

description of a Mrs. Despard who was said to be an intimate friend of Sinclair. Clare had already suspected that the fourth member was Delroy himself.

Neither of the men could be found at their apartments, so that Clare decided to turn her attention for the present to Mrs. Despard.

Mrs. Despard, she soon found from *Gossip*, had come from no one knew where, but with letters sufficiently good to admit her to at least a substratum of society. *Gossip* had it also that Mrs. Despard was reputed to owe much of her dashing good looks to a beauty parlor, the Futurist Beauty Shop, as it was called, managed by a Mademoiselle Fleurette.

More than that, the inquisitive public went on to say that Mrs. Despard had been undergoing a complete treatment at the hands of the "Futurists." At least that was the explanation of her frequent presence there and of her recommending the place on every occasion.

AS far as Clare could find out, Mrs. Despard was not a bad-looking woman and it was difficult to see how she expected to be improved by cosmetics that would lighten her complexion, bleach her hair, and the other defect, real or imagined. Still, the fact remained that recently she had dropped out of her social life altogether. Some had said that she had gone to Europe; others to a sanitarium to rest after a hard season. But it was clear that in reality she was living obscurely in New York, apparently making daily and long visits to the Futurist Beauty Shop. At least that was what *Gossip* said.

The mention of the beauty parlor of Mademoiselle Fleurette interested Clare. She opened the telephone book to look it up. It was on the street and near the same corner where the cab had stopped the night before.

Clare quickly seized the clew for what it might be worth. She would go there, determined even on a thorough course of "decorative surgery" if it should prove necessary in the pursuit of Norma.

The Futurist Beauty Shop was indeed all its name implied—a temple of the cult of beauty up to, if not ahead of, the minute in its effort to satisfy what was more than health, wealth, and happiness, the fundamental feminine instinct for personal beauty.

As Clare stepped out of the private elevator, a delicate scent as of attar of roses smote lightly on her and there was an exotic warmth in the air.

Everything, from the electric bulbs buried deep in clusters of amber flowers to the artificial leaves on the dainty green trellises, the little diamond-paned windows, the pure white enamel tables of the manicures and inviting wicker chairs and couches, bespoke rest and good taste.

There were cosmetic surgeons who were dangerous to life and limb in the practice of their "art." But as far as Clare could judge, Fleurette's only real ability seemed to be in putting on make-up in a most attractive, and, if desired, plausible manner.

Mademoiselle Fleurette hurried forward to greet her. Well-groomed was the first expression that flashed over Clare's mind. She was a creature of reinforcements from her puffy masses of dark hair to her gown which looked like a mould into which she had been cast, with nothing to spare. There was a faint yellow tinge to her complexion that was patently as artificial as her French heels and clocked stockings that shone beneath the slash in the draperies of her gown.

Mademoiselle and everything in her shop had a "tone" that was peculiarly and startlingly *chic*. It took Clare but an instant to see that she had carried the somewhat hideous influence of the unconventional Cubist and Futurist art even into dress and the beauty parlor. There was nothing that Clare had ever heard of from Paris or London too extravagant for Mademoiselle to be capable of—tinted faces, odd eyes, dimples that would last for a few hours, perfume injected into the skin itself.

"I'm all unstrung," confided Clare, with an assumed languor as she dropped into a chair. "A late supper after theater—and all that sort of thing."

Mademoiselle nodded knowingly. With her usual histrionic ability Clare had struck the right note instantly. She could be as blasé as the most jaded.

"A Turkish bath, massage, something to tone you up, my dear," Fleurette advised, leading Clare gently on.

With alert eyes Clare went patiently through the process of freshening, first in the steamy white room, then a deliciously cool shower, gentle massage, and at last rest.

On a chaise longue near her reclined a woman taking her favorite nepenthe, coffee with a safe complement of veronal. Languidly she nodded to Clare.

"Isn't it delightful to rest up here?"

Clare assented, but her quick eyes had told her that while this woman was of the type she was not the one she was looking for.

Suddenly her attention was arrested by a muffled voice on the other side of a low partition. Some one was talking over the telephone. Whether it was her suspicion that the voice was disguised or the fragments of the conversation itself, Clare strained her attention to catch the drift of the conversation.

"Everything . . . arranged . . . lovely . . . tell you all . . . Montmartre at four . . ."

Clare could not see the speaker, but there was something in the voice that set her thinking.

As she sank back again on her cushions, Clare longed to explore the beauty parlor, to leave the rest room and go down the narrow corridor prying into

A quickly suppressed look of surprise crossed the other's face.

"She has gone to Europe, I believe."

"Indeed?—I thought I saw her at the Charity Ball last night."

Fleurette shrugged her shoulders.

"It must have been some one else."

The conversation was at an end, but Clare knew that the woman had lied. There was some mystery here. How much did she know of it?

A HALF hour later, her head still in a whirl from the drug she had inhaled, Clare hurried from the temple of beauty. Her first thought was to discover what was in that cigarette which had aroused in her a sensation of which she did not dream she was capable. She went directly to Dr. Lawson.

While she waited, the next step was clear in her mind. Who was to meet whom at the Montmartre?



As Delroy rushed at her, Clare whipped an automatic from her handbag and covered him

the secrets of the little dressing rooms that opened into it, each with its dainty bed, dresser, and mirror. What did they conceal? Whose was the mysterious voice? Rather than incur suspicion just yet she decided to wait.

There was a feeling of luxurious well-being as she lolled back in the deep recesses of her chair. A maid brought a little silver box of cigarettes on a tray. Clare selected one and lighted it. From it exhaled a delicious odor.

Another whiff, and she knew that to finish it would be disastrous. A subtle warmth had begun to steal over her already. She could feel a strange, dreamy, reckless sensation tingling in every organ, as if she were floating along on a sea of voluptuous happiness. With a start she gripped herself—there in the haze of her day vision she saw the face of Billy Lawson, in one fleeting moment!

HASTILY, while no one was looking, she crushed the lighted end of the doped cigarette on the ash tray and stuffed the rest into the pocket of her bath robe. The possibilities of that gold-tipped cigarette dazed her.

"How do you feel now?" asked Fleurette.

"Much better, thank you," smiled Clare, looking up. "I am almost afraid of myself." There was a pause. "I suppose you have a large clientele?"

"Yes, indeed. Many of the most exclusive."

"Oh," exclaimed Clare taking the lead she had opened, "do you know Mrs. Despard?"

She must find out. It was of absolute importance. The opening of the laboratory door broke in on Clare's reverie.

"You'll be interested to know, Clare," remarked Billy, seating himself beside her, "that the cigarette you brought to me contains a good-sized portion of cannabis indica, Indian hemp—hashish."

"Hashish?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," Lawson answered, his attention on the trim lines of her figure and the alert sparkle of her eyes quite as much as on what he was saying. "A fresh fad from Paris, where several establishments, I hear, are in operation."

"What does it do?" she asked naively.

"It's one of the most singular and least known of narcotics," he answered frankly. "In small quantities it has a stimulating and exhilarating effect. In large doses it produces a dreamy state, verging on catalepsy, with motor and sensory disturbances of the spinal cord, really a sort of hysteria. An overdose might produce insanity. It is very accommodating—it can be taken as a powder, a liquid, or as a solid; smoked, chewed, eaten as a confection, or as a drink. But, to put it in plain English, in any case the user is no longer master of his thoughts, but the servant."

"Why," exclaimed Clare eagerly, "it is just the thing to rouse the wild demi-mondaine instinct that lurks in the back of the heads of some romantic girls."

"Exactly. It has a marked tendency for exciting the passions."