

roses. The scent of her, like musk and spice, was on the air. When she brushed her hair she talked to Rhoda, to that silent adoring image crouched on the floor with wide eyes and pale lips. At last Maata, shaking her powder puff, noticed. 'What is the matter, dear?' she said, and smiled at Rhoda who clasped her hands and smiled back. 'I never dreamed—no I never ever dreamed that you were so beautiful Maata. I never ever dreamed that your voice was so wonderful nor your movements—every supple movement—nor your skin so gleaming nor your hair. Your—your drowning* hair. I'd forgotten or just dimly remembered the way your little hands move, so sure and dainty—my little angel—everything about you ...'. But Maata sat forward and took Rhoda's heavy head in her hands and laughed. 'You mustn't flatter me so darling, really not.' And she said, still laughing 'Oh, it's so good to be spoiled, Rhody! But help me to dress now and bring me some of those violets out of the sitting-room. I'll wear them.' 'Yes, dear.' 'Thank you. How nice to feel your capable hands again. Were you surprised when Maisie and Philip were down at the station?' 'Yes, perhaps a little,' said Rhoda. 'I telegraphed them from Plymouth. I don't know *why* exactly, but you know they are such darlings—all of them—and they and you are my only people in London.' 'Of course, dear, I quite understand.' 'And then, at Plymouth today England suddenly stopped being Queen Victoria and turned into a most unworthy creature and I got homesick for some of my own people.' Rhoda brought her the violets. 'I suppose you're dreadfully disappointed that I'm going out tonight,' said Maata. 'But I can come with you to the gate can't I?' said Rhoda. 'Of course you can. But tell me, *are* you disappointed?' Rhoda looked down into Maata's half shut eyes. 'I do not allow myself to be disappointed. You are not to bother your wise head over me and my concerns. I am here to make you happy and to be with you when you want me, but I am not here to be like any other, remembering the world—just *considered*—because—'. Her eyes dropped and an expression of tragic caresses came into her face. 'Don't you understand little sweetheart—I love you. That merely to see you, to be able to—to put my hand on your coat like that and know it is warm with you ...'.