

the rate we were traveling we would pass closest to it upon the twelfth day, or about the 6th of January, 2026.

Our course would bring us within about twenty thousand miles of the Moon, and as we neared it I believe that the sight of it was the most impressive thing that human eye had ever gazed upon before. To the naked eye it loomed large and magnificent in the heavens, appearing over ten times the size that it does to terrestrial observers, while our powerful glasses brought its weird surface to such startling proximity that one felt that he might reach out and touch the torn rocks of its tortured mountains.

This nearer view enabled us to discover the truth or falsity of the theory that has been long held by some scientists that there is a form of vegetation upon the surface of the Moon. Our eyes were first attracted by what appeared to be movement upon the surface of some of the valleys and in the deeper ravines of the mountains. Norton exclaimed that there were creatures there, moving about, but closer observation revealed the fact of the existence of a weird fungus-like vegetation which grew so rapidly that we could clearly discern the phenomena. From the several days' observation which we had at close range we came to the conclusion that the entire life span of this vegetation is encompassed in a single sidereal month. From the spore it developed in the short period of a trifle over twenty-seven days into a mighty plant that is sometimes hundreds of feet in height. The branches are angular and grotesque, the leaves broad and thick, and in the plants which we discerned the seven primary colors were distinctly represented. As each portion of the Moon passed slowly into shadow the vegetation first drooped, then wilted, then crumbled to the ground, apparently disintegrating almost immediately into a fine, dust-like powder—at least in so far as our glasses revealed, it quite disappeared entirely. The movement which we discerned was purely that of rapid growth, as there is no wind upon the surface of the Moon. Both Jay and Orthis were positive that they discerned some form of animal life, either insect or reptilian. These I did not myself see, though I did perceive many of the broad, flat leaves which seemed to have been partially eaten, which certainly strengthened the theory that there is other than vegetable life upon our satellite.

I presume that one of the greatest thrills that we experienced in this adventure, that was to prove a veritable Pandora's box of thrills, was when we commenced to creep past the edge of the Moon and our eyes beheld for the first time that which no other human eyes had ever rested upon—portions of that two-fifths of the Moon's surface which is invisible from the Earth.

We had looked with awe upon Mare Crisium and Lacus Somniorum,

Sinius Roris, Oceanus Procellarum and the four great mountain ranges. We had viewed at close range the volcanoes of Opollonius, Secchi, Borda, Tycho and their mates, but all these paled into insignificance as there unrolled before us the panorama of the vast unknown.

I cannot say that it differed materially from that portion of the Moon that is visible to us—it was merely the glamour of mystery which had surrounded it since the beginning of time that lent to it its thrill for us. Here we observed other great mountain ranges and wide undulating plains, towering volcanoes and mighty craters and the same vegetation with which we were now become familiar.

We were two days past the Moon when our first trouble developed. Among our stores were one hundred and twenty quarts of spirits per man, enough to allow us each a liberal two ounces per day for a period of five years. Each night, before dinner, we had drunk to the President in a cocktail which contained a single ounce of spirits, the idea being to conserve our supply in the event of our journey being unduly protracted as well as to have enough in the event that it became desirable fittingly to celebrate any particular occasion.

Toward the third meal hour of the thirteenth day of the voyage Orthis entered the messroom noticeably under the influence of liquor.

History narrates that under the regime of prohibition drunkenness was common and that it grew to such proportions as to become a national menace, but with the repeal of the Prohibition Act, nearly a hundred years ago, the habit of drinking to excess abated, so that it became a matter of disgrace for any man to show his liquor, and in the service it was considered as reprehensible as cowardice in action. There was therefore but one thing for me to do. I ordered Orthis to his quarters.

He was drunker than I had thought him, and he turned upon me like a tiger.

“You damned cur,” he cried. “All my life you have stolen everything from me; the fruits of all my efforts you have garnered by chicanery and trickery, and even now, were we to reach Mars, it is you who would be lauded as the hero—not I whose labor and intellect have made possible this achievement. But by God we will not reach Mars. Not again shall you profit by my efforts. You have gone too far this time, and now you dare to order me about like a dog and an inferior—I, whose brains have made you what you are.”

I held my temper, for I saw that the man was unaccountable for his words. “Go to your quarters, Orthis,” I repeated my command. “I will talk with you again in the morning.”

West and Jay and Norton were present. They seemed momentarily paralyzed by the man's condition and gross insubordination. Norton, however, was the first to recover. Jumping quickly to Orthis' side he laid his hand upon his arm. "Come, sir," he said, and to my surprise Orthis accompanied him quietly to their stateroom.

During the voyage we had continued the fallacy of night and day, gauging them merely by our chronometers, since we moved always through utter darkness, surrounded only by a tiny nebula of light, produced by the sun's rays impinging upon the radiation from our insulating generator. Before breakfast, therefore, on the following morning I sent for Orthis to come to my stateroom. He entered with a truculent swagger, and his first words indicated that if he had not continued drinking, he had at least been moved to no regrets for his unwarranted attack of the previous evening.

"Well," he said, "what in hell are you going to do about it?"

"I cannot understand your attitude, Orthis," I told him. "I have never intentionally injured you. When orders from government threw us together I was as much chagrined as you. Association with you is as distasteful to me as it is to you. I merely did as you did—obeyed orders. I have no desire to rob you of anything, but that is not the question now. You have been guilty of gross insubordination and of drunkenness. I can prevent a repetition of the latter by confiscating your liquor and keeping it from you during the balance of the voyage, and an apology from you will atone for the former. I shall give you twenty-four hours to reach a decision. If you do not see fit to avail yourself of my clemency, Orthis, you will travel to Mars and back again in irons. Your decision now and your behavior during the balance of the voyage will decide your fate upon our return to Earth. And I tell you, Orthis, that if I possibly can do so I shall use the authority which is mine upon this expedition and expunge from the log the record of your transgressions last night and this morning. Now go to your quarters; your meals will be served there for twenty-four hours and at the end of that time I shall receive your decision. Meanwhile your liquor will be taken from you.

He gave me an ugly look, turned upon his heel and left my stateroom.

Norton was on watch that night. We were two days past the Moon. West, Jay and I were asleep in our staterooms, when suddenly Norton entered mine and shook me violently by the shoulder.

"My God, Captain," he cried, "come quick. Commander Orthis is destroying the engines."

I leaped to my feet and followed Norton amidships to the engine-room, calling to West and Jay as I passed their stateroom. Through the bull's-eye in the engine-room door, which he had locked, we could see Orthis working

over the auxiliary generator which was to have proven our salvation in an emergency, since by means of it we could overcome the pull of any planet into the sphere of whose influence we might be carried. I breathed a sigh of relief as my eyes noted that the main battery of engines was functioning properly, since, as a matter of fact, we had not expected to have to rely at all upon the auxiliary generator, having stored sufficient quantities of the Eighth Ray of the various heavenly bodies by which we might be influenced, to carry us safely throughout the entire extent of the long voyage. West and Jay had joined us by this time, and I now called to Orthis, commanding him to open the door. He did something more to the generator and then arose, crossed the engine-room directly to the door, unbolted it and threw the door open. His hair was dishevelled, his face drawn, his eyes shining with a peculiar light, but withal his expression denoted a drunken elation that I did not at the moment understand.

“What have you been doing here, Orthis?” I demanded. “You are under arrest, and supposed to be in your quarters.”

“You’ll see what I’ve been doing,” he replied truculently, “and it’s done—it’s done—it can’t ever be undone. I’ve seen to that.”

I grabbed him roughly by the shoulder. “What do you mean? Tell me what you have done, or by God I will kill you with my own hands,” for I knew, not only from his words but from his expression, that he had accomplished something which he considered very terrible.

The man was a coward and he quailed under my grasp. “You wouldn’t dare to kill me,” he cried, “and it don’t make any difference, for we’ll all be dead in a few hours. Go and look at your damned compass.”