

**THE VALLEY OF THE  
MOON; IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL.II**

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The Valley of the Moon; in two volumes, Vol.II by Jack London

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**JACK LONDON**

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THE  
VALLEY OF THE MOON

BY

JACK LONDON

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

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## THE VALLEY OF THE MOON.

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### BOOK II (CONTINUED.)

#### CHAPTER XVII.

SHE slept all night, without stirring, without dreaming, and awoke naturally and, for the first time in weeks, refreshed. She felt her old self, as if some depressing weight had been lifted, or a shadow had been swept away from between her and the sun. Her head was clear. The seeming iron band that had pressed it so hard was gone. She was cheerful. She even caught herself humming aloud as she divided the fish into messes for Mrs. Olsen, Maggie Donahue, and herself. She enjoyed her gossip with each of them, and, returning home, plunged joyfully into the task of putting the neglected house in order. She sang as she worked, and ever as she sang the magic words of the boy danced and sparkled among the notes: *Oakland is just a place to start from.*

Everything was clear as print. Her and Billy's problem was as simple as an arithmetic problem at school: to carpet a room so many feet long, so many feet wide; to

paper a room so many feet high, so many feet around. She had been sick in her head, she had had strange lapses, she had been irresponsible. Very well. All this had been because of her troubles—troubles in which she had had no hand in the making. Billy's case was hers precisely. He had behaved strangely because he had been irresponsible. And all their troubles were the troubles of the trap. Oakland was the trap. Oakland was a good place to start from.

She reviewed the events of her married life. The strikes and the hard times had caused everything. If it had not been for the strike of the shopmen and the fight in her front yard, she would not have lost her baby. If Billy had not been made desperate by the idleness and the hopeless fight of the teamsters, he would not have taken to drinking. If they had not been hard up, they would not have taken a lodger, and Billy would not be in jail.

Her mind was made up. The city was no place for her and Billy, no place for love nor for babies. The way out was simple. They would leave Oakland. It was the stupid that remained and bowed their heads to fate. But she and Billy were not stupid. They would not bow their heads. They would go forth and face fate. —Where, she did not know. But that would come. The world was large. Beyond the encircling hills, out through the Golden Gate, somewhere they would find what they desired. The boy had been wrong in one thing. She was not tied to Oakland, even if she was married. The world was free to her and Billy as it had been free to the wandering generations before them. It was only the stupid who had been left behind everywhere in the race's wandering. The strong had gone on. Well, she and Billy were strong.



They would go on, over the brown Contra Costa hills or out through the Golden Gate.

The day before Billy's release Saxon completed her meager preparations to receive him. She was without money, and, except for her resolve not to offend Billy in that way again, she would have borrowed ferry fare from Maggie Donahue and journeyed to San Francisco to sell some of her personal pretties. As it was, with bread and potatoes and salted sardines in the house, she went out at the afternoon low tide and dug clams for a chowder. Also, she gathered a load of drift-wood, and it was nine in the evening when she emerged from the marsh, on her shoulder a bundle of wood and a short-handled spade, in her free hand the pail of clams. She sought the darker side of the street at the corner and hurried across the zone of electric light to avoid detection by the neighbours. But a woman came toward her, looked sharply and stopped in front of her. It was Mary.

"My God, Saxon!" she exclaimed. "Is it as bad as this?"

Saxon looked at her old friend curiously, with a swift glance that sketched all the tragedy. Mary was thinner, though there was more colour in her cheeks—colour of which Saxon had her doubts. Mary's bright eyes were handsomer, larger—too large, too feverish bright, too restless. She was well dressed—too well dressed; and she was suffering from nerves. She turned her head apprehensively to glance into the darkness behind her.

"My God!" Saxon breathed. "And you . . ." She shut her lips, then began anew. "Come along to the house," she said.

"If you're ashamed to be seen with me——" Mary blurted, with one of her old quick angers.

"No, no," Saxon disclaimed. "It's the drift-wood and the clams. I don't want the neighbours to know. Come along."

"No; I can't, Saxon. I'd like to, but I can't. I've got to catch the next train to Frisco. I've ben waitin' around. I knocked at your back door. But the house was dark. Billy's still in, ain't he?"

"Yes, he gets out to-morrow."

"I read about it in the papers," Mary went on hurriedly, looking behind her. "I was in Stockton when it happened." She turned upon Saxon almost savagely. "You don't blame me, do you? I just couldn't go back to work after bein' married. I was sick of work. Played out, I guess, an' no good anyway. But if you only knew how I hated the laundry even before I got married. It's a dirty world. You don't dream. Saxon, honest to God, you could never guess a hundredth part of its dirtiness. Oh, I wish I was dead, I wish I was dead an' out of it all. Listen—no, I can't now. There's the down train puffin' at Adeline. I'll have to run for it. Can I come——"

"Aw, get a move on, can't you?" a man's voice interrupted.

Behind her the speaker had partly emerged from the darkness. No workingman, Saxon could see that—lower in the world scale, despite his good clothes, than any workingman.

"I'm comin', if you'll only wait a second," Mary placated.

And by her answer and its accents Saxon knew that Mary was afraid of this man who prowled on the rim of light.

Mary turned to her.

"I got to beat it; good-bye," she said, fumbling in the palm of her glove.

She caught Saxon's free hand, and Saxon felt a small hot coin pressed into it. She tried to resist, to force it back.

"No, no," Mary pleaded. "For old times. You can do as much for me some day. I'll see you again. Good-bye."

Suddenly, sobbing, she threw her arms around Saxon's waist, crushing the feathers of her hat against the load of wood as she pressed her face against Saxon's breast. Then she tore herself away to arm's length, passionate, quivering, and stood gazing at Saxon.

"Aw, get a hustle, get a hustle," came from the darkness the peremptory voice of the man.

"Oh, Saxon!" Mary sobbed; and was gone.

In the house, the lamp lighted, Saxon looked at the coin. It was a five-dollar piece—to her, a fortune. Then she thought of Mary, and of the man of whom she was afraid. Saxon registered another black mark against Oakland. Mary was one more destroyed. They lived only five years, on the average, Saxon had heard somewhere. She looked at the coin and tossed it into the kitchen sink. When she cleaned the clams, she heard the coin tinkle down the vent pipe.

It was the thought of Billy, next morning, that led Saxon to go under the sink, unscrew the cap to the catch-trap, and rescue the five-dollar piece. Prisoners were not well fed, she had been told; and the thought of placing clams and dry bread before Billy, after thirty days of prison fare, was too appalling for her to contemplate. She knew how he liked to spread his butter on thick, how he liked thick, rare steak fried on a dry hot pan, and how he liked coffee that was coffee and plenty of it.