
"Heart-stopping" TOM PALMER
LUNAR
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To Rob, Michelle and Sofia,

A good friend all the way
to the moon and back ...

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CHAPTER 1

Rover

"Slow down, Luna!" my father shouts at me as we hit a bump and bounce off the ground. "This Rover *isn't* a race car!"

"Spoilsport!" I reply, and take my foot off the power pedal.

My father gives me a look, but he is grinning as much as I am. "You know I'd be in serious trouble if the Hub commander found out I let you drive. You can easily crash a vehicle on the Moon. There may be very little gravity, but objects still have the same mass, so the Rover will take longer to stop than you think."

"I *did* listen in my Lunar Lessons, Dad," I reply. Even so, I have to brake hard to stop in time for the mine survey spot.

"OK, last rock sample for this trip," says my father, putting on his helmet.

I put mine on too, check my oxygen supply, then open the airlock to the Rover's cabin. Everything goes quiet. In Space, there's no sound. I can only hear the rasp of my breathing inside my helmet – "*Hand me the core sampler, will you?*" – oh, and I can hear my father's rather loud voice over the comms unit too!

I pick up the core sampler. It's a drill with four metal legs that screw into the ground. On Earth I wouldn't be able to lift it. Here, where gravity is six times less, it's as if I've got superpowers! I can easily carry it over to my father.

Dad sets up the core sampler and fixes its feet into the ground. Then he begins to drill



into the Moon rock. I enjoy going on mining surveys with him. It's fun looking for precious minerals that we can use for building, turning into oxygen or making rocket fuel on the Moon. If we find something, we'll tell the crew at the Hub that this is a good spot for mining. Best of all, we get to name the new mine!

It's also good to escape the Hub, where we live. Yes, the Hub's got air, food, water, TV and

all the other things you need to survive in Space. But it sure is cramped. There are 30 other Moon Miners living there too!

But most of all, the views when you go out on a survey are simply spectacular. It may be the same grey dust and rock everywhere you look. But glance out into Space and you see …

Earth.

Wow! It's like a big, blue sparkling marble.

There are no stars, of course, because it's daytime right now on the Moon – and about 120 degrees in the sun. That's pretty hot. But don't think I'm taking off my spacesuit any time soon to sunbathe. You have to remember there's little atmosphere on the Moon.

If I took my helmet off, my eyeballs would explode …

Only joking! They won't explode. And I won't freeze or fry to death, at least not right away. But the oxygen would be sucked from my lungs in just a few seconds. Breathing would be *incredibly* painful. The spit on my tongue would boil away, as well as my blood. (I've been told it's a fizzy feeling like drinking a soda. *Nice, eh?*) But it wouldn't last long. After 15 seconds, I'd pass out and then die from lack of oxygen.

That's why I keep my helmet on.

My visor begins to clatter softly as if it's raining. I frown and look up. There's no rain on the Moon, so what's falling on me?

My comms unit bursts into life. "*Rover 3, return to the Hub right now. Meteorite warning.*"

"Let's go!" says my father. "We need to get to cover ASAP!"

We jump into the Rover and my father takes the driving seat. We don't even bother to take off our helmets. He turns the vehicle round and speeds back towards the Hub. We bounce over the lunar surface like some bucking bronco and I have to tighten my seatbelt.

"I thought you said not to drive too fast."

"This must be a big shower for the commander to call us back," Dad says, and grits his teeth. More micro-meteorites batter the windscreen like hail. We crest a small hill and head down slope, picking up speed. In the distance appear a number of large mounds – the Hub.

Then the ground in front of us explodes in a bright flash of dust and rock.

My father swerves to avoid the meteorite strike. But we're going too fast. We hit the impact crater, bounce high and the Rover flips.

