

right. Laugh, mum! Laugh! Wish'd I'd half yer grit."

I had come to myself and only Billy knew, who was loyal. As the candle blazed up I saw the Chinaman gibbering like some toothless mask of yellow india-rubber, but that nurse still kept up her silly screaming, until I ordered her to shut her mouth, which she did in sheer surprise.

There lay Polly prone across the doorway on her face, racked with convulsive sobs, until feeling, I suppose, the lashing rain on her back, she rose on hands and knees like some forlorn wild animal crawling to shelter, while behind her stretched a trail of wet and blood. I stared until in shame she sat up, still for all the world like an animal lost to human feeling, and to a woman's dignity, until as she looked at me a wan shamed smile seemed to apologize. She sat back then against the log wall, limp, relaxed with weakness.

"Nurse," I called, still with my gaze on Polly, "this woman is wounded. You are a nurse. You claimed to be a nurse."

But Miss Panton indulged in hysterics, so I turned to Billy. "Run into the house, get the hip bath, warm water, blankets, bandages."