

MY BEARDED MAID

"But don't you think that what your maid says about suicide may be just the morbid fancy of an ignorant woman or the gossip of the kitchen?"

"Oh no, Gracieuse is a very discreet, sensible person. I believe her letter contains the true version of the tragedy."

"You know, of course, that people who take drugs are always inclined to augment them, as they get used to them, and Lady Dare might have taken a second dose, forgetting she had already had a previous one. Those things occur frequently. My suppositions are just as plausible as those of your maid."

"Yes; but, Médor, you don't know how Vi was gnawed at the heart by the fear of age. She had no children, no husband, no intimate friend except me, and there was a great difference of years between us. She had no aim, no work, no future, but just slow decrepitude, and that she feared more than death. It was not so much for my cousin Vi killed herself, as for her *last* lover."

"Poor soul," said the doctor again. "What a *triste chose*! not her death, child, but her brilliant life!"

We spoke no more. He sat by my side, holding my hand until the glorious crepuscule of Algerian night came through the open window. With the gentleness of the hour, my heart seemed to soften and become ready to receive sorrow. I felt an anguish creeping through my limbs, and my throat tightened. Médor, immobile, was looking at the violet sky. I lolled back on the pillow and closed my eyes, and, from under the pressed lids, my tears came.

When the lamps were lighted, Médor reminded me of