

The Lamp in the Valley

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

W. N. U. Service

Three women love Sidney Lander, Alaska mining engineer. He is engaged to Barbara Trumbull, whose rich father is contesting the mining claim of Carol Coburn, teacher at Matanuska. Lander breaks with Trumbull. Salaria Bryson, a big out-door girl,

also loves Lander. She disappears. Lander finds Salaria. Barbara misinterprets the rescue and flings away her engagement ring. Lander and Carol fly to Chaktana, scene of her claim. Someone shoots at the plane. It was Sock-Eye, a friend. He

thought it was a Trumbull plane. He told them Trumbull had sent Eric, the Red, for work. Eric, the Red, had annoyed Carol on several occasions and threatened her. The menace of Red seemed still present.

THE STORY SO FAR

INSTALLMENT XVIII

"That's the Big Squaw," he said with an unmistakable note of triumph in his voice.

Yet all I could see, in the distance, was a meandering ribbon of water, an uncertain thread of water muddy with glacial silt as it twisted between broken rock and gravel beds fringed with dwarfed birch trees and in the blue-shadowed distance lost itself in what must have been a small lake.

"There's no plane at Cranberry Lake," I heard him say. "And the Trumbull mine's shut down. Everything's empty there."

He stooped and handed me the glasses, pointing into the valley. I finally made out the mine buildings, deserted and idle. And in all the broken terrain beyond them I could detect no sign of life.

"I don't understand this," Lander said as he reached for the glasses again. And even as he spoke a sound that was neither a whine nor a whistle smote on my ears. A moment later the sound was repeated, followed by the splash of a bullet against the rock on which Lander was standing.

"Get back," he called out to me. "Keep low."

His own drop from the rock top was so abrupt that the binoculars fell at my feet. He motioned me down as another bullet whined overhead.

"So that's how they welcome us!" he said as his eyes narrowed and yet remained alight with a grim sort of humor.

Still another bullet cut across the top of the rock behind which we crouched.

"They're getting their range," my trail mate sardonically observed.

"But who is it?" I gasped.

"That's what I've got to find out," said Lander as he reached for his own rifle. But instead of bringing it into use he crowned the barrel end with his hat and slowly lifted it above the top of our sheltering rock.

There was a far-off report, and I saw the hat that had been on the barrel end whisked ten feet away. Lander, when he guardedly recovered it, found a bullet hole through one side of the felt brim. He looked at it ruminatively. Then he put the hat back on his head.

He sat in the rock shadow, studying the wide amphitheater of rounded and canyoned mountain slope that surrounded us.

"We'll crawl back," he quietly announced, "and come on him from another quarter."

"On whom?" I queried, trying in vain to match quietness with quietness.

"The man who's trying to murder us," was Lander's curt reply.

That backtrailing, however, turned into a quartering and cautious advance, once we had climbed to higher ground. We crept forward in a westerly direction, crawling closer and closer to the heights overlooking the Big Squaw and the empty mine buildings.

I was glad to sit and rest while Lander crawled cautiously forward and, through that tangle of willow, carefully studied the alley beneath him. He studied it for a long time. Then he crept back to my side, his somber eyes quiet without any look of satisfaction.

"Let's eat," he said as he reached for his discarded shoulder pack.

Instinctively I looked about for fuel; but he stopped me with a gesture.

Later we squatted Indianlike on the rocky floor of a sheltering bowl and ate as the shadows shifted and a wood-warbler twittered and hopped between the clump-willows.

"You'll have to stay here," Lander said. "I've got a little scouting to do. If anything should happen, give me a couple of signal shots from that six-gun of yours."

"But I can go where you go," I maintained.

Lander studied my face. Then he smiled a little.

"I don't want you in this," he said with a quiet but steely firmness.

"But if it's dangerous for you I want to be in it," I persisted.

"I know what I'm doing," he said. "And you've still got to believe in me."

He didn't even say good-by. He merely slipped over the edge of the rock and lost himself in the fireweed and balsam fringing the stream that went singing down into the lower valley.

I crouched behind my clump-willow, watching for some sign of him. I saw him at last, flattened Indian fashion in a narrow crevasse as he inched his way down into that hollow of uncertainty. He went very slowly.

Then my heart leaped into my mouth. A rifle shot echoed through the valley, tearing a hole in the silence. And before its echoes died away it was followed by another shot, and still another.

I saw Lander drop beside a boulder; and I thought, for one frantic moment, that he had gone down with a bullet through his body. But I could see him edge up over the crown of that boulder, with his rifle extended, pointing across a rock-

stippled stadium to where a small whiff of smoke was drifting off between a sprinkling of hardwoods. I could see him suddenly bend low and run toward the shelter of a larger boulder, where he again guardedly trained his rifle and fired at some undecipherable target.

I forgot my trail mate's warning and went scrambling over the shelf edge, groping for my six-gun as I went.

I knew it was dangerous, but I didn't much care. All I remembered was that I was Alaska born and my blood was up. I couldn't see a man killed for a cause that was essentially mine. To stand aside, at such a time, was more than cowardly.

I disregarded Lander's shout of warning and ran on, scarcely thinking of cover.

Then an odd thing happened.

Instead of the bark of a rifle I heard the bark of a voice, half in protest and half in anger.

"Sock-Eye," was the shout that fell on my ears. It came from the tall figure which was no longer crouching behind its rock shelter.



To stand aside, at such a time, was more than cowardly.

And that, I knew, was Lander, a startled and indignant Lander who wasn't even trying to wave me back.

"Sock-Eye, you old fool, stop it," was the repeated shout that echoed across the valley. And it was answered, a moment later, by a call that was halfway between the howl of a timber wolf and the ki-yi of a happy cowboy.

I could see the shaggy old figure that emerged from its hiding place and stood in startled wonder, staring at his equally startled enemy.

"I'll be hornsawgled if it ain't Sid Lander," cried the embattled old-timer as he lowered his firearm.

"And me a-tryin' t' blow him out o' the valley!"

"What do you mean by it?" demanded Lander, striding toward him.

Sock-Eye stood scratching his head, a picture of bewilderment touched with contrition. His wandering gaze fell on me and he emitted a second triumphant ki-yi.

Then Sock-Eye turned back to the taller figure confronting him, the squint of incredulity going out of his bearlike eyes as he studied the newcomer. Then he spat and leaned on his rifle.

"I thought you was that yellow-bellied coyote Trumbull planted in these parts t' do his dirty work for him."

"What coyote?" questioned Lander.

"That fire-eatin' Ericson," Sock-Eye answered. "He's still snakin' round this valley tryin' to ease the hate out o' his system by puttin' lead in folks."

This fact brought a frown to Lander's face.

"Then it was Ericson fired on the plane two days ago?"

I could see a look of guile creep over the seamed old face. Then a smile widened the brown-stained and slowly relenting old mouth.

"I reckon them pot shots came from me all right," he slowly acknowledged. "I was under the delusion it was Trumbull comin' back t' trump my ace when I had him already licked."

"You might have killed somebody," cried Lander.

The bearlike old eyes lost the last of their benevolence.

"There's jus' one snake, I'm aimin' for t' git," Sock-Eye slowly affirmed.

"And right now he's hidin' and huggin' a rifle somewheres between here and Cranberry Lake. And if you don't git him he'll sure git you."

Lander's narrowed eye studied the valley bottom.

"Why is he here?" I asked, chilled by the thought of unseen menace all about us.

"'Cause he's fuller o' venom than a cage o' copperheads," was Sock-Eye's deliberated reply. "He's so plumb sour with hate he can't see

straight. And Trumbull cashed in on that when he posted him here as an armed guard t' protect his property. It was like leavin' a trap set with pizen bait behind him."

"What did you mean by saying you had Trumbull licked?" Lander demanded.

Still again I saw the look of guile on Sock-Eye's crafty old face. His eyes, when he spoke, were not on Lander, but on me.

"I ain't got nothin' against college-dood engineerin'," he said. "Least-a-ways, when a high-collar ploodocrat tries t' change the face o' nature, there's always two can play at the same game."

"What do you mean by that?" Lander questioned.

"I mean, mister," was Sock-Eye's quiet-toned answer, "that I happened t' mush in here afore Trumbull and his survey officials dropped into this valley. They was bankin' on the Big Squaw t' show 'em ol' Klondike Coburn's claim couldn't lie along the crick bank where his patent sure said she ought t' lie."

I waited for Sock-Eye to go on. But as he stood silent for a moment or two, with a somber light in his crafty old eyes, he seemed to be turning a succulent thought over in his mind, very much as a squirrel turns a nut over in its paws.

"I reckon an earthquake must've run recent through these regions," he blandly suggested. "For there was the ol' Big Squaw, right back in the bed where she belonged. And when them engineerin' sharps got through with their maps and sightin' tools they sure had t' tell Boss Trumbull the mine was located proper and the claim stood as recorded. And the ol' skunk was so sprayed with his own scent that he—"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Lander, fixing the other with a steady eye. "How much dynamite did you pack into this valley?"

Sock-Eye scratched his head and spat. Then his leathery old throat shook with a chuckle.

"I reckon, tenderfoot," he observed, "I savvyed how t' handle blazin' powder afore you was born."

"Then it was you changed the course of the Big Squaw?"

"I put 'er back where she belonged," Sock-Eye stubbornly maintained, "where she was on the original survey."

"But that doesn't mean the issue's settled," contended my champion.

"Sure she's settled," Sock-Eye proclaimed. "Them govern'ment sharps flew out three days ago, headin' for Juneau t' register their findin' and confirm the claim. I'll lead you over t' the Big Squaw and show you where your location posts is all set reg'lar and your limits defined."

"Why do you say when the coast is clear?" Lander exacted.

"'Cause there's a hate-soured son o' misery skulkin' around behind them rocks," he announced, "and he ain't consorced with love for any one of us. Fact is, folks, we've got t' git under cover."

He turned and pointed toward a rock ledge that waved along the water-torn mountain slope. "I've got me a nifty little hide-out up that hillside there. She's tarp-roofed and bedded down with balsam and plumb out o' sight from pryin' eyes down here."

I knew a sudden sense of weariness touched with homelessness as I waited for Lander to retrieve our overlooked shoulder packs.

"You've had hard goin', girlie," Sock-Eye observed after a glance into my face. "But you've got your mine."

"It doesn't seem so important," I said out of my backwash of weariness.

Sock-Eye wagged a shaggy head. "I guess you're right, girlie. It ain't the gold that stacks so high in this game. It's the doggone joy o' diggin' it out. And I may as well tell you, straight out, she ain't no El Dorado. There's a showin' of color all right. But accordin' t' the test pits I put down she's going to run thinner than your ol' pappy counted on."

Lander plainly resented that decision.

"You can't appraise a mine by a scratch or two on the surface," he said as we made our way up the broken mountain slope, slowly step by step.

Sock-Eye's gaze, as he stopped and blinked at the taller man, was one of asperity.

"I ain't no college dood," he affirmed. "But I panned these cricks afore you was a pulin' infant. And I reckon I kin still sniff out a payin' pocket when she's under my nose."

It seemed very futile and foolish. And I had trouble in finding my footing along the fan-shaped gravel bed that lay in our path. I even staggered a little.

"This girlie needs rest and sleep," Lander said as he shifted his rifle and reached out an arm to hold me up.

I could feel that arm tighten about my tired body as we moved on again.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

GRASSROOTS
by
WRIGHT A. PATTERSON
(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

WE SHALL BECOME WORLD'S FINANCIERS

ENGLAND WAS the greatest of the creditor nations for generations, in fact, for centuries. To maintain that plan, England was forced to finance debtor nations. She did it by supplying the funds for development of those nations. She developed their resources, she built railroads, she provided shipping facilities. Large quantities of English money were invested in many countries of the world. Such funds were provided not so much by the English government, as by the English people as individuals, with the government back of them to minimize their chance of loss.

That will be America's job when the present world conflict is over. It was our job after the close of World War No. 1, but we did not do it effectively. We did not know how. It is a problem our financial leaders must study now if America is to achieve that world dominance which is her destiny.

SOUND ADVICE

The AMERICAN BANKERS magazine says every man or corporation or institution that in any way depends upon public patronage for support should never permit any issue of its hometown newspaper to go to press without containing a mention of his or its name and business. To that it adds:

"The man who does not advertise his business does an injustice to himself and his town."

"The man who insists on sharing the business that comes to town, but refuses to advertise his own, is not a valuable addition to any town."

"The life and snap of a town depend upon wide-awake, liberal advertising men."

The wise business man will follow the advice of the Bankers magazine.

DIVIDE-AND-GET FIFTY CENTS A YEAR

A WOMAN CLERK in one of the retail stores rides the same suburban train I take each morning. She is married and every day tells me of the small wages, \$25 a week, her husband receives, all because others are paid such unwarranted salaries, from \$25,000 to as much as \$200,000 a year. I became rather "fed up" on her daily complaint and looked up a few figures.

"How much do you think your husband should be paid?" I asked.

"He could have at least \$100 a week if they would divide up the unwarranted salaries paid in this country," she said.

"Would you place the limit at say \$10,000 a year?" I inquired.

"That would be too low," she replied. "Many people are worth more than that."

Then I pulled out my figures.

"Do you know," I asked, "that if all salaries of more than \$10,000 a year were divided between people of the United States it would mean less than 50 cents for each one of us each year?"

She refused to believe it, though it is true, but I have heard nothing more about the salary her husband is entitled to.

IS THIS DEMOCRACY

A CONTRACT the C. I. O. was demanding one of the big aviation plants must sign, or else—, provides that the company cannot discharge any member of the union because he is a communist; it must pay a maximum wage scale of \$1.15 an hour; compel all employees to join the union; collect all initiation fees, dues and fines for the union; pay for time off for sickness; grant two-week vacations with full pay; pay any member of the union the difference between his earnings as an employee and his pay as a soldier during his period of conscription.

The plant is working exclusively on defense orders and NLRB supports the union's demands. Is America still a democracy?

'M' DAY DEMAND

WE ARE NEARING that much-talked-of "M Day" when all of our man power and resources may be mobilized in that "all out" conflict which is now engulfing the world. When it comes there will be no question of profits, hours, or wages. It will settle all present difficulties with a demand for production, for work.

SACRIFICES

UP TO THE present time, the only Americans who have made any real sacrifice in the cause of preparedness are those who have given up good jobs or lives of ease to go into the armed forces of the nation for a wage of \$21 a month, and the families of those men.

BLESSINGS HERE

WE AMERICANS represent one-sixteenth of the people of all the world. We consume and enjoy just about 50 per cent of such luxuries and conveniences as automobiles, telephones, radios, bathtubs and many other things. We represent, under normal world conditions, just about 50 per cent of all the purchasing power of the world. In the face of such facts there are people who would change our democracy, our way of life, to some one of the totalitarianisms of Europe.

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Outlook Is Virtue
One's outlook is a part of his virtue.—Amos Bronson Alcott.

If you bake at home, use
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The Household Favorite of Four Generations!

Saving Habit
The habit of saving is itself an education; it fosters every virtue, teaches self-denial, cultivates the sense of order, trains to forethought, and so broadens the mind.

Our Existence
Rome endured as long as there were Romans. America will endure as long as we remain American in spirit and in thought.—David Starr Jordan.

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Regular \$1 size limited time only - **49¢**

Appreciate Life
Be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars.—Henry Van Dyke.

Indifference Slays
Affection can withstand very severe storms of vigor, but not a long polar frost of indifference.—Sir Walter Scott.

THE SMOKE'S THE THING!

THAT'S GOOD NEWS ABOUT LESS NICOTINE IN THE SMOKE OF CAMELS. I LIKE THAT EXTRA MILDNESS

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