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LITTLE AMERICA ON THE MOON

by ARTHUR J. BURKS

illustrated by EMSH

A base on the Moon was the key to space, the stepping stone to the planets. It was more than that. A nation that controlled the Moon was the master of Earth, too

SEVEN prospective Moon mothers had rocketed back to Earth to bear their children. Kay Archer was resolved to be the eighth. Six mothers had so far found excuses to delay their return to Luna and their prisoner husbands. Kay was *sure* she would return to Monte, even in his prison.

Kay stood behind her glass window, keeping up her courage, and stared at the brazen dusty waste which extended to the base of Mount Pyramid. Not even an A-bomb explosion would make a sound out there. There was no atmosphere on

Moon save that which its prisoners carried with them.

"Keep watching, Kay," the endless meteorite 'rain' seemed to whisper, "they'll be coming 'round Pyramid any moment now."

She swallowed a scream. For seven periods of twenty four hours, the first half of the two-week lunar day, she had spent eons at this fantastically deep-inset window, watching for Monte and his associate explorers, trying not to feel sorry for herself and the child to come. She was no more prisoner than was Monte, but Monte



was dedicated to his prison, which none who lived on Moon could escape.

In Archer Mansion itself each separate room was a cell, sealed into the mountain to protect it from solar radiation, from constant bombardment by millions of meteorites, mostly too small to see, and to retain the processed atmosphere required for life. If ever the seal were punctured and the synthetic atmosphere escaped into the void, it would take the mangled remains of its occupants with it.

Buxton Mountain, the "home" mountain, named for Angus Buxton, whose millions of Earth dollars were exploiting Moons resources, was honeycombed with "houses" like this of the first family, the Archers. Each house was a separate prison, locked away by itself. There was little visiting back and forth. Few women cared to crawl through the endless series of connecting airlocks a second time, and only fanatics did it a third time. Nature was rapidly making it quite impossible for Kay, even to consider visiting other

Moon "widows." Television served, but coldly.

The first of the balloon men—so she always thought of them—came into sight around the left-hand sharp ridge of Pyramid Mountain. That would be, would have to be, Monte. But one, even one who loved him, couldn't tell just by looking. They all looked alike, and all looked monstrous. Only her heart identified her man. Monte and his dozen associates were prisoners, each of them also apart, in their cumbersome space-suits, which held the barest necessities of life, especially oxygen; helmet radios, concentrated foods, and gadgets. The gadgets were Geiger counters, compasses, theodolites, sketch paper, water....

Now all the returning explorers were in sight and Kay sighed with relief. There had been no casualties. Those dozen men, in their space suits, walked side by side, slept side by side, with horrible death every instant they were outside their homes, offices, shops, garages or laboratories, their constant companion. The tiniest of meteorites, penetrating

a space suit, meant oblivion. No man could help another.

As if they feared some accident during the last lap, as if they feared some hideous pursuit, the returnees started to run. This was always, to Kay, the most heartbreaking phase of the return. In spite of its ridiculous appearance, she had never known any Lunar inhabitant to laugh.

Gravity pull on the Moon was one sixth that of the Earth. Roughly, then, when a man set out to step a yard, he was likely to execute a slow-motion leap of eighteen feet, and to land with considerable awkwardness. Monte had struggled, as had his men, to master normal walking on the surface of the Moon. But once in sight of home they no longer tried. They ran. They jumped high, like suddenly released toy balloons—eight-foot high, four-foot thick, oval “toy” balloons, equipped with helmets so, Monte said, “you can tell which end is up”—flailing their arms to maintain balance as they dropped to the blazing surface. And all the time, Kay knew, they were being pelted by meteorites. Even in sight of home

a man could die horribly.

Kay was sure that every wife whose husband returned with her's, stood behind her zlass window, heart in mouth, praying her husband safely home. All except those wives who, when their times were near, returned to Mother Earth to bear their children. She tried not to remember them, especially the three who had asked for divorces from their Moon-prisoner husbands.

“I *can't* bear a child in this big silent jail!” Kay wailed inside. “Why should I be first, my child be first? I'll tell Monte before he overpowers me just by being with me.”

SHE was always rebellious while he was away. When he was at home, in this largest of his several “offices”, it wasn't so bad. Their home was the counterpart of her former Earth home, except that nothing in it, actually, was “Earth.” Oh, it was real enough, but it wasn't what they pretended. The chairs, tables, stools, beds, were not wooden at all. They were made of the many lunar plastics Monte and his associates had developed under the

constant verbal nagging of Old Angus Buxton, President of Lunar Industrial, and Monte's boss, who snarled across space from New York City offices:

"What are you producing for my money?"

Kay knew what she would do after the baby was born, on Earth, out of prison; she would go to Old Angus and call him all the names she had invented expressly for him, during endless Moon-hours of meditation. Now, she pushed him out of mind, concentrated her mind, body and soul, on Monte. She watched the jiggling balloons make their silly, heart-hurting way across the treeless, shrubless, otherwise lifeless, half mile stretch between the base of Pyramid and the base of Mount Buxton—whose heart and arteries was Buxton City—and vanish into the outer airlock, whose door was invisible under an overhang below her window. Her mind began to follow the endless series of airlocks by which the men, mole-like, returned to their own homes. Small airlocks, near the last, through which they crawled; fearfully

restricted airlocks designed to allow the escape of not one wisp of oxygen more than absolutely necessary.

Kay began to compose herself. She fought to regain cheerfulness, to find smiles, to bring joy to her eyes, to perk up, to be the Kay her husband had every right to expect at journey's end. She even addressed her son or daughter—daughter, she hoped—to whom, in the silent watches, wherein she could hear nothing but the ceaseless humming of dynamos in Mount Buxton's heart, she often spoke as one courageous lady to another.

"Help me not to hurt him!"

She turned, walked away from the window, into her spacious, indirectly lighted, air-conditioned (even the oxygen processed, she reminded herself, from the deep crust of the Moon) sitting room, and lowered herself into the easy chair that faced the room end of the last airlock. She watched the plastic door. . . .

"Cat!" she snapped at herself. "Cat! Watching for the mouse to come out the hole! But anyway, it's *my* mouse,

and I'm only going to *half* eat him!"

She heard meteorites on the roof. The roof, she knew, was a thousand feet thick, and she couldn't have heard the striking of meteorites if she had been outside, within inches of where they landed. But she heard them anyway, as she had been hearing them, off and on, when she forgot *not* to hear them, for weeks. Millions of space-pebbles, some of them not pebbles, but rocks, boulders, monoliths, endlessly hitting the roof. No one had ever heard them, but Kay. She heard them, she knew, because she knew about them, because they constantly menaced Monte when he was outside, because other women had insisted they heard them. They sounded like steady rain on a composition roof, or on a tent-on-Earth.

"I am not going mad," Kay told herself softly. "I am the wife of the first Lunar-pioneer. I *can't* be going mad. It's just the always being locked up!"

"But every human being, every living thing on Earth, darling," Monte had told her

patiently, the first time she had told him of her growing fear of her escape-proof prison, "is a prisoner, a prisoner of Earth's atmosphere."

"Maybe, but did it ever feel like a prison to you, when you ran barefoot, as a boy, working *hard* to jump twelve feet, instead of cavorting eighteen feet while trying to step? Did it seem like a prison when you went on picnics with me, went fishing with your friends, went skiing in winter, dived into swimming pools. . . ."

She fought not to remember now. He had suggested then that she go back to Earth, at least until the child came, and she had vehemently refused even to consider it. She had ever since refused. But this time, when she hadn't much margin of time for decision, she would. . . .

The plastic door shot open. Monte Archer, all six feet two of him, blond hair, lighter by much than Kay's auburn, crawled like a huge reptile into the sitting room. He scrambled to his feet, took a deep breath of fresh air, opened his arms—and Kay landed in them, un-

aware of rising from the chair to meet him.

"Cat!" cried Monte.

"Rat!" cried Kay, falling in again with their private little game—which, likely enough, other wives and husbands played.

Monte held her out at arm's length, noting her motherly housedress, her comfortable old shoes, the bright ribbon in her hair.

"We're not parents yet?" he asked.

"Silly!" she retorted. "What do you expect? You've been gone just half a Moon-day."

"That would be seven days and nights on Earth," he snapped back. "Isn't that long enough for you to miss me?"

"One second," she went instantly grave, "is too long for you to be away, especially now. And when I say now I mean the *always* now."

HE sat in the easy chair in the window recess, holding her in his lap. She could feel that he was bursting to tell her of his experiences.

"Tell me, Monte," she said gently.

"You tell first, Kay," he

said. "Surely *something* has happened."

"Yes. Doc Probeck advises me to go back to Earth for hospitalization. Says he can handle it here well enough, but who wants to have the first Moon-child? I've told him to stand by to usher in that said first Moon child!"

"Maybe not, Kay," said Monte slowly. "I've been thinking . . ."

"Even out *there* you've been thinking of me?"

"Whenever old Angus Buxton let up on us long enough to give me a chance. The old codger had himself tuned in with all our helmet radios, from Central Broadcasting in Buxton City, of course, and came in every hour on the hour with this: 'what do you see now? Any prospects? No out-croppings? See any plant life?' He'd talk to each of us separately then, as if he didn't trust any of us. Tried to use each of us as a spy on the others."

"And you're the City Manager here!"

"No subordinate is manager, really, while Old Angus lives. Some day I'm going to tell him

what he can do with his job!"

"When, Monte?"

There was a moment of stillness. Then, slowly, the big man answered his comparatively diminutive wife.

"Never, I guess, Kay. You know how I feel. The Moon is the key to all our solar system, just as our artificial satellites are keys to the Moon, were, still are. Thanks to the low escape velocity...."

"Five thousand four hundred miles an hour, compared to thirty thousand miles on Earth!" said Kay softly. "One and a half miles per second, one sixth the required speed on Earth."

"You never forget my little lectures, do you, Kay?"

"I keep them in my heart," said Kay, "and argue with them while you're away. They're all I have to talk to. I'm not complaining, just telling you."

"You're a true spaceman's wife, Kay. If wives who went back to Earth to have babies—then stayed—had had your guts...."

She put her palm over his lips. He must not be allowed to say something he would bit-

terly regret when she told him she had made up her mind not to be the first Earth Mother on the Moon. She delayed, however, for "that light" was in his eyes again.

"I'm a peaceful man," he said. "Dad was a veteran of World War Two. He knew thousands of veterans of World War One. Their talk, some I had straight, some secondhand, cured me of all desire to go to war. But I'm a realist. War hasn't ended for man, not yet. Do you realize, Kay, that German V-2 rockets, developed only as they were at the end of World War Two—they've been improved immeasurably since then—could be fired from Moon to targets on Earth, right now? Even the new ones can't bracket the Moon from Earth, not yet, but we *have* the Moon. Turn some of its craters into bombproof launching sites, and we are masters of the Earth! And that's not all: Moon is the key, a master satellite, on which all conditions are right for it to serve as steppingstone to Mars, Mercury, Venus, Pluto, Uranus, Saturn...."

"Since the Beginning it has been the Great Bottleneck," she reminded him. "Now, you and the others are expanding that neck."

"And some of us will be first on Mars, some will be first on Venus. . . ." He broke off suddenly, became very still. He had something to say that required forethought. While he marshalled his thoughts she gave thought to how she would word her decision to return home for the birth of their daughter. Minutes moved.

Kay listened to the "rain" on the distant roof, separated from this sitting room by millions upon millions of tons of rock. She knew she heard the meteorites only in her imagination. When she *really* heard them, and *believed* she heard them, it would be too late to go home. She would be mad. She shook her head; she would never lose balance.

But they were prisoners. The atmosphere of the house always whispered, always eddied as if it moved on tiptoe. Nothing was Earthian in the house, in all Buxton City, except the people. Kay wore Earthian clothes, hopelessly dated, she

was sure, much worn. Old Angus didn't grant space on his cargo spaceships for non-essentials—like clothes, furniture, food, tools. He had at first, but not since, five years ago, Monte and his men had found ways to synthesize almost everything.

"I've located ideal rocket-launching sites, Kay," murmured Monte. "We've found outcroppings of new ores we believe to be priceless. We've even found, in deep craters, pockets of atmosphere, mist, clouds. That suggests that atmosphere comparable to Earth's can, possibly, one day be pumped into Moon's gravity pull. We've surveyed the site of a new mining town. It will be called Archer City. Old Angus said so!"

He whirled on her before she could gasp her surprise.

"None of that matters, Kay," he said harshly. "It matters to me, but I'm a fanatic. It matters to old Angus because he's Scotch, the third richest man on Earth, with the yen to be the richest. It matters to me because I see something universally magnificent in mankind reaching for the stars. I'm

proud to be one of the first of the reachers. You know, since I wore my first spaceman's suit, at age six, I've dreamed of Earthmen on the planets of the solar system. The dream will come true; it must. But you're my wife, and you come first, Kay. This time I'm going to insist. You're going home for the birth of our daughter!"

KAY did not answer. Here he was, urging her to do the very thing she had been working herself up to tell him she had decided to do. It was all so easy. All she had to do was ask Monte to arrange with Old Angus for space on the next cargo ship to Earth, and the thing was done. For *months*, maybe as long as a year, she would not know what Monte did. She wouldn't be reaching out to him with her heart across the deadly dusty surface of Moon, in terror lest he die out there. Not knowing what he did, she might comfort herself that "no news is good news."

"No," she heard herself saying softly. "No, Monte! I'm staying right here. Maybe we'll

call our first child Virginia Dare!"

What made her pretend like this, she asked herself? She was trying to escape the drag of her conscience. She knew she was going back, but she could see that Monte, having made up his mind, in agony, perhaps, because he had been five years on the Moon without her—he hadn't returned home since coming out, seven years before—was determined. She would allow him to persuade her.

"I'm your husband, Kay. I know what's best," said Monte.

"You're a bouncing balloon," she chided him. "You're so wrapped up in your work I half expect you to try to crawl home with your space suit on. I'm always surprised when you reach here in your comfortable home clothes. How could you know what's best for *me*? Besides, Monte, separation does strange things, especially if the separation is by vast space. Seven Moon wives have gone back. One has returned. The others, possibly, never will. I'm here. I've been here five years. I can stand it. I'll go back only when you do."

"Then I'll throw up my job and go back with you! I'm not too keen about a Moon child. There are half a dozen men here who can fill my shoes. I haven't been homesick since you came out and married me, but I can work up a good case of it, if I give it a little thought!"

"*You* can't go back. Not ever. Not and be happy, that's certain. This is your job. You belong here. I belong with you. So does our child."

"You mean you don't want to go?" a great obvious hope was in his words, his eyes. She was not good at lying, not while he looked into her face.

"I want to go. Earth is home. But I want to stay more than I want to go." This *can't* be true, what I'm saying, she thought. I don't want to stay more than I want to go. I just want Monte with me. But half the time, even here, he leaves me alone. If I can endure it half the time, I can endure it more—on Earth. Then, when the child is born, and we return . . . but suppose there were something that made it impossible for the child to return?

Suppose Old Angus clamped down a rule: no children to the Moon! He'd been more arbitrary than that, repeatedly. But he hadn't so far gone to such lengths with his employees and their families. He hadn't had to. Women had returned home, and stayed.

"Prisoners," said Monte. "I've been a prisoner for seven years. I expect to be a prisoner the rest of my life. To go home, become acclimated, then return here to do all over again the job of becoming a Moon-man, would be just too much. Maybe that's why women haven't. . . ."

He pushed her from him, almost roughly. He stood, turned, holding her hand, and walked back out of the window recess, back into the sitting room. He looked at the familiar things, and Kay could read his mind. To him this was *home*, a refuge. It wasn't a prison. It was the big world into which he escaped from his working hours inside the space-suit. Deep rugs, atop plastic "wood", hid away the solid granite floor. Monte's hands hadn't done every bit of the work on his

home, but his mind had directed it, his hands had done enough to give him a sense of possession. And by the grace of Old Angus, Monte *owned* his home. There was even a fireplace in one end of the sitting room; but the fire in it wasn't real, unless neon lights are real.

There were "bear", "tiger", "wolf" and "buffalo" rugs scattered about. The room looked to be that of an enthusiastic sportsman. But actually no bear, tiger, wolf or buffalo rug had ever been rocketed to Moon. It had amused Monte to produce these items, so true to life, he insisted, they would have fooled real bear, tiger, wolf or buffalo. Buxton City produced such items for sale to homesick men and women who tried, because they couldn't bring home with them to Moon, to reproduce Earth on Moon. Old Angus, while they were manufactured on Moon, made a good profit on each item.

"One day synthetic items like these," said Monte, in a voice of wonder, "will produce Earthian culture on all the

planets of the sun—made right on the planets."

Kay held back her scream with difficulty. They were not *real*. They were all "moon." They were fake, phony....

But wonder, honest, sincere wonder, showed in Monte's face as he led Kay from room to room. If he remembered that Kay spent all her waking and sleeping hours in these seven rooms, he did not refer to the fact. *He* had been away. She was always a prisoner; he felt himself a free man only when he was here.

Monte, holding her hand, paused to touch the lintel of the door leading into the dining room; a door with a sill, a door that swung, a door that was a *door!* As if, amid eternal, inescapable privacy, there were any need for a door. But the wood of the door, the sill, the lintels, was a triumph for Monte and his associates. It was Moon "wood", and back on Earth Old Angus was selling it in competition with wood products still procurable on earth; selling it and coining money—from the work of Monte's hands and brains.

The dining room table, the

chairs, the silver service—which was Moon “silver”—the cups, saucers, plates, bowls, all were manufactured on the Moon, for transport to Earth. Tableware was of indestructible “china.”

“Nothing is *real!*” murmured Kay. She couldn’t help it. The words just popped out.

“To me, every bit of it is real. Steel isn’t real, or nickle, or copper, or any alloy, or any plastic, any more than are these things. And we’ve made them here, within seven years after landing! And when I started with Old Angus scientists said we wouldn’t even reach the Moon short of a century! Can’t you still feel the wonder of what we have done?”

“I can feel it, Monte,” she replied, clasping his hand even more tightly, “but I’m afraid, too. Eventually, when all worlds have been conquered, what is man going to do for his restlessness?”

“Start interplanetary wars, maybe—if he hasn’t learned anything in the last two thousand years! There’ll come a day, Kay, and our children will

see it, when Moon is just a way-station to the Universe, like a railway terminal on Earth. With the founding of Archer City we’ll have started *that*. A few more rails laid, a few more pressure cars, and we’re on our way. At the same time, I’ll be organizing the rocket-launching sites, aiming at Mars!”

Vast rebellion seethed in her.

“He’s insisting I go home,” she told herself. “But he’s doing everything he can, pulling out all the stops, to sell me on the idea of staying here, of deciding *myself* to stay here. He’s telling me, without words, how much our home means to *him*. He’s asking me, without words, if it doesn’t mean even more to *me*. Sonny, that’s no way to pin down Kathryn. The more you tear-jerk me the more my heart calls me home.”

But she couldn’t induce herself, really, to resent his technique. He was probably totally unaware that he was most effectively begging. Maybe his heart cried out. Certainly no woman could fail to respond to a man’s love, so clearly indicated.

"I can manage here, nicely," Monte said. "I managed in three rooms before you came. Now there are seven, and with you in every one of them, in spirit. . . . yes, I'll manage. It won't be long."

SLOWLY they went through each room. To him it was home, this "house"; to her it was home only when Monte was there, though at all other times she had tried with all her heart to make it *seem* to be home.

And, if Monte feared to go back to Earth, lest he find thought of return to Moon, and re-acclimatization, unendurable, what would it be like for *her*? She had never actually become accustomed to the rabbit-warrens of Buxton City. Houses, garages, stores, barber-shops, laboratories, all dispersed, connected by tunnels through which pressure cars rumbled; homes connected by small locks through which one belly-crawled with the weight of Buxton Mountain on one's back. The mountain itself was divided into compartments, so that if one blew out, the rest had a chance of survival. It

was a dreadful way to live, in such a place, but their tomorrows, Monte kept insisting, with each new conquest, would be infinitely better.

"I'll be home," he told her now, when they had visited each room, and each had *seemed*, momentarily, new again to Kay because they were new to Monte after his sortie into the outside, "until you've left for Earth. There's so much to prepare before we can move a pioneer party to Archer City: a branch pressure-car line, living pressure-domes to be used by pairs until houses can be mined; food, which means installation of hydroponic tanks. . . ."

Even the food wasn't real, she thought. She had eaten all manner of Earth vegetables and fruits, grown in hydroponic "gardens" on the surface, protected by plastics from meteorites, from the terrific heat by day, the sub-sub-Arctic cold by night. They had tasted all right, always, when she shut her eyes and pretended they came from gardens of Earth—as, secondhand, they had!—but when she remembered she felt as if they *had* to leave her

hungry for a real Earth meal.

After they had become acquainted again, they sat before their tele-screen and visited with friends in other houses, some of them miles away through the heart of the mountain. Kay shuddered. Some of her women friends actually occupied "homes" so deep in Buxton Mountain that they never saw the outside at all, as Kay did through her glass window. Oh, there were tele-screen connections, but all they showed the deepest-recessed viewers was how completely they were imprisoned.

"I'm insisting that Kay go back to New York to have our daughter, Helen," Monte said to Helen Bodine, whose husband was one of Monte's most brilliant scientists, so occupied with his work he seemed to have completely forgotten that he lived in the mountain's heart, like a mole in a shadowed garden.

"Of course she should go," said Helen promptly. "I wouldn't *think* of having a child in Buxton City, though Doc Probeck is the best doctor around. It's just.....it's.....well...."

Kay nudged Monte. Monte recovered, broke in. He had forgotten, apparently, that Helen Bodine had no children, would never bear a child.

"That's what I keep telling her," said Monte. "But you know how some women are. She thinks her place is with me, as if *I* were the baby. She insists she won't go."

Kay met Helen's direct gaze in the tele-screen. Kay had told Helen she *was* going back to New York, but that she scarcely knew how to break the news to Monte. Helen was clearly puzzled, and Kay wouldn't be able to explain while Monte was in Buxton City, for very frequently, wherever he happened to be in the city, store, shop or office, he called her to the screen for a brief visit.

Now he visited even oftener, busier by far though he was, almost boyish in his eagerness to found Archer City. Days passed, and nights—lunar days and nights—and Monte kept insisting:

"You'd better start packing. I'll be arranging transportation any day now."

"I'm all packed, Monte. You'd think my husband was

eager to get *rid* of me! It's so grand having you concerned about me, even by television, that you can scarcely blame me for putting it off. It's awfully nice, being a wife."

It's awfully nice being a wife!

It was the first thing she told him when he came crawling out the last airlock for meals or rest, an event that took place about three times each twenty four hours.

Sleeping in their bedroom, with the mountain over her head, millions of tons of it, and such darkness pressing her down as Earth-man could scarcely conceive, did not seem so bad when Monte slept beside her. If Monte had the slightest inclination to claustrophobia, he never mentioned or showed it. But when he was away, Kay weakened to the extent of keeping the lights on.

"Otherwise," she told herself, "it's like being blind in a deep mine. The darkness is thick velvet!"

Another thing: when she lay awake in darkness, alone, she could hear much more clearly the meteorite "rain" on the roof. When Monte breathed se-

curely beside her, she forgot all about the rain.

How much of her feelings, her fears, on Moon, transmitted themselves to her unborn daughter?

"On Earth," Doctor Probeck had told her, "I'd say *nothing*. I think the idea of pre-natal marking is an old wives' tale. But here on Moon, where the child was conceived, I wouldn't venture to say. My *guess* is that there'd be nothing. But *you* change, ever so little, everybody does, so"

Probeck had ended by advising her again to get back to New York for the delivery, and to stay there until the daughter—or son—had been checked in every way known to science for possible differences.

CAME a "night" when Monte returned home with a fistful of daffodils. Kay's eyes widened as she took the big bouquet in her arms, hunted for a vase, and water, in which to place them. These flowers hadn't come from Earth, though possibly the bulbs had. Did she detect something odd, something strange, in the fragrance of the flowers?

Was there something, infinitesimal but certain, different in their *appearance*?

She knew there was. Nobody could possibly *miss* noting the difference, but she hid her throat-clutching fear from Monte as she turned to thank him.

"You went to so much trouble, to synthesise flowers for me! I've been *starving* for flowers!"

"Old Angus sent them really," Monte told her. "I begged like a Dutch Uncle. I told him they were your favorites. He grudgingly gave consent for the transport of two dozen—then sent two additional dozen, as if to prove he has a heart, or something. So, thank Old Angus!"

Doctor Wilbur Probeck, whose wife had rocketed to Earth four years ago, and hadn't yet returned, came through the airlock in time for dinner. He didn't express an opinion during the delicious meal, but he kept looking at Kay. Later, he applied his stethoscope, took her blood pressure, made a blood test, and said:

"You're taking risks now,

Kay. You've dillied and dallied too-long. There's a chance your child may now be born enroute. There is always a good physician aboard a passenger-rocket-ship, and I may go out myself. Harriet has been begging me to go out and return with her, and I may do it...."

Kay knew Harriet had been doing nothing of the sort, and for a moment deep sorrow for her favorite Doctor caused her to forget the significance of what he had said. If she went to New York now, in a rocket which would hit Earth's atmosphere at terrific speed, which must decelerate at a sickening rate, there might be danger!

A feeling of exaltation, as if she had planned it this way, surged through her. Even though she hadn't, much of her guilt feeling ebbed away on the instant she realized.

"Now," she said, "I *can't* go. If there is the slightest risk...."

Monte's face was a shining sun.

Doc Probeck looked glum. Maybe he'd hoped to use Kay, wife of Moon Manager, as an excuse to go out and beg his wife to return. Then he may

have welcomed a situation which spared him certain embarrassment and defeat.

As if elated by the turn of events, the child hurried. Doctor Probeck turned the Archer guest room into a maternity ward. It was, as Kay had known all along it would be, a girl, a girl with eyes as blue as corn-flowers; a girl who didn't look a bit like other girls, who wouldn't have resembled any other girl if she had been born in New York City.

Menna Archer was unique, as all children born of women are.

Probeck exulted: "Perfect!" he said. "Couldn't have been more successful in New York City's most hoity-toity Maternity Hospital. Menna, the first Moon maiden! You've paved the way to the newest thing, Kay. When the news reaches Earth you're a heroine. Moon wives on Earth will be ashamed; maybe shamed enough to rocket home to their husbands."

He was thinking of his own

wife, she knew, though he didn't say so.

Monte was radiant. Time after time he extended his huge hands to his un-different daughter, only to note their great size and pull them back, sheepishly, awkwardly.

"Now you'll *have* to take a trip to Earth," he told Kay, "to show Menna to her in-laws, to all Earth by television, but especially to old Angus Buxton, who'd have insisted on Angus for a name if Menna had been a boy. Now he'll claim children as a new Moon crop. Yes, you'll have to go, and soon."

But Moon, for Kay, had suddenly ceased to be lonely, or a prison. There was no explaining it, really. It just was.

"No," she said. "It's impossible."

"Impossible? Why? How so?"

"I'm amazed that you can even *think* of sending your new daughter so far from her native land!"

THE END