., Feb. 27.—Otis E. Clymer, former major league ball player was killed here tonight when his motor car plunged through a bridge railing and fell 50 feet.

Clymer was 50 years old and played with Pittsburgh, Chicago and Boston in the National league. He also played with Minneapolis in the American association.

## NOTRE DAME WINS

SOUTH BEND, Ind., Feb. 27.—(United Press)—Notre Dame laid a strong claim to state and national basketball honors in defeating the strong Franklin college quintet here tonight.

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