

of one's very own—something that belonged to you, and regarded you as being first in its small universe. She had treasured that thought, and had had at times a little foolish dream that she hugged to herself—a dream of an invisible child that sometimes seemed to trot along beside her through the streets, clinging fast to her hand. In busy streets she would step aside a little, that those who would have jostled her should not stumble against the child.

It had been just at that point in her life when she was beginning to look with shrinking eyes out into a future that was rapidly becoming clouded that Fortune, looking at her perhaps a little pityingly or a little contemptuously, carelessly tossed her a scrap of the good things of life. A prosperous man, to whose daughter she had been governess years before, and who had never seemed to take the least notice of her, save in a chaffing, rather familiar fashion, died, and left her a legacy. It was the most staggering thing that could have happened to her, and it was such a good legacy that it gave her a tiny comfortable income.

The only reason suggested in the will was that Priscilla Meadows had at one time nursed her charge through a dangerous illness, and had helped to bring her out of it alive; but then Priscilla had liked doing that kind of thing, and had expected no reward.

Fortune was evidently extremely pleased with herself over what she had done; she looked about her for something else that should suit Priscilla Meadows. And, being in a freakish turn of mind, did the very thing that Miss Meadows would most have desired.

Priscilla Meadows was living at that time, just after the receipt of her legacy, in a tiny boarding-