

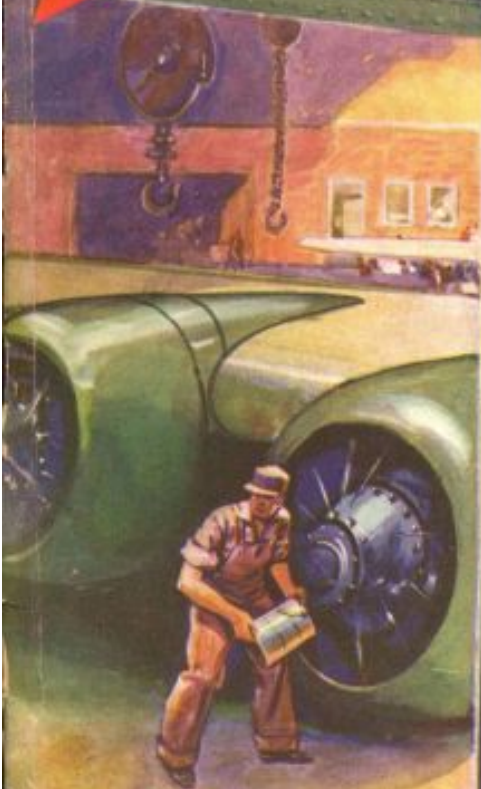
LUVIUM, INVINCIBLE CITY A. R. MCKENZIE

See  
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# AMAZING

## STORIES

SEPTEMBER 25c



WAR  
WORKER 17

BY  
FRANK PATTON



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On the moon was a mechanism that had to be smashed; and Earth had the gun. But there had to be someone to find the range!



# LUNAR VENGEANCE

By **THORNTON AYRE**

# LUNAR VENGEANCE

By

John Russell Fearn

Writing under the pseudonym Thornton Ayre.

First published *Amazing Stories*, September 1943.

## CHAPTER I

New York Airport Number 1 was filled to capacity. Cars were jammed in the tens of thousands side by side; men, women and children were sitting or standing on their roofs. Some had field glasses, others had resorted to twenty-cent spy glasses. There were television cameras by the dozen, radio commentators and newsreel men.

New York had gone mad. The most thrilling of days had arrived. The first flight to the moon was about to begin!

In the center of this cyclone of surging humanity, in an area kept clear by the struggles of police officers and militia, stood the rocket ship—devised and invented by Hartley Dean. Right now he stood shaking hands with Brice Mynak, the toughest stratosphere aviator the World State Air Force had yet produced, indeed about the only man deemed fit enough by medical science to make this daring leap into infinity.

Hartley Dean was massive, big shouldered, strong-faced, with a wide intelligent forehead and deep gray eyes. He was definitely one of the finest astrophysicists science had yet produced. . . . Brice Mynak on the other hand was smallish, olive-skinned, with a hint of his revered Egyptian heritage about his features.

“Good luck!” Hart breathed, gripping the slender, steel-strong hand. “You’re probably the pioneer of a space empire, and don’t go forgetting it! Everybody, the world over, is expecting big things.”

“I know,” Brice Mynak said simply. “And they’ll get them!” he added—then he climbed through the airlock and closed it.

There was a long, tense pause. Civic authorities, engineers, the mass of the people, Hartley Dean in particular—they all waited. Beside Hart, Beryl Mason was standing tensely, her dark eyes fixed on the machine. Further away still was her father, biting his lip steadily.

“We’ve waited a long time for this, Hart,” the girl whispered.

“Yes.” His mind flashed back over the years he had spent with the girl and her father working out the intricacies of space travel in the great Mason Aircraft Corporation laboratories. And now—

Suddenly the rocket ship moved. There was a flash of flame from the gleaming exhaust tubes, a backdraft of scorching air that sent the people pressing backwards with arms flung over their faces. Hart and the girl turned away quickly. . . .

Then with cyclonic force the machine swept from level keel over the heads of the people, over the giant buildings, roared with a meteoric scream into the calm morning sky—turned—went upwards—. Higher—higher, watched now by millions of eager eyes. It became a speck, left a trail of condensation . . . and was gone!

Din exploded everywhere. Sirens blew, people yelled, automobile horns shrieked. Babel rolled back and forth and rebounded in the crowd. Hart stood grinning and frowning by turns—triumphant as an engineer; anxious as a man.

“He *must* make it, Berry,” he breathed, clutching the girl to him. “He must! It’s man’s greatest progressive leap ever!”

---

Six hours later came the stunning news. It jolted the world from equator to arctic, suddenly rendered needless the observation of the rocket by trained armies of astronomers.

Those other armies, the radio technicians in touch with Brice Mynak, realized before anybody how hopes had been smashed. They were the first to get Mynak's single message—a forlorn, desperate cry—

*“I can't stand it! It's breaking me! I can't—!”*

That was all! But observers in the moonward hemisphere reported that a meteor had been seen. Falling to earth. Location? Unknown as yet. . . .

In the big central-operations office of the Mason Corporation, Hart was gray with worry, Beryl and her father at his side just as anxious as he was. Their attention was glued to the world-reports being flashed to them. . . . And so at last their worst fears were confirmed.

The rocket ship had crashed! Had come down in a blaze of unholy glory somewhere in the Sahara desert, probably near the ruins of the half excavated city of Tri-Konam. Already the emergency squads were flying to the scene of the disaster.

“My God!” Hart whispered, staring in stunned horror in front of him. “My God—it failed!”

“But how the devil could it?” Mason demanded. He was a realist, mature, and a keen business man. “We've checked everything—gravity strain, accelerative fields, radiation—And there was plenty of fuel!” He frowned puzzledly. “I didn't get what Brice meant by that one radio message. *What* was breaking him, anyway—?”

Hart jerked out of his trance and cut the older man short.

“What the blazes are we doing standing here, anyway? We've got to get out to that fallen ship as fast as we can. Come on!”

An express airplane was ready for the three of them in a few minutes. With Hart at the controls it streaked like lightning from the city, maintained its stratosphere height and eight-hundred mile an hour speed for the whole eastward journey.

Beryl kept a check on the radio so they could make their course. Gradually they turned toward Egypt. Here it was late afternoon. Desert, the eternal Sahara, spread below them, its surface marred only by the Sphinx and Pyramids and the partly completed restoration of the recently discovered city of Tri-Konam.

But the attention of the three was mainly focused upon a swarming mass of men and sandtractors gathered around a still smoking object in the sand. Hart dropped the 'plane swiftly, put out the sand-skids, then taxied forward to the site of operations.

Jumping out, he hurried over to Freeman, the chief engineer in charge of excavating Tri-Konam.

“What happened?” Hart demanded.

Freeman's sun-dried face was grim. “Guess this is all that's left of that rocket ship, Mr. Dean. It landed on its emergency underjets so it didn't actually crash: this heat was generated in the atmosphere fall. We managed to get Brice Mynak out before he burned but— Well, he's in a gosh-awful mess.”

“Take me to him!” Hart's voice was impatient with worry.

---

The engineer led the way across the sand to where Brice Mynak lay under a sunshield, stretched out flat, badly blackened on the face and hands. Healing ointment gleamed on his skin. His breathing came and went in shallow gasps.

“Take it easy,” said the medico in the sun-suit attending him. “He's in mighty poor shape.”

Hart nodded and took the aviator by the shoulder.

“Brice, what happened? Tell me! Brice!”

Brice opened his eyes at that and Hart felt a strong inclination to recoil. The look in those eyes was unnerving, horrible. It was the blank, ghastly stare of a man who has had reason blasted. Certainly there was no spark of recognition in the dead orbs.

“No use, I’m afraid,” the medico sighed. “He’s insane. He says queer things at times—impossible things about chariots of fire. Delusions, obviously.”

Hart looked at Beryl and her father sharply, then again tried with Brice.

“Brice! It’s me, old man—Hart Dean. You know me? Your pal?”

Brice tossed uneasily as though something had indeed stirred his outraged brain. Then he lay flat again and stared blindly up at the canvas sunshield.

“Chariots,” he whispered, through cracked lips. “Chariots of fire—in the sky—dropping to the city—! They’re falling!” He breathed rapidly. “Must load the towers!” he panted. “Must load them quickly . . .”

He stopped suddenly to grip Hart’s wrist with a hot hand. The blank face turned to stare at him.

“They must be loaded,” he whispered, almost inaudibly. “The square towers—” Then suddenly he shuddered, relaxed.

Beryl turned away sharply from that sudden death, face averted. The medico pulled the dust sheet slowly over the stricken visage.

“But—but *what* killed him?” Hart demanded, clenching his fists. “Surely you’ve some idea, doc?”

He shrugged. “Might have been one of a number of things. Too rapid a speed in space; sudden clot on the brain causing insanity—. Poor devil! He died crazy all right . . .”

Hart looked around on the wastes of sand; the ruins of the half excavated city. Thoughts were twisting in his keen mind—odd thoughts.

“I suppose it was chance that he landed here,” he muttered. “The Earth would have rotated far enough from New York, his initial starting point, to cause it. Yet somehow, because he was of Egyptian descent . . .”

“What the devil does that matter?” Mason asked bitterly. “The whole thing is a fizzle, and one of the best aviators in the world is dead. And I’m a cool two million out of pocket. I guess we’d better see what the ship will fetch as scrap.”

---

The three of them turned to the site of operations again. With something of an effort, still dazed by the ruin of his plans, Hart made an examination—but not with the ruthless business eye of Mason. His aims were scientific, as usual.

The curious thing was that there was nothing amiss with the ship, except its blackened exterior. The instruments were okay, the fuel ample. Nothing whatever should have stopped Brice Mynak going right ahead to the Moon. Yet, out in space, an unknown power had blasted every sane thought out of him.

“Just what do we do?” Mason asked sharply, when the examination was over and they were having tea in the mobile canteen. “As a business man this is a serious matter for me. It throws my financial foresight into disrepute; and it clouds your profession, Hart, as a first class engineer.”

“Those are side issues,” Hart grunted, staring moodily at the flaming sunset. “I’m trying to figure out Brice’s dying words— That stuff about loading square towers. . . .”

He broke off and Beryl and her father saw that he was looking at the ruins of Tri-Konam against the lurid sky, ruins quite close to the ageless Pyramids, ruins sprouting towers,



minarets, and domes. . . .

“I suppose,” he finished slowly, “he couldn’t have meant *those* towers?”

“Not very likely, is it?” Mason asked bluntly. “Doc Andrews, the archaeologist, says those are only some sort of ventilation shafts. Know better when the excavations are finished.”

“Queer to have ventilation shafts to a city that once stood above ground,” Hart reflected, still gazing.

To his imagination, as the night deepened, they looked—those towers—like four mammoth guns pointing skywards. But whoever heard of a gun being square? Besides, hadn’t the excavators discovered that each tower was set in a solid block of stone? Guns!

Hart laughed ruefully, looked beyond the Pyramids to the eastern horizon. The moon, waning to her last quarter, was just poking into the darkened sky. Brice Mynak had of course taken off at full moon to secure full visibility.

“Looks very inscrutable, sailing there, doesn’t it?” Beryl sighed, watching it with chin on hand. “Just as though it feels proud of having beaten us miserable little humans!”

“But between us and it there is the unknown something which smashed Brice!” Hart’s jaws set tightly; then he clenched his big fists and looked towards the dim bulk of the battered space ship. Fiercely he went on, “But Brice told us *something*—and if I spend the rest of my life on the job I’m going to find out what he meant! We’re going to build another space ship—or at least remodel this one—and I’m going to drive it!”

Mason and the girl stared at him in surprise.

“But, Hart,” the girl said anxiously, “your medical report shows you are not capable of standing it! You’ve never been a stratosphere man and—”

“Be damned to that!” he interrupted brusquely. “My best friend is dead, and your father’s and my reputations are at stake. I’m going to alter all that! Tomorrow we start back for New York and begin all over again. No mystery in space is going to balk this effort to make the Moon the first stop in a regular space line.”

## CHAPTER II

### Sahara Secret

Fired with new enthusiasm Hart cracked the whip to full effect in the Mason workshops and the salvaged space machine was brought back to its original glory—a job that took nearly two months of ceaseless work.

In this time the unhappy death of Brice Mynak and the fiasco of the first lunar effort had died from public memory—and this time Hart killed all publicity about his intentions. He had gotten through the first debacle by the skin of his teeth: a second one might have grave commercial and professional repercussions.

So when at last the machine was ready it was placed in the private testing yard of the Mason works. The day set for departure grew nearer: each night brought a waxing Moon in the early autumn sky. And with it Beryl Mason became increasingly anxious.

“Look, Hart, does it really matter?” she asked him, as he finished his check up of details on the night before he was due to depart at 10:00 a. m. next day. “I mean why not experiment a little more and maybe you’ll find what really drove Brice insane. There was perhaps some error which—”

“Listen, sweet, there was no error!” He caught her slender arms gently, looked into her strained face. “Whatever trouble there is in space I’m going to locate—and it *is* there and no place else. What’s more, I’ll reach the Moon! I have everything here—radio, provisions, space suits, weapons— What’s the matter?” he broke off, as she remained silent.

“Nothing,” she said very quietly, then detaching herself from his grip she walked away across the tarmac without another word. He wondered if his adamancy had offended her. . . .

Next morning he was quite sure she’d taken umbrage for she did not even turn up with her father to see him make his lonely departure.

“I don’t know where she is,” Mason replied anxiously, as Hart questioned him. “She went off somewheres last night after seeing you. I guess she doesn’t like you risking your life, Hart, and I feel the same way about it. However,” he shrugged, “we can’t make headway without risk. So there it is.”

He held out his hand and Hart gripped it firmly. There was a rather woeful smile about his lips.

“Tell Berry I’ll come back a hero,” he said briefly; then went inside the ship and closed the airlock.

---

He sat before the control board he knew so well, hesitated for a moment, then switched on the power to the firing cylinders. Instantly the machine jolted under him, flung him flat against the springs of his chair. His breath was forced out of him in a long gasp: little drops of blood trickled from his nose. For a second or two he sat in gasping anguish as the ship hurtled outwards, upwards, and then climbed with dizzying speed.

Faster he went, cleaving through the stratosphere, the Heavyside Layer. Temperatures outside switched amazingly but in the insulated ship he felt no variations— Then a cry broke on his ears, a cry of pain. . . .

He twirled round in amazement. Beryl Mason was right behind him, staggering a little, her face as white as a sheet and blood smearing her nostrils. She gave one brief, defiant smile then

collapsed her length on the floor.

“Berry, you loyal little fool—!”

Hart stumbled towards her, lifted her with an effort to the long charting bench, bunched up his coat as a pillow. He paused only long enough to put the robot pilot in commission then turned to the job of reviving the girl. It did not take very long. Presently her eyelids fluttered open.

“The take-off is—is pretty awful, isn’t it?” she muttered.

“Berry, why did you *do* this?” Hart tried to sound stern. “Think of the risk! It may mean death!”

“I know. I’m a bit of a scientist like you. But my place is beside you—and since you wouldn’t see reason I decided to become a stowaway. I’ve always wanted to explore anyway, ever since I climbed trees as a kid. You can’t send me back now,” she finished seriously.

“But your dad will be frantic!”

“Not he. I left a letter which he’ll have found by now.”

Hart sighed. “Okay, you win. But you’ve destroyed my peace of mind for the rest of this trip— Better now?” He helped her to get to her feet, and for a moment they both staggered at the more than normal gravity occasioned by acceleration.

Slowly they moved to the window. In awed silence they gazed outside. It was breathtaking because it was a complete novelty; it was something which so far had only existed in their imaginations— The dead black void of space gilded with a myriad stars: the Sun with his twirling prominences and ghostly corona. Then the Moon toward which they were heading, her right hand limb beginning to shade off slightly as the full phase waned.

Clear, uncannily clear, the satellite hung there, her face traced with innumerable mountains and crater-pits, marred with the dead sea bottoms. Then there were those bright streaks and rays sweeping outwards from Ptolomey, Copernicus, and Tycho—more complex than ever when viewed through this perfect vacuum.

“Those rays—science’s biggest mystery ever,” Hart mused. “So many explanations and none of them convincing . . .” Pausing, he gazed in different directions with a frown. “Damned if I can see what could have caused Brice to—”

He turned, caught the girl in his arms as she swayed dizzily. Her face had gone deathly pale again. Her eyes, formerly filled with interest, were now fixed on the Moon’s inscrutable disk in something like horror.

“Hart,” she whispered, “I feel something terrible—stifling—trying to—”

Her senses left her and she became limp in his grasp. He was so stunned with the suddenness of it that he didn’t know what to do for the moment. Gently he laid her down on the floor, and at the same moment a vast wave of dizziness caught him, too, sent him sprawling across her. Whatever had come upon them it had affected the girl’s more sensitive organism first.

---

Hart got to his knees with difficulty, but he felt as though he were in hell itself. Fiery darts of radiation—vibration—were hammering and twisting through his skull. It made movement a titanic effort; thinking almost an impossibility. The wildest of delirium sought to blast his agonized brain.

He was going insane! And subconsciously he was aware of it! Mightily, superhumanly, he battled against it, using every scrap of his will power. He clawed his way to the switchboard,

overmastering a desire to burst into peals of hysterical laughter. Reason, all the normal ideas associated with this amazing trip, were fleeing away from him.

He caught the switches, held onto them like grim death and turned the machine slowly round. As he half crouched, drooling in spite of himself, he saw the Moon apparently spin round in a dizzy half circle. The more he gazed at its dead, inscrutable face the wilder seemed to rage his emotions.

“I must!” he breathed to himself, doggedly. “I must get free!”

But how he was to do it he had no idea. He was in a daze. None the less he began to realize as the ship twisted round and moved Earthward that the crushing lunacy was beginning to relax, flowing away from him like an ebbing tide.

Faster he sent the ship hurtling on the return journey, until all Earth filled the space before his straining eyes. Less racked mentally—though by no means ruled by ordered sanity even now—he had the chance to notice one thing. Earth had turned on its axis so that the Sahara desert now faced the void—and the ship was falling towards it. Obviously then, since he had started from New York and got just about the same distance as Brice Mynak before being overcome, it had been purely law of science which had brought the aviator down in the country of his ancestors. . . .

Consciousness sought to desert Hart—but he knew that that meant death from a crash landing. He hung on somehow, guiding the ship until it tore through the atmosphere with the fiery trail of a comet. . . . Down and down, faster and faster, until the yellow sand came rushing up to meet him— He blasted the underjets at the last second. A stunning crash and the splitting of tortured air slammed into his senses. He went flying and collapsed into darkness.

---

Stiff, bruised, his head aching violently, Hart stirred again. He was in total darkness and silence, seemed to be huddled against the curved padded wall of the machine. He felt around him and unexpectedly gripped Beryl’s hand. Obviously she had been thrown right beside him.

For a long time he tried to recall what had happened, then as he pieced the hectic last moments together he scrambled to his feet and felt around for the light switch. It operated, and the cool glow showed the machine tilted at a sharp angle. Outside the ports was dead blackness.

The immediate environment did not concern him. His brain was clear now, thank God, and that terrible madness had gone. He went over to the girl and for ten minutes gave all his attention to reviving her. By degrees he explained matters to her.

“But—but where are we?” she asked finally, as he helped her up.

He shrugged. “Last thing I saw was the Sahara—pretty nearly the same spot where Brice landed. I passed out then and don’t know what happened—But we’ll soon find out!”

He handed her a torch, took one himself, then opened the airlock. To their surprise they didn’t step out into a night-covered desert or to the friendly voices of the men excavating Tri-Konam. No, they stepped out into the vast deserted reaches of an immense underground cavern, wrapped in the weighted silence of the tomb.

They were both too surprised to be afraid. Moving slowly away from the ship on rocky floor they presently turned and looked back at it. It was tilted nose down at forty degrees, its tail piled thick with rubble, rocks, and sand. Up above in the cavern roof there was a gaping fissure.

“I think I get it,” Hart said at length. “We struck the sand nose down and plunged right through a weak seam in this roof into this cavern, bringing in the rocks on top of us. Guess it

will take hours for anybody above—granting they saw us—to get us out. Wait a minute; I'll try the radio."

They hurried back into the ship, and to their relief the radio worked. Nor was it long before they made contact. The voice of engineer Freeman came through the loud speaker.

"Thank God you're alive, Mr. Dean! But it's going to take us a bit of time to get down to you, I'm afraid. . . ."

"Just whereabouts did we hit?" Hart interrupted.

"You went right through the sand about quarter of a mile south of the Tri-Konam towers. Guess you must have plunged into part of the city which hasn't yet been excavated. . . . Okay, you hang on. We'll dig you out with blasters."

Hart switched off and looked at Beryl. She seemed relieved.

"Take them some time anyway," she said. "Might as well do a bit of looking around while we wait. . . ."

---

Again they left the ship, flashing their torches as they went. The cavern seemed endless in extent, cyclopean in its vastness. It receded into shadowy darkness far away—but that it had once been used was clearly obvious for there were the rough outlines of roads; then as they advanced further they beheld shattered stone colonnades which had obviously been the work of intelligent beings at one time. There were even dwellings, queerly designed, smashed amidst a wilderness of boulders.

"Obviously all part of the still unexcavated Tri-Konam," Beryl said after a while.

"Yeah," Hart acknowledged, and he was obviously pondering. Then he said, "Come to look at it, the walls of this cavern are not solid rock; they're composed of countless hundreds of rocks piled solidly on top of one another and fused partly together by some vast heat. Suppose this city were originally on the surface but rocks piled so thickly around it that it became buried in a cavern?"

"Doc Andrews has thought of that," the girl reflected. "But how did so many boulders get fused round a city. . . .?"

Hart couldn't answer that one. They went on, gazing about them fascinatedly. Then they both glanced at each other as ahead of them in the midst of the ruin they saw four massive pieces of apparatus, age-old, but with their outlines still plainly discernible.

When they came up to the machines they found them supporting a chimney-like mass of metal each, going up through the cavern roof. To each machine was still linked a maze of stout cables, all leading to a power engine of fantastic design.

"Doesn't make sense to me," Hart muttered. "These things look rather like the special stoves used for making pottery—you know, like an inverted tundish with a squarish chimney—" He stopped suddenly, catching the same amazing thought as Beryl.

"We're at the base of the four square towers!" she ejaculated.

"Of course!" He stared in wonder. "So far unexcavated—"

Immediately they both forgot all about the rest of the ruins and instead concentrated on studying the four machines in front of them. After some searching they discovered there was a way *inside* the machines. Carefully they entered one of them, found themselves in a sort of square metal chamber, standing on a device of massive springs and complicated switches. Over their heads yawned the cavernous dark of the flue, its outlet obviously blocked since surface testings had shown the chimneys had a stone foundation.

"I'm going to take a look up here," Hart said, and catching onto the chinks in the steel he made his way up with comparative ease, stopped finally when he came to solid stone—a mighty block of it barring his way. He puzzled over it in the torchlight, then dropped back to the girl's side.

"This isn't a foundation; it's jammed half way up the flue," he said. "Just as though heat had fused it there. Same sort of stone the Pyramids are made from—a great square block of it. No wonder it was mistaken for a foundation stone by those above."

---

Baffled, they looked back at the floor on which they stood.

Hart said slowly, "This machinery, what's left of it, is like the stuff they used to use to fire ballistas. You know, those old fashioned catapult things. I wonder—"

"If these things are ballistas on a giant scale?" Beryl broke in quickly. "Why not? The Egyptians used to have 'em."

"Yeah—but firing blocks weighing countless tons! The power that would be needed!"

"Maybe they had it. The machines linked to all this spring mechanism—and particularly the big one where the wires join up—are right beyond us anyway. Atomic force perhaps. . . ." The girl gave a hopeless little sigh. "After all, we're not archaeologists: better turn the problem over to Dr. Andrews and let him worry. Our job is to solve what's wrong in space. We're still licked in trying to get to the Moon, remember."

Hart nodded gloomily. "But we won't be! We'll solve what's wrong out there in space even if it kills us. 'Least I will."

"That means me, too," she said seriously.

They gave up their searching and climbed out into the cavern again, spending their journey back to the space ship studying the city's remains. Undoubtedly there were endless evidences to show that Hart's theory had probably been correct—that the whole place had been battered and pounded until the surrounding cavern walls had been made from piled-up rocks.

"And the rocks would erode into sand under weather conditions," he summed up. "So we get the Sahara. Once there was a mighty, prosperous city here and a very intelligent race back of it—not necessarily the Egyptians but the ones who built the Sphinx and Pyramids. We've no proof the Egyptians ever made those."

"And Brice was descended from the Egyptians," the girl mused. "Remember him saying all that about chariots of fire dropping to the city? Space ships? Or shells or something? Rocks?"

"Possibly." Hart gave a perplexed shrug. "Oh, leave it to Doc Andrews. It's his job anyway, not ours. We'll hand him the dope the moment we're rescued. . . ."

---

They had time to get a meal and a sleep before the first sizzling fire of a rock blaster burst through into their underground prison. Then in a few minutes safety ladders began to appear. The rescue party came into view, looking round curiously. Freeman came hurrying over.

"Say, what kind of a place is this anyway?"

"Along with Doc Andrews you are going to find out," Hart said briefly. "Come along to base camp and I'll tell you all about it. . . ."

From the base camp radio calls went out for Doc Andrews, and the girl's father. Fast airplanes brought both of them before dawn was paling the eastern sky. Doc Andrews in

particular, the best archaeologist in America, listened interestedly to all that was told him. He was a lean, little man with rimless glasses and a fluffy white head.

“Maybe the answer to the whole problem of who built Tri-Konam,” he said finally. “I’ll take charge of excavations right away. Freeman, come with me.”

“All this is very well,” Mason said gravely, “but what good does it do us? Beyond turning yourself and Berry nearly insane, Hart, you’ve gotten nowhere with this second effort. Don’t you think it’s time you gave up?”

“No!” Hart retorted. “I’m going to conquer the first space leap somehow. I plan to stay here for the moment and supervise the salvaging of the rocket ship from underground. We can get it repaired where necessary and then figure out a new plan of campaign. But that Moon is going to be conquered!”

## CHAPTER III

### Desperate Journey

While the salvaging of the machine went on, Dr. Andrews went to work with tireless energy in the caverns below, ruling over his army of willing helpers.

A couple of weeks passed, in which time Hart had had the time to carefully examine the damage sustained by the rocket ship—then one evening as the party sat in their tent at a late supper Dr. Andrews came hurrying in, eyes glinting behind his glasses.

“I believe I’ve sorted the mystery out!” he cried, plumping down at the table. “It’s a most amazing story, believe me—but from the records we’ve found and deciphered I think it’s right. The place *is* a continuation of Tri-Konam, by the way, for the hieroglyphics are the same as those already discovered. That made me able to make instantaneous translations. Anyway

...

“There are some ancient charts in the ruins which show the Moon—but it’s not the Moon that we know. This one is covered with clouds and obviously has an atmosphere!”

The others looked at him sharply. He went on,

“Other records reveal that the people who built this city originally came from the Moon—and there are a number of still fairly useful space ships to prove the fact. But from the unsavory history they possess it seems that they fall into the category of what we’d call gangsters—or else were ostracized from the Moon on account of criminal scientific activity. They came to Earth with various notions of vengeance, it appears. And they were clever—far cleverer than anybody we know today. What they looked like we don’t know, but records seem to show that they were not unlike animal-men . . . like the Sphinx itself for instance.

“They wanted vengeance,” Andrews repeated seriously; “and they chose an amazing way of exacting it. At the time they erected the city of Tri-Konam the Sahara desert did not exist; it was a rock-strewn plain. The outcast Selenites, it appears, hit on the idea of hurling meteorites at the moon which had disowned them! In other words, giant blocks of stone from the plain were used, blocks which would become hell-laden bombs of devastation when they hit the Moon because of her small area compared to Earth . . .”

“My God, the lunar craters!” Hart ejaculated.

“So it would appear. Nor did they put over a rush job. They collected endless blocks, using giant levitators whose lifting system we can as yet only guess at. They gathered vast piles of ammunition, high enough to be level with the tops of the guns they intended using. That is why the Pyramids are the same height as those four square tower-guns. Machinery obviously lowered the blocks into the gun muzzles. As far as I can judge, atomic force fired the blocks. And the effect on the Moon can be imagined!

“Endless meteors must have hurtled at it from Earth, pounded it to blazes, raised vast mountains, gouged deep craters, lifted the tortured atmosphere to boiling point and evaporated the seas themselves. But apparently the Selenites on the Moon had the time to retaliate for this brutal vindictiveness. They devised similar methods and fired numberless rocks back at Earth. They were better aimed than those from the aggressors and the vast majority crashed down on Tri-Konam. There are faded photographs to prove that much. As one crashed on another at white heat they liquefied into each other, became a solid wall round the city, since the city itself was no doubt protected by some means or another. But finally the city was buried in a



cup of molten rock. The Pyramids remained, their sloping sides permitting no grip for hurtling rock. The surface rocks underwent weather change and a desert formed. Tri-Konam vanished under what has become the Sahara desert. . . .

“So apparently both sides were wiped out,” Andrews concluded. “Apparently the Earth-guns fused with the excessive heat, a block in each barrel—which by the way can be easily removed. The Moon was wiped out, her air gone, and her face bearing to this day the scars of the onslaught. . . .”

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“And,” Hart said slowly, rubbing his chin, “you say these Selenites probably looked like the Sphinx?”

“Probably,” Andrews nodded. “Of course it is possible that some of them escaped to the outer world—but each succeeding generation would more and more conform to the laws governing this planet, would become more bipedal. Eventually, no doubt, they formed the nucleus of what later became the Egyptian race, and by a mass instinct they chose to live near the site of their long forgotten ancestors from the Moon.”

“Which might explain Brice Mynak’s dying visions,” Mason put in quickly. “He was Egyptian by descent, of course. Suppose, as he died, he had a flashback of memory through his ancestry—as so often happens just before death? He spoke of a city being bombarded by chariots of fire— That bears out the meteors. And then he mentioned about loading the towers, which also fits in.”

Hart nodded slowly, thinking. “And it might explain—though I don’t know how—the reason for the mad insanity in the void.”

“But where is the connection?” Beryl asked, puzzled.

“Listen,” Hart said seriously. “If a race throws out a collection of undesirables, and it has great scientific power, it also makes darned well sure that said undesirables never return. And not only them, but their descendants! These few on Earth would presumably be destroyed far quicker than the vast number on the Moon. Those on the Moon no doubt wanted to be sure that all survivors and descendants of the outcasts would *stay* on Earth and never again reach the Moon to perpetrate more villainy. So, between Earth and Moon some sort of barrier was established. Something to defeat all efforts to reach the Moon!”

“Just a theory,” Mason shrugged, unconvinced.

“I disagree!” Hart shook his head emphatically. “Stratopilots, as we know, sometimes go crazy by flying too high, whereas aeronauts of the ordinary type get spells of amnesia. We know what happened to Brice and to us in space where no atmosphere at all could shield us— Again, don’t forget that at full moon lunacy on Earth is by no means an uncommon thing among certain types of people, and usually in spots where the atmosphere is least dense.”

Mason gave an incredulous smile. “Are you seriously suggesting that the Moon is training waves of—of lunacy to prevent anybody reaching it?”

“It’s worth a bet,” Hart snapped. “We’ve evidence to support the theory, too— And I’m going to get busy proving it on the next hop. One-half of the mystery is solved: the rest will come the same way.”

“And the next immediate move?” Beryl questioned.

“We radio to the Mount Everest Observation Unit. I want lunar recordings. . . .”

With that Hart headed out of the tent to the radio camp, left the others looking at each other dubiously. . . .

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Another week passed in the sweltering heat of the desert. Dr. Andrews finding more evidences to support his already provable explanation of the Pyramids and Moon. Space ships, battered but well capable of revival, were brought to light.

To Hart, however, all this was a side issue. He was waiting for a reply from Mount Everest — And at last the needed reports came through. He spent an evening studying them with Beryl, Mason, and Andrews grouped around him.

“Definitely we’ve got something,” he breathed at last, pointing to the graphs which had been teleradioed to him. “These show a distinct and unusual radiation being generated by the Moon when she is at the full, dwindling as she reaches the quarters, and fading entirely at New Moon. Lunacy is always at full moon, and we and Brice made our trips at the full moon also—so we got the full blast of this unknown radiation . . .”

He paused, studying the Observatory notes. Again he contacted Mount Everest by radio, said as he waited, “They don’t know what this unknown wave-length represents. Their Physical Laboratory had better find out—”

As the Observatory replied he gave the details, then added, “Better make sure that nobody in your Physics department gets in the way of that radiation when you try and duplicate its wave-length. It might either kill or produce total imbecility . . .”

With that he switched off and waited, pondered a while.

“Since it occurs at full Moon it must be connected with the Sun,” Beryl said thoughtfully. “The Moon only shines by reflected light. It seems that the absence of radiation at new moon is—”

“Idiots that we are!” Hart interrupted her suddenly, his eyes gleaming. “What are the most dominant things on the Moon at the full? And partly at the quarters? Why, the bright rays and streaks from Tycho, Ptolomey, and Copernicus! Nobody has ever yet figured them out— And no wonder!”

“But,” Mason argued, “at the new Moon they can still be seen reflecting Earthshine.”

“What of it? Earth’s illumination means nothing. It is *solar* action that does something, and since the Moon always reveals the same face to Earth the effect repeats every time— By God, I’ll swear we’re getting at it!”

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He fell to eager thought, pulling his underlip—then he switched on the radio as the signal sounded again.

“Say, Hart,” came the voice from Everest, “it’s a darned good job you warned us to keep clear of this radiation! It’s dynamite! We tried it on a rabbit and it went stark crazy.”

“Did it die?” Hart questioned.

“No—just went nuts. Same thing happened to a white mouse—”

“That’s all I need to know. Thanks a lot.”

Hart switched off and looked at the others tensely.

“We’ve got it! Lunacy radiations *are* generated by the Moon, but in the main very few of them reach Earth’s surface because of the atmosphere. Maybe they’re not intended to anyway: they are just there to stop anybody trying to get to the Moon. Begins to look as though my guess was right. The Selenites went to a great deal of trouble to stop any gangsters getting back.”

“But the Selenites must be dead by now!” Beryl cried. “What is the idea of prolonging—”

“I don’t know. But I’m going to the Moon to find out. Maybe it’s a legacy—automatic—which will go on until somebody stops it.”

"You daren't try again!" Mason protested.

"There *is* a way!" Hart breathed, his eyes gleaming. "I must start off from Earth just after the last quarter of the Moon when the radiations are ebbing to minimum at new Moon. I've got to reach the Moon then before the first quarter—that is in fourteen days. I should make it. . . ." He straightened up. "I've *got* to," he finished simply.

"Then I'm coming with you," Beryl said quickly; but he shook his head.

"Not this time, Berry. This is a real gamble with death and I'm not taking that chance."

She was silent, looking out towards the desert. Then she gave a shrug.

"Okay, perhaps you're right. . . . And I suppose you know that the Moon's last quarter is tomorrow night?"

"I know. I leave first thing tomorrow morning. . . ."

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At dawn, after an undemonstrative farewell, Hart took off in the fully repaired rocket ship. His mind was so concentrated on his job that he hardly gave a thought to the desperate risk he was undoubtedly taking. Imbecility, death itself, lay before him unless he made the grade in time. Space was not even charted to help him: he was the first lone pioneer blazing the trail between Earth and Moon—

Yet he sat down before the control board as calmly as if he were making the usual flight from New York to Australia.

In a few minutes the dawn-lit vista of the Sahara was whirling away under the rear tubes. Again blood trickled from his nostrils; and anguish belted him as he tore against Earth's gravity—up and out into the void. Regardless of his physical sufferings he pushed the power up notch by notch. Speed! Everything depended on it!

Ahead of him the Moon was a thick crescent, the copper brown of the earthlit portion merging into ragged lines along the terminator. Two hundred and forty thousand miles in fourteen days? It might be possible. He was using no super-fuel, though, only ordinary monoxite, the most powerful fuel known to Earth so far. Yes, he *might* do it, but with precious little margin to spare.

Rest was the most incessant demand made of him. The strain of space flying was unbelievable, he found, and there were no fancy gadgets to help him; those would come from the space engineers of the future. All he got were the crushing pressures of acceleration, the lightheadedness and sickness of disorganized internal functions. For hours at a stretch he lay in the eternally sunlit cabin, sprawled out, giving out radio signals to Earth to say what grand condition he was in.

Time and again he was delayed, swerved off his course by brickbat swarms. Later, he decided, ships must have repellers. Each time he re-set the course he noted worriedly how much schedule had been nipped.

With growing anxiety he watched the crescent appear on the waxing edge of the new Moon. Earth was well behind now, pink-rimmed, green tinted. The Moon filled all the void, and deep in the coppery bowl of its night, reflecting star and earth-shine, Hart saw quite clearly those deadly points from which he was convinced spewed death and insanity . . . the streaks and rays.

He had been on the way now for 12 days, 16 hours—but now he was within the Moon's gravity field his speed would increase even more. More than once he thought his heart would stop from the sensation of everlasting headlong falling. Hours—minutes—days—nights— He didn't know which was which or where he was. Everything was in hopeless confusion in his

brain. He lay now on his stomach, one leaden hand on the rocket switches, the ship dropping towards the ever-spreading sunlit tide engulfing plain, mountain, and dead sea bottom.

Already the fingers of the Sun were creeping to the fatal points. He drove on desperately, headed round the limb of the Moon away from the center to the furthest point on the still dark side.

Lower—faster—Jerking—twisting. A headlong dive!

He landed with a crash that shook the wits out of him. But as his senses departed he had a deep subconscious thrill. . . . He was the first man to reach the Moon!

## CHAPTER IV

### The Final Gamble

It was still dark when he recovered—the frozen, searing dark of the lunar night, the stars frostily still in coal-black sky; the Earth bisected by the saw teeth of the mountain range beside which the ship had dropped. It was dreary, unthinkably desolate.

Hart shuddered, made himself some hot coffee and ate a little food; then he scrambled into his spacesuit and made his way outside cautiously, torch in one hand and lethal gun in the other.

Sunrise, he realized, was still some time off, and for that he was thankful: he had little desire to wander around in a temperature near that of boiling water. He was none too sure of this first space suit's insulation: it might let him down.

First he examined the ship—and got a shock. Three of the tubes were smashed to hell! Grim-faced, he stared at them, then with a fatalistic shrug of his shoulders he turned and headed to the top of the ridge forming the lower foothills of the mountain range. From here the sight which greeted him was surprising.

Across a ragged plain he was gazing at a solitary ray, pale gray in shade and hardly visible, projecting upwards—*Earthwards!* Beyond the near-horizon were two more rays, obviously from more distant craters, and they too were pale and dim like faded searchlights, reflecting only star and Earthshine at the moment.

“Tycho, Copernicus, Ptolomey,” Hart whispered to himself. “This one as I figure the geography, must be Tycho . . .”

Down here, *behind* the rays so to speak, no sense of mental turmoil touched him. He advanced again, over rills and crevices, leapt ravines in the lighter gravity—on and on, until he came to within close range of Tycho crater. Through a cleft in the surrounding hills he stared down onto it, perplexed.

The whole crater floor was a shifting sea of pearly light—and being to one side of it no influence reached him. As yet the sun had not reached this far, though it was approaching as he could see from distant mountain peaks, tipped with ice-white brightness.

Finally he scrambled down towards the crater, tripped over something, and went flying. Going back to examine it he found a thin wire, of all things! And tracing it back he found it went in a circle round the crater, fastened to stumps of substance that seemed like ebonite.

Animal snare? Private property? He didn't know; but it seemed an odd idea to put a wire around a crater as one might round an earthly sheep field. He gave it up at last, went to the very edge of the shifting substance on the crater floor—and then found that it did *not* shift. It was motionless: the illusion of movement was created by endless ripples of radiation.

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Pulling a ladle from his equipment he gathered a scoopful of the stuff and withdrew it carefully, began to return to the ship. But as he went, looking back, he was aware of something. For some reason the three ashy-gray beams had now been augmented by three more beams, pale violet in color, tracing like lavender fingers into the void.

The riddles buzzing in his brain deepened—and deepened again when, still continuing shipwards, he did his best to find some sort of entrance into the Moon's interior. Every time he

drew a total blank. All openings, gaps, crevices, pits, were sealed up—apparently by flowed lava. There was no way in.

Disgusted, weary, he got back to the ship and set to work on the crater's material with analyzing instruments. He had been at it for an hour when the sun smote down through the window like a finger from hell, sending the ship's temperature up by leaps and bounds.

Hart shut the airlock promptly and took off his spacesuit. The heat abated somewhat as insulation returned. He screwed his eyes at girdling prominences and flame white brilliance beating from over the mountain range, then went on with his analysis out of the sunlight.

Finally he gave a little gasp of amazement, contacted Earth over the radio short wave and heard the welcome voices of Mason and Beryl answer back immediately.

"I've solved what causes the lunacy, anyway," he said, when the fervent greetings were over. "The craters responsible for rays are filled with a metallic isotope, laboratory-created, I should think. It absorbs and retransmits solar wave-lengths, these wave-lengths being identical to the ones produced in the Mount Everest laboratory. Some crystals on Earth—tourmaline for one—absorb only one particular radiation and retransmit it: tourmaline does that with light. This isotope does it with brain-irritating radiations.

"Normally of course the sun transmits a whole mass of radiations, one of which neutralizes another. Taken in bulk they are harmless: but one of them singled out can be deadly. The one singled out here *is* deadly, as we know. And in each case the radiation is aimed at Earth. Thanks to the atmosphere it doesn't penetrate all the way to Earth's surface—"

"But it *is* doing!" Mason cried abruptly. "It started about two hours ago. Reports are coming in from everywhere of serious disturbances affecting people the moment the Moon rises! *Something has happened*, Hart! Stratopilots report that the atmosphere at the upper levels is being affected by some electronic stream which is disrupting parts of the ionic layer —"

"Wait!" Hart gasped. "Wait a minute—!"

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He stumbled quickly to the port, a memory blazing through his brain—a memory of a wire round Tycho crater, which he had snapped. Wire on ebonite poles. Then those subsidiary beams of violet which had mysteriously come into being . . .!

Dumbfounded, he stared outside on the blinding brilliance of the rays from the now sunlit craters. Yes, those violet beams were also still visible against the jet backdrop of sky . . . He swung back to the radio.

"I believe I've done something terrible!" he panted. "I fell over a wire a while back, and snapped it. It was some sort of a bait, I guess—broke a contact or something which started machinery hidden under the craters. Machinery in this lunar underworld . . . That must be it," he went on desperately. "For all I know this Moon may be honeycombed with such snares. It must be the second and final safeguard laid by the Selenites. If anybody *did* chance to reach the Moon they laid this other trap, knowing it would be bound to be started finally. Electromagnetic beams directed at Earth's atmosphere are to stop anybody else coming from Earth by driving *them*—everybody—to madness!"

"But can't you do something?" Mason demanded hoarsely. "The disaster may not be so big *this* full Moon, but those electromagnetic beams will keep on tearing down our ionic shield until the next full Moon—then trouble will blast down in real earnest. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," Hart acknowledged grimly. "But I can't get into the underground anyway. The caves, rills, and chasms are all sealed—for reasons quite obvious now. I don't think any

life exists here any more, but it's evident that machinery was left behind situated under each special crater and ready wired—Say, wait a minute!”

Hart broke off, thinking. “Under each crater,” he repeated slowly. Then his voice tautened. “There's one chance, just one! I've no explosive powerful enough to wreck the place, and I could not get back to Earth if I wanted. The only alternative is for you to fire at this satellite with your ballista guns from Tri-Konam!”

“What!” Mason ejaculated. “But it's impossible! They're so old and—”

“But they're intact,” Hart interrupted. “And Andrews himself said it wouldn't be difficult to free their bores of those stone blocks. It's the only way: and it must be done in time for the rocks to land here before the next full Moon. As soon as you can possibly do it. I'll guide your aim by radio from here.”

“And you?” Mason asked anxiously.

“Yes, what about you?” Beryl's voice asked in alarm. “If we succeed with these ballistas we'll give the Moon a terrible pounding, and you might—”

“Get those things right and fire!” Hart ordered doggedly. “Get Dr. Andrews busy. I'll look after myself . . . When you have got the guns working contact me.”

And to prevent further argument he switched off . . .

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For a long time he sat thinking, scowling through the port onto the sun-drenched, inhospitable scene. He was only just commencing to realize that he had virtually signed his own death warrant. If he was to direct the meteorites' paths by radio he certainly couldn't get very far away from here. And one meteor a bit off the target might very easily mean—

“Looks like you let yourself in for something, feller,” he said, getting to his feet; then more for the sake of something to do than anything else he went out into the blaze to confirm his earlier suspicions that all means of entering the underground were sealed up.

They were—utterly. For a long time he surveyed those deadly rays pointing upwards, made estimates of distance with his instruments for target-direction purposes, then glanced towards the green Earth on which they were focused. A nostalgic feeling swept over him. He thought how nice it would be to have security again and Beryl beside him.

“Dope!” he grunted, and trailed back to his battered machine. Thereafter he stuck to the ship. The heat was too intense outside for prolonged investigation anyway. So he spent the time thinking, eating, sleeping, and marveling somewhat at the different rate of time upon the Moon. The 14-day lunar day had gone again at a surprising rate and cold, inexorable night shut down again.

Then at last his nerve racking vigil was broken as the radio gave out its deep signal tone. The moment he snapped the switch Mason's tired but eager voice came through.

“Still there, Hart? Well, we managed it— Thanks to Andrews! Restoration work is finished and the ballista towers are ready to fire. But why don't you leave the Moon and let the astronomers chart the target accurately?”

“How can they?” Hart demanded. “There's no air to fire the rocks as they fall. All that will be visible on Earth will be friction flashes . . . No, I've got to direct operations. And besides,” he finished dryly, “I guess I'm here for keeps. I smashed the ship to blazes when I landed.”

“Hart!” came Beryl's voice, aghast.

“Forget it, Berry,” he said quietly. “I'm doing useful service right here, I guess. Remember me now and again when a space lane service is opened—” He stopped, finished crisply, “Okay, make your first shot and I'll tell you what happens.”

In his mind's eye Hart could picture Mason giving the signal. He left the radio, almost heedless of Mason's curt announcement that the first boulder had been fired . . . Standing at the port he watched the backdrop of blazing stars—the distant worlds. He counted seconds mechanically . . . Seconds—minutes—an hour. And it was an hour that drifted into eternity, it seemed.

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He was cold and cramped with waiting when all of a sudden, without the least warning, a titanic concussion from somewhere near the horizon shook the very ground whereon the spaceship stood. He stared out towards distant Ptolomey. And more rocks descended, chipping pieces out of the mountain ranges, drawn by the Moon's gravity field.

"Nice going!" he shouted into the radio. "You're hitting right in to the Ptolomey area. Keep it up—and aim for Tycho later on. You'll have to hit Ptolomey and Copernicus as best you can: I'm too far away to direct you. But Tycho's a cinch. Seems like the initial speed through Earth's atmosphere is so swift the boulders hardly lose any size. And here there is no diminution at all, of course. What's your initial take-off speed?"

"Thirty miles a second," Mason said.

"Okay—keep going."

So, after another long wait, bombardment began in real earnest. Hart watched in fascinated interest as boulder after boulder came flying invisibly from the void to hammer beyond the horizon. Here and there they missed hopelessly as a quirk of gravity in space had drawn them off their trajectory. One such landed with shattering force not fifty yards from the spaceship, made it bounce so violently that Hart thought he was a goner for sure.

But there were more hits than misses. In the still abysmal dark of the lunar night he saw flash after flash from the distant craters as rocks slammed into rocks, battering—pounding—wrecking. Harder and thicker they came— The Copernicus rays went out!

Hart gave a whoop of joy and yelled the news over the radio. Encouraged by this success the bombardment started again on a new angle, all four ballistas obviously at work now. In thirty minutes of incessant hammering Ptolomey went of the same way as Copernicus, and like its fellow both violet and "lunacy" rays expired.

"Okay, now for Tycho!" Hart cried. "I'll direct you!"

This time, after the usual interval, the onslaught was dangerously near to him. Then one of those erring boulders came whizzing from nowhere, hit the nose of the spaceship and sent it pitching into the emptiness. Stunned with the shock Hart went flying— But he didn't lose consciousness.

He groped his way to his feet, the very ground rolling and shaking under him now with the incessant fall of rocks hammering into Tycho crater. Right now he felt he needed some kind of movement, release from this damnable prison which barred his view of the crater proper. If he had to be snuffed out he preferred it outside anyway, where he might have a chance to see what was coming.

"You're on the target," he said into the radio. Then with an effort. "Good-by, and good luck."

He didn't wait to hear an answer. Switching off he stumbled outside, moving stiffly in his clumsy spacesuit. For a while he stood contemplating the amazing sight of rocks by the dozen raining one after another into Tycho—but those two obstinate rays still continued. One only could be obliterated by covering the crater with rocks, smothering the isotope's power to



reflect; and the other by enough force to mash through to whatever machinery lay buried below.

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For an hour he watched, saw the “lunacy” radiation dim to a mere nothing—but that obstinate violet ray remained. He turned back to the ship, intending to radio a change of position—but at the identical moment a “wanderer” slammed down clean on top of the ship and smashed it flat.

Hart ducked, lying flat as pieces of rock and metal whirled over his head. He got up again presently and stared back at Tycho. Still the rocks were missing that vital violet beam. He got up, raced toward it in flying leaps in the light gravity.

Staring into the crater he saw that all of it was covered except one spot of half a mile in the center—clearly the one vital spot under which lay the violet-ray machinery. Somehow the boulders had got to be directed right onto the target center.

He was baffled for a while, then he unstrapped his heavy torch from his belt. It was possible that giant 500-inch reflector on Mount Wilson would see his signal . . . He ran to the clear patch, knee deep in isotope, its power zero without the sunshine. Kneeling down he flashed the torch on and off continuously for nearly ten minutes—then he left it on, bulb Earthwards, and hurried to the safety of the crater edge.

Not five minutes afterwards the rocks started to fall more inward in their flight towards the crater center. His signal had been seen then. Breathless, he watched. Nearer—nearer— Then there was a direct hit!

Several things happened at once. A mass of boulders crashed right into the crater’s interior, putting out the violet ray but at the same time hurtling Hart upwards from the force of a titanic explosion. Probably some power had been stored down there to drive machinery and had blown up—

Hart thought he would never stop rising, so slight was the gravity and so vast the explosion. But that he must fall back he well knew—and to death. His spacesuit would rip. Not that it made much difference anyway. He was doomed—

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It was Beryl’s eager eyes that looked into his as his senses returned. His spacesuit and helmet had gone and he was lying on a rough bed with head propped up.

“Berry!” he gasped hoarsely. “How—? What—?”

“You’re all right,” she said softly. “And I’ve radioed back to dad to stop the bombardment. Thank the stars that that explosion blew you up or I might never have found you . . .”

She hurried into an explanation.

“When you said that your machine was wrecked I remembered Doc Andrews having said that there were spaceships in Tri-Konam. I got one overhauled immediately and set off into space without dad’s knowledge. Being new Moon I figured I could make it—and I did. I kept clear of the boulder stream, found you more by accident than design, dropped a gadget this ship has got—an attractor beam— And there we are!”

Hart nodded slowly, caught her hand.

“Space is ready,” he said quietly. “Luna is conquered— But does she look different without her streaks and rays!”