

last of the cinders and turn to the door, there was a pungent smell of smoke in the room. she wondered if she would ever be able to cross that swaying, seething floor to open the window. she closed her eyes and listened with straining ears for the closing of the door. it came, and following it a sharp click as of the turning of a key. she looked up at the sound, and saw her mother come back to her. she was carrying something in one hand, something that dangled and cast a snake-like shadow. she came to the cowering girl and caught her by the arm. "now get up!" she ordered brutally. "and take the rest of your punishment!" truly dinah drank the cup of bitterness to the dregs that night. mentally she had suffered till she had almost ceased to feel, but physically her powers of endurance had not been so sorely tried. but her nerves were strung to a pitch when even a sudden movement made her tingle, and upon this highly-tempered sensitiveness the punishment now inflicted upon her was acute agony. it broke her even more completely than it had broken her in childhood. before many seconds had passed the last shred of her self-control was gone. guy bathurst lying comfortably in bed, was aroused from his first slumber by a succession of sharp sounds like the lashing of a loosened creeper against the window, but each sound was followed by an anguished cry that sank and rose again like the wailing of a hurt child. he turned his head and listened. "by jove! that's too bad of lydia," he said. "i suppose she won't be satisfied till she's had her turn, but i shall have to interfere if it goes on." it did not go on for long; quite suddenly the cries ceased. the other sounds continued for a few seconds more, then ceased also, and he turned upon his pillow with a sigh of relief. a minute later he was roused again by the somewhat abrupt entrance of his wife. she did not speak to him, but stood by the door and rummaged in the pockets of his shooting-coat that hung there. bathurst endured in silence for a few moments; then "oh, what on earth are you looking for?" he said with sleepy irritation. "i wish you'd go." "i want your brandy flask," she said, and her words came clipped and sharp. "where is it?" "on the dressing-table," he said. "what have you been doing to the child?" "i've given her as much as she can stand," his wife retorted grimly. "but you leave her to me! i'll manage her." she departed with a haste that seemed to denote a certain anxiety notwithstanding her words. she left the door ajar, and the man turned again on his pillow and listened uneasily. he was afraid lydia had gone too far. for a space he heard nothing. then came the splashing of water, and again that piteous, gasping cry. he caught the sound of his wife's voice, but what she said he could not hear. then there were movements, and dinah spoke in broken supplication that went into hysterical sobbing. finally he heard his wife come out of the room and close the door behind her. she came back again with the brandy flask. "she's had a lesson," she observed, "that i rather fancy she'll never forget as long as she lives." "then i hope you're satisfied," said bathurst and turned upon his side. yes, dinah had had a lesson. she had passed through a sevenfold furnace that had melted the frozen fountain of her tears till it seemed that their flow would never be stayed again. she wept for hours, wept till she was sick and blind with weeping, and still she wept on. and bitter shame and humiliation watched beside her all through that dreadful night giving her no rest. for she had gone through this fiery torture, this cruel chastisement of mind and body, all for what? for love of a man who felt nought but kindness for her—for the dear memory of a golden vision that would never be hers again. it was soon after nine on the following morning that scott presented himself on horseback at the gate of dinah's home. it had been his intention to tie up his animal and enter, but he was met in the entrance by billy coming out on a bicycle, and the boy at once frustrated his intention. "good morning, sir! pleased to see you, but it's no good your coming in. the pater's still in bed, and the mater's doing the house-work." "and dinah?" said scott. the question leapt from him almost involuntarily. he had not meant to display any eagerness, and he sought to cover it by his next words which were uttered with his usual careful deliberation. "it's dinah i have come to see. i have a message for her from my sister." billy's freckled face crumpled into troubled lines. "dinah has cleared out," he said briefly. "i'm just off to the station to try and get news of her." "what?" scott said, startled. the boy looked at him, his green eyes shrewdly confiding. "there's been the devil of a row," he said. "the mater is furious with her. she gave her a fearful licking last night to judge by the sounds. dinah was squealing like a rat. of course girls always do squeal when they're hurt, but i fancy the mater must have hit a bit harder than usual. and she's burnt the whole of the trousseau too. dinah was so mighty proud of all her fine things. she'd feel that you know pretty badly." "damnation!" scott said, and for the second time he spoke without his own volition. he looked at billy with that intense hot light in his eyes that had in it the whiteness of molten metal. "do you mean that?" he said. "do