

ever there was a golden kiddie in the world you are she. Gold? Why, you've showered it on me. Luck? Why, I verily believe if you'd been around you'd have brought luck to Jonah when he got mixed up with the whale's internals.' And then, just as he finished, the bolt fell. The doctor came in from the next room and took him aside. Your mother was dead."

A sob broke from the listening girl, a great sob of sympathy for the kindly, weak, irresponsible father she had never known.

"Your father's disaster looked like my blessing. I had no regrets for the woman," Mercy went on. "He was mine now by every right. The thief had come by her reckoning. So I seized the opportunity that was thrust in my way. Mine was the right to care for him and help him in his trouble, nor have I shame in saying that I took it.

"But the curse of your life was working full and sure. But for your existence I should never have taken that step. But for that step other matters would never have occurred. When your father's—friend discovered what I had done his fury knew no bounds. His insults were unforgettable—at least by me. But I persisted. For a great hope was at work within me that now your mother was gone eventually Charles Stanmore might come back to his allegiance, and I might step into her place. It was a foolish hope, but—I loved your father.

"Bah!" she went on impatiently. "It is no use raking amongst those ashes. The details don't matter to you. Those things are dead. And only is their effect alive today. My hopes were never to be fulfilled. How should they be with the curse of your father's golden girl in-