

Under The Moon Romena Akinyemi

1 AOL

Five hundred kilometres over Europe, Ship OM-45 moved north. In a room at the back of the ship, Kiah watched the numbers on the computer in front of him.

‘Time for dinner, ’ Rilla said.

The numbers changed quickly and Kiah's eyes didn't move. Rilla went across the room to his table. She began to watch the numbers, too.

‘What's wrong with the satellite? ’ she asked. She was a beautiful girl, about twenty years old, with long black hair and big eyes.

‘Nothing's wrong with the satellite, ’ Kiah answered quietly. ‘It's the AOL. ’ He began to write the numbers in the book on his table.

Suddenly, the numbers stopped changing. Kiah looked at Rilla. ‘Over Europe, ’ he said. ‘It's happening. The AOL is breaking up. There are big holes in the AOL and they're getting bigger. ’

‘You're right! Shall we see Captain Seru now, before dinner? ’

Kiah stood up. He was nearly two metres tall, with dark eyes and hair. ‘Yes, come on, ’ he said.

Quickly, they went to Captain Seru's room. They waited at the door.

‘Come in! ’ captain Seru called. She was a little woman with a fat face. ‘Come in! Would you like a drink? ’

‘No, thank you, ’ Kiah answered. ‘I'd like you to look at these numbers. ’ Kiah gave Captain Seru his book.

Captain Seru looked at the numbers. Suddenly, her face changed. ‘No, no, ’ she said. ‘I don't want to talk. It's late and I'm tired. Sit down and have a drink. ’

Kiah and Rilla sat down. There was a big window in Captain Seru's room. Kiah looked out of the window at the dark sky. He saw the Moon. It was cold and white in the dark sky.

‘ Captain Seru , ’ he began . ‘ It's important . Look at those numbers carefully. The AOL is beginning to—’

‘ Stop ! ’ captain Seru stood up and put her hands in her pockets. She went to the window and looked at the sky.

‘ Three hundred years ago , Earth nearly died , ’ Rilla said . ‘ Earth stopped dying because of the AOL. But now, over Europe, the AOL is breaking up. We would like you to talk to Earth Commander. ’

Captain Seru did not move. ‘ Do you remember Adai ? ’ she asked . She didn't wait for an answer. ‘ I was on his ship, two years ago. One evening, the satellite gave us interesting numbers about the AOL. We went back to Earth and saw Earth Commander. ’ captain Seru stopped speaking.

Rilla looked at Kiah. ‘ And then ? ’ she asked Captain Seru.

‘ Gog was angry, very angry, ’ captain Seru said. ‘ In the end, he sent Adai to the Moon. Adai's there now, Commander of the Moon colony, under the Moon. ’

Kiah waited for a second or two. ‘ I know about Adai. But we need to talk to Earth Commander again. These numbers are worse. ’

Captain Seru's face went red. ‘ You don't understand. I'm not going to talk to Gog. Last time, he sent me to a weather ship in the Antarctic ! This is my first Ship for two years ! ’ And Captain Seru began drinking.

Kiah stood up. ‘ Thank you, Captain Seru. ’

Captain Seru said nothing.

Kiah and Rilla left the room , and walked slowly downstairs . The Ship was dark and quiet. It was eight o'clock and every-body was at dinner.

‘ What are we going to do next ? ’ Rilla asked.

‘ I need to talk to Adai, ’ Kiah said.

‘ OK, talk to Adai. But he's far away on the Moon colony, ’ Rilla said. ‘ Let's visit Commander Zadak. ’

‘ Zadak? Commander of Australia? He's famous ! ’

‘ Yes. He's my father's friend. He worked with my father in Brazil ten years ago. Perhaps he can help us. ’

Kiah smiled. ‘ Good ! We return to Earth next week. I can phone Adai from Kisangani and then we can go to Australia. But now, I'm hungry ! Let's get some

dinner. ’

2 Visit to Australia

On Friday, after three weeks in space, Kiah and Rilla finished work and left Ship OM-45 on a space plane to Kisangani. Kiah phoned Adai and Rilla phoned Commander Zadak in Australia. The next morning they took an aeroplane to Sydney. A taxi took them from the airport to Commander Zadak's office, some kilometres north of Sydney.

‘Wait for us here, ’ Kiah said to the taxi driver.

Kiah and Rilla walked to the gate. About ten guards stood in front of the gate. Across the road, a train waited.

‘Rilla, OM-45, ’ Rilla said. ‘To see Commander Zadak at four-thirty. ’

‘Let me call the Commander's office, ’ the guard said.

Kiah and Rilla waited. It was hot and Kiah began to feel thirsty.

The guard came back. ‘I'm sorry, ’ he said. ‘The Com-mander can't see you. ’

‘But I talked to the Commander yesterday, ’ Rilla said.

‘He wanted to see us at four-thirty. ’

‘The Commander is leaving on the train in three minutes, ’ the guard said.

‘Can we wait and see him here? ’ Kiah asked.

‘No! ’ the guard shouted. ‘Get out of here! ’

Kiah and Rilla walked back to the taxi.

‘Where's the driver? ’ Kiah asked.

‘Look! He's sitting under that tree, ’ Rilla said.

Just then, Commander Zadak came out of the gate. He was a very tall, big man with blue eyes and a lot of white hair. Two guards marched in front of him, and two guards marched be-hind him. They all carried guns.

‘There he is! ’ Rilla cried. ‘Commander! ’ And she began to run along the road to him.

‘Commander Zadak did not stop. A guard opened the door of the train and the Commander got in. Slowly, the train began to move. ’

Kiah ran to the taxi and jumped in. Then he drove the taxi fast down the road. The taxi driver saw him and ran after him. The train began to move faster. Suddenly, Kiah drove the taxi off the road. He drove in front of the train and stopped.

The train came nearer. And then the train stopped, very near the taxi, and some guards jumped off. Kiah opened the door and got out of the taxi.

‘Put up your hands!’ the guards shouted.

Two of the guards began to hit Kiah.

‘Stop that!’ someone shouted. ‘Bring him over here!’ It was Commander Zadak.

Kiah stood in front of the Commander. Just then, Rilla arrived.

‘Oh, it's you!’ commander Zadak said. He did not smile. ‘Rilla, your father's going to be angry.’

‘We want to talk to you, Commander,’ Rilla said. ‘It's very important.’

‘Very well. I'm listening.’

Kiah began to talk. ‘Two years ago, Adai told you about the holes in the AOL. Now they're worse. The AOL is breaking up over Europe. Please look at these numbers and this satellite picture.’

He gave his book to Commander Zadak and the Commander looked at the numbers.

‘It's important, Commander,’ Kiah said. ‘In ten years Earth is going to die.’

‘You stopped my train because of this?’ commander Zadak asked. ‘Two years ago Adai talked to me about the AOL. Then he talked to Earth Commander, and what happened? Where is Adai now? Is the Moon colony helping the AOL?’

‘We know about Adai, Commander,’ Rilla said. ‘But someone needs to talk to Earth Commander again.’

‘I'm going to talk to Gog about rain, I can tell you that. Earth needs rain: there was no rain last winter. Half of Australia has no water and my trees here are dying. Without rain, many people are going to die. Is Gog going to understand that? I don't know!’

Commander Zadak began to walk back to his train. ‘Move that taxi!’ he called to his guards.

Some guards moved the taxi back to the road and then they jumped on to the train again. The train began to move.

‘OK,’ the taxi driver shouted. ‘What are you going to do next? Drive my taxi into the river?’

Kiah smiled. He took some money from his pocket and gave it to the taxi driver.

The taxi driver looked at the money. ‘OK, OK,’ he said. ‘Where now? Back to the airport?’

Kiah took Rilla's hand, ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Let's get back to Kisangani. We can phone Adai again tomorrow.’

3 Earth Commander

The next day in Kisangani, Kiah and Rilla waited quietly in an office in Gog's house. Suddenly, Commander Zadak came into the office and gave some letters to the man behind the table. He saw the two young people and stopped in front of them.

‘You again!’ he said. ‘What are you doing here?’

Kiah stood up. ‘Good morning, Commander. We're here because we want to see Earth Commander.’

‘I saw Earth Commander some minutes ago and talked to him about rain,’ Zadak said quietly. ‘But he didn't listen. Your captain, Seru, was here earlier this morning and began to tell him about the holes in the AOL. But Gog doesn't want to hear about our planet. He's always talking about Mars. In the end, he's going to destroy Earth.’

‘Please help us!’ Rilla cried. ‘Come and see Gog with us!’

‘No.’ Zadak looked at Kiah and then at Rilla with his blue eyes. ‘I'm not talking to Gog again. And you—Gog isn't going to listen to you. Be careful—and good luck!’

Commander Zadak opened the door and left the office.

Rilla looked at Kiah. ‘Earth Commander is a difficult man. I don't understand him.’

‘Everyone is afraid of him,’ Kiah said. ‘And Commander Zadak isn't going to help us.’

Kiah and Rilla waited. They waited and waited. At nearly twelve o'clock, a guard came into the office.

‘Come!’ he said.

Kiah and Rilla went with the guard. The house was big and old, with big windows and many doors. The guard went downstairs and opened one of the doors. There was nobody in the room.

‘Wait here,’ the guard said, and left.

Kiah and Rilla sat down on the expensive green and black chairs and looked at the expensive flowers on the tables. There were no windows in this room. Suddenly, the door opened and a tall, fat woman came in. Her name was Bel, and she was Gog's wife. She had a lot of long red hair and she wore an expensive blue dress. Bel liked expensive things. She carried a cat. The cat was black and white: half its face was black and half was white; half its body was black and half was white.

‘Why are you here? Why do you want to see Earth Commander?’ she asked.

Rilla stood up. ‘How do you do?’ she said. ‘We want to talk to Earth Commander about the AOL. We have new numbers from the satellite.’

Bel's face was red. ‘The AOL! Earth Commander knows about the AOL, and he is the best man—’

‘Excuse me,’ Kiah said quietly. ‘We want to help Earth Commander.’

Bel began to laugh. ‘Help? You?’ the cat jumped down and walked across the room. ‘How can you help? Why can't you understand? Listen. Earth Commander is working on the spaceship for Mars. It's difficult and expensive work.’ the cat jumped on to Rilla's chair and looked at her with its yellow eyes. ‘Two years ago, Adai wanted more money for the AOL—and Earth Commander sent him to the colony under the Moon. Now you're talking about the AoL. Do you want to go to the Moon, too?’

The door opened again and a different guard came in. ‘Excuse me. Earth Commander is ready now.’

Bel stood up. ‘You can see Earth Commander now,’ she said coldly. ‘But you're going to be sorry!’

The guard opened a different door, and Bel and the cat went into a beautiful room with expensive, very old tables and chairs. Rilla and Kiah went in behind them. There were no windows in the room, but a lot of pictures. There was Gog! The richest man on Earth; and the worst man on Earth. He was tall and fat, and without much hair. He sat behind a big table with a television, three computers and five telephones. He watched the television and didn't look at Kiah or Rilla. Two guards with guns stood behind him and two more guards stood near the door.

‘Here they are!’ Bel said. ‘They aren't friends, oh no! They want to talk

about the AOL, of course. No one under-stands about Mars—'

'That's all right, that's all right, ' Gog said quickly. And then he looked up, first at Rilla and then at Kiah. His eyes were cold and green. 'I know about you two, ' he said. 'Your captain told me about you. You're famous! Two children! You want to help planet Earth, is that right?' He waited. The cat jumped on to his table and sat down in front of the television.

'Yes, Commander, ' Kiah began. 'The AOL is breaking up—'

'When? Tonight? Tomorrow?' Gog said angrily. 'I heard this old story two years ago, from Adai. Everyone comes here and wants money-money for the AOL, money for rain, money for the Moon colony. But I am Earth Commander, and you are nobody! I know about the AOL and the AOL is good for a hundred years! '

'But the satellite—'Kiah began again.

'Be quiet!' Gog cried. 'I am Earth Commander! I'm not going to give money for the AOL! Or for rain! Or for the Moon!' Gog looked at the guards near the door. 'Take them—take them away. I don't want to hear them. '

The guards moved behind Kiah and Rilla, and Bel began to laugh. 'Goodbye!' she said. 'You're not going to the Moon, you're going to prison! You can talk about the holes in the AOL there! '

4 Prison 888

Commander Zadak was in his room at the biggest hotel in Kisangani. Suddenly, he heard the phone.

'Commander?' someone said, very quietly. 'A man and a woman—from Ship OM-45—in prison 888. ' the phone went dead. Zadak put the phone down, stood up, and left his room.

Prison 888 was a big white building without windows, near Gog's house. There were a lot of guards at the gate, and some more guards marched past the bulding. All the guards carried guns.

Commander Zadak walked across the road to the prison. 'I want to visit someone. My name is Commander Zadak. '

'I'm sorry, Commander, ' a guard said. 'We can't open the gate. Nobody can go in without a letter from Earth Commander. '

'That's all right, ' Zadak said, and walked along the road, past the prison.

A guard ran behind him. 'Excuse me, Commander,' he said quickly. 'Please come back tonight. I can open the back gate at midnight. You can see the two people from Ship OM-45.'

Zadak looked at the guard. 'Your captain's going to kill you.'

The guard smiled. 'My captain phoned you about the two people from OM-45. He's the brother of Captain Seru.'

Zadak didn't smile. 'The prison commander is going to kill you and your captain.'

'It doesn't matter,' the guard said. 'We want to help.'

'Midnight,' Zadak said, and walked away.

At midnight there were four guards at the front gate of prison 888, and there was one guard at the back gate. The guard opened the gate and Zadak went in. The guard said nothing. They walked downstairs into a big room. A lot of prisoners slept on the floor because there were no beds or chairs. Kiah and Rilla sat on the floor near the door.

'You can talk for five minutes,' the guard said quietly.

'The next guard arrives at 12. 15.'

Kiah and Rilla stood up. 'Good evening, Commander,' they said.

Zadak looked at the prisoners. 'Why are all these people here?' he said to Kiah and Rilla. 'They're in prison because Gog doesn't like them. I talk to Gog about rain, I talk to him about the AOL, but he never listens. Today, someone told me about some fires in the new forest here in Africa; but Gog doesn't want to hear about those fires.' Zadak laughed angrily. 'And he doesn't want to hear about my trees in Australia. He never listens to me. He's always thinking about Mars, Not about our beautiful planet Earth.'

Kiah listened carefully. 'Take it easy, Commander,' he said quietly. 'Please talk to Adai. Adai wants to help. He can come back from the Moon and help you.'

'No,' Zadak said. 'I phoned Adai this afternoon. He's a good man and he wants to help. But I don't need help. I'm going to stop Gog: I'm going to kill him.'

Kiah closed his eyes for a minute. 'Gog's guards have guns. They can kill you, Commander,' he said. 'You need more people to help. Wait for Adai. He can help you to look for more people.'

'No, Kiah', Zadak said quietly. 'I don't want more people. Adai can come back to Earth after Gog is dead—after I am dead, perhaps. I don't want Adai to

die, too. '

'Excuse me, Commander, ' the guard said. He looked at the clock near the door.

'OK. Let's go, ' Zadak said to the guard. He looked at Rilla and then at Kiah. His eyes were very blue. 'Goodbye, ' he said.

'Goodbye, Commander, ' Kiah said.

'Be careful! ' Rilla cried. 'And good luck! '

Early that morning, Earth Commander's house was quiet. A guard opened the door.

'Good morning, Commander Zadak, ' he said. 'Earth Commander isn't in his office. '

'That's all right, ' Zadak said. 'I can wait. '

Zadak went upstairs and waited.

At eight o'clock Bel came into the room. 'Good morning, Commander, 'she said. 'You're early this morning. Are you happier today? Earth Commander was very angry with you yesterday. Don't begin talking about rain or the AOL today. '

Zadak smiled, but his blue eyes were cold. 'No, ' he said. 'I'm not going to talk about rain today. '

Just then, Gog came into the room. He looked at Zadak. 'What's wrong? Why are you here at eight o'clock in the morning? '

Zadak took his gun from his pocket. Gog saw the gun and his face went white. His eyes were dark and afraid. For a second nobody moved.

Suddenly, Bel's black and white cat ran into the room.

'Guards! Guards! ' Bel shouted.

The cat jumped at Zadak, and Zadak hit the cat away from him. Bel ran across the room to Gog and Zadak, at that second, shot at Gog. But Bel was between him and Gog. She gave a cry and fell to the floor. Her hair looked very red on the black floor.

'No! ' Gog cried. 'You shot Bel! '

Three guards ran into the room with their big guns and stood in front of Gog.

'Kill him! ' Gog shouted, and began to help Bel.

Zadak looked at the guards and then at Bel and Gog. Kiah was right: he was going to die.

‘ I'm sorry , Kiah . I'm sorry , Adai , ’ he said quietly . The guards shot Zadak. Slowly, he fell to the floor.

5 Forest fires

Later that morning, four guards took Rilla to Gog's of-ice . His face looked tired and his eyes were red.

‘ Leave us , ’ he said to the guards . Then he looked at Rilla . ‘ Tell me about Kiah. When did you first meet him? Is Zadak his friend? What do they talk about? ’

Rilla looked down at the floor and said nothing.

‘ Come on , tell me ! ’ Gog said angrily . He waited , but Rilla said nothing . ‘ Tell me about Zadak , then . Your father and Commander Zadak were friends. Now, you're talking to Zadak about the AOL. I know that. What is Zadak saying? ’

‘ Why? Why do you want to know about Commander Zadak? ’ Rilla asked.

‘ I'm asking the questions , not you , ’ Gog said . ‘ Did you see Zadak yesterday? ’

‘ The AOL is important, not Commander Zadak, ’ Rilla said.

Gog watched Rilla carefully. ‘ Zadak is dead. ’

‘ No ! ’ Rilla cried.

‘ He is dead , ’ Gog said again . ‘ You lost your friend , here in this building, early this morning. My guards shot him. ’

Rilla's face went white. ‘ What happened? Tell me ! ’

‘ I'm going to tell you one thing , ’ Gog said angrily . ‘ I'm going to destroy Australia. I'm going to burn Zadak's new forest there . You can tell all your friends ! Zadak wanted to kill me, but I killed him. He wanted money for rain, money for the AOL, and now he's dead. You can tell all those prisoners in prison 888. They wanted to stop me , but they can't now . I'm going to Mars ! Bel always wanted to go to Mars. ’ He began to hit the table with his hand. ‘ I'm going to leave this dead planet ! Nobody can stop me ! ’

‘ You're crazy , ’ Rilla said. ‘ You killed Zadak, but one day someone is going to

kill you. ’

Gog stood up . His face was tired and he looked ill . ‘ Be qui-et ! ’ he said. ‘ Guards! Take her away. Back to 888. ’

The guards came in and took Rilla out.

‘ What happened ? ’ she asked them. ‘ Commander Zadak is dead; why is Gog angry? ’

The guards said nothing. But after they returned to the gate of 888, a guard said to Rilla, very quietly: ‘ Bel is dead. Zadak didn't shoot Gog, but he shot Bel, before the guards shot him. ’

A guard took Rilla into the prison, and soon she was with Kiah again.

‘ What happened? ’ Kiah asked. ‘ Tell me. ’

Rilla put her hands over her face and began to cry . ‘ Zadak is dead , ’ she began. ‘ He didn't kill Gog. He killed Bel before the guards shot him, and now Gog is going to destroy Australia. ’

Kiah sat down on the floor next to Rilla. His face was sad.

‘ Don't cry, ’ he said quietly.

Three or four prisoners came across the room.

‘ What's the matter? ’ they asked.

‘ Zadak is dead, ’ Kiah said. ‘ But Bel is dead, too. ’

‘ What's going to happen next? ’ someone asked. But nobody answered.

The next afternoon, Captain Seru's brother took Kiah and Rilla to a little room at the back of the prison . They sat down , and five minutes later Captain Seru arrived. Nobody smiled.

‘ You were right, Captain, ’ Kiah said. ‘ Gog sent us to prison because we told him about the holes in the AOL. ’

Seru smiled . ‘ You were right, Kiah, ’ she said. ‘ Those satellite numbers were very bad. I began to tell Gog, but he didn't listen to me. ’

‘ Would you like some coffee? And some sandwiches? ’ seru's brother asked.

‘ Yes , please , ’ seru said . ‘ I'm hungry . ’ she looked at Kiah and Rilla. ‘ Things are very bad. ’

‘What's happening?’ Rilla asked.

‘You know about Zadak? And Bel?’

‘Yes. Gog told Rilla yesterday,’ Kiah said.

Seru smiled, but her eyes were not happy. ‘Gog talked to me this morning,’ she said. Her brother came in with the coffee and sandwiches and Seru began to eat. ‘Gog wants to know about Zadak, and about you,’ she said. ‘He's going to kill us all, I think, before he goes to Mars.’

Suddenly, Rilla felt ill. ‘I can't eat now!’ she cried. But she took some coffee and began to drink. ‘Let's get out of here,’ she said. ‘Perhaps we can get a plane to Brazil and go to my family.’

‘Difficult,’ seru said. ‘Last night fires began in the new forest in Europe, and they're moving across Europe. The fires in Africa are burning fast. Gog began to destroy Zadak's forest in Australia yesterday.’

‘Did you phone Adai?’ Kiah asked.

‘Adai! You never stop talking about Adai. What can he do?’ Rilla said. She felt angry.

Seru looked at Rilla for a minute. ‘Yes, I phoned Adai before I came here. I told him about Zadak and Bel, and about the fires. He asked about you, Kiah. He can't come down at Kisangani airport because Gog is there with a lot of his guards. Ship MARS 4 is nearly ready and Gog is watching it. He wants to leave Earth tomorrow.’

‘How can Adai help us?’ Rilla asked. ‘He can't shoot all the guards here.’

Captain Seru finished the last sandwich. ‘Let's leave that to Adai,’ she said. ‘We can do nothing.’

‘Are you going to stay here?’ Kiah asked.

‘Yes,’ seru answered. ‘Adai is coming to the prison after he arrives on Earth.’

‘Oh yes?’ Rilla said tiredly. ‘But when? Gog can kill us before Adai comes.’ ‘No, he can't,’ seru's brother said. ‘You can stay here, in this room. Gog's guards are all afraid—afraid of the fires, afraid of the people. They aren't going to look for you here.’

6 Spaceship to the Moon

And so they waited. And waited. Rilla slept in her chair. Kiah and Seru talked quietly. Seru's brother came and went. Most of the prison guards ran away with the prisoners. Seven or eight people—some prisoners and some guards—didn't want to run away, so they came into the room and waited, too.

Ten o'clock came, then eleven o'clock. It was very quiet. Seru walked up and down the room. Kiah sat next to Rilla. Seru's brother came into the room again.

‘It's after midnight,’ he said.

Just then, they heard the noise of a plane. Kiah stood up. ‘Come on,’ he said. ‘Let's get out of the building.’

Quietly, they left the building. It was a dark, hot night. There were no guards in front of the prison, so they went to the gate and waited there. Suddenly, they saw the plane. It was a little plane, and it was going to come down on the road in front of the prison!

Rilla took Kiah's hand. ‘You were right,’ she said. ‘I'm sorry.’

Kiah smiled. He began to feel happy. ‘That's all right. I understand. I know Adai very well, and you don't.’

The plane stopped and someone opened the door. Kiah ran across to the plane.

‘How many can you take?’ he called. ‘There are twelve of us.’

‘That's all right,’ someone said. ‘Quickly, the spaceship is waiting.’

The twelve people got into the little plane, and the plane began to move. Rilla looked at the captain of the plane. He was tall, with brown hair. He looked nice. Was this the famous Commander Adai?

‘Where is the spaceship?’ Kiah asked.

‘At the old airport,’ the man said. ‘One of the fires is moving very quickly across the new forest. It's going to arrive at the west of Kisangani before tomorrow, I think. But the old airport is OK.’ then the man looked at Kiah and smiled warmly. ‘My brother’, he said. ‘My little brother, in prison 888!’

‘Your brother? Commander Adai?’ Rilla asked. ‘But you didn't tell me that!’

Kiah smiled. ‘Nobody knew,’ he said. ‘But now—it doesn't matter now. Everyone can know.’

The little plane came down at the old airport, south of the town.

‘Let's be careful,’ Adai said. ‘We don't want someone to shoot us before we leave.’

The spaceship was dark. Quickly, everyone jumped down from the plane and ran across to the spaceship. Soon, the spaceship left Earth, and everyone looked down at the burning planet. They saw the dark smoke over Africa, and here and there, through the smoke, the red, angry fires.

‘The fires are destroying the forest very quickly,’ seru said.

Adai put his hand on Kiah's arm. ‘I'm sorry about Zadak,’ he said.

‘I wanted him to wait,’ Kiah said. ‘I wanted him to talk to you.’

Adai's face was sad. ‘He didn't want me to die,’ he said quietly. ‘He was a good man. And now he's dead.’

‘And Gog is going to Mars,’ seru said.

‘Mars? He's crazy! Mars isn't ready for people,’ Adai said.

‘But Gog wants to go, and so he's going,’ seru said. ‘Tell us about the Moon colony. That isn't ready: you need more money.’

‘No, I don't,’ Adai said. ‘The Moon colony is ready. I asked for more money because of Zadak: I wanted to give him money for rain. But Gog didn't listen; he wanted all Earth's money for the spaceship to Mars.’

‘I don't want to leave Earth,’ Rilla said sadly. She felt tired and afraid.

Adai smiled warmly at Rilla. ‘Nobody wants to leave Earth,’ he said. ‘But under the Moon is the best home for us now. Wait and see. The Moon colony is a beautiful, wonderful country, with rivers and rain, forests and flowers, buildings—and the first town. You can visit Earth again soon, and bring more people to the Moon colony. We all want to help Earth, because it's our first home. I know that. At the same time, you are going to be happy under the Moon.’

Suddenly, someone cried: ‘Look at the Moon!’

And through the window of the spaceship they saw the Moon before them, cold, white and beautiful; and under the Moon, there was the Moon colony!