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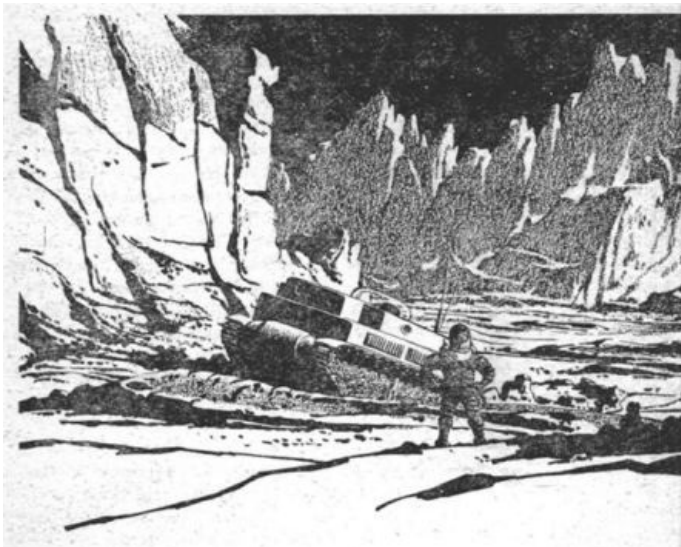
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ALL DAY SEPTEMBER ***

ALL DAY SEPTEMBER

By **ROGER KUYKENDALL**

Illustrated by **van Dongen**

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Some men just haven't got good sense. They just can't seem to learn the most fundamental things. Like when there's no use trying—when it's time to give up because it's hopeless....

The meteor, a pebble, a little larger than a match head, traveled through space and time since it came into being. The light from the star that died when the meteor was created fell on Earth before the first lungfish ventured from the sea.

In its last instant, the meteor fell on the Moon. It was impeded by Evans' tractor.

It drilled a small, neat hole through the casing of the steam turbine, and volitized upon striking

the blades. Portions of the turbine also voltized; idling at eight thousand RPM, it became unstable. The shaft tried to tie itself into a knot, and the blades, damaged and undamaged were spit through the casing. The turbine again reached a stable state, that is, stopped. Permanently stopped.

It was two days to sunrise, where Evans stood.

It was just before sunset on a spring evening in September in Sydney. The shadow line between day and night could be seen from the Moon to be drifting across Australia.

Evans, who had no watch, thought of the time as a quarter after Australia.

Evans was a prospector, and like all prospectors, a sort of jackknife geologist, selenologist, rather. His tractor and equipment cost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Fifty thousand was paid for. The rest was promissory notes and grubstake shares. When he was broke, which was usually, he used his tractor to haul uranium ore and metallic sodium from the mines at Potter's dike to Williamson Town, where the rockets landed.

When he was flush, he would prospect for a couple of weeks. Once he followed a stampede to Yellow Crater, where he thought for a while that he had a fortune in chromium. The chromite petered out in a month and a half, and he was lucky to break even.

Evans was about three hundred miles east of Williamson Town, the site of the first landing on the Moon.

Evans was due back at Williamson Town at about sunset, that is, in about sixteen days. When he saw the wrecked turbine, he knew that he wouldn't make it. By careful rationing, he could probably stretch his food out to more than a month. His drinking water—kept separate from the water in the reactor—might conceivably last just as long. But his oxygen was too carefully measured; there was a four-day reserve. By diligent conservation, he might make it last an extra day. Four days reserve—plus one is five—plus sixteen days normal supply equals twenty-one days to live.

In seventeen days he might be missed, but in seventeen days it would be dark again, and the search for him, if it ever began, could not begin for thirteen more days. At the earliest it would be eight days too late.

"Well, man, 'tis a fine spot you're in now," he told himself.

"Let's find out how bad it is indeed," he answered. He reached for the light switch and tried to turn it on. The switch was already in the "on" position.

"Batteries must be dead," he told himself.

"What batteries?" he asked. "There're no batteries in here, the power comes from the generator."

"Why isn't the generator working, man?" he asked.

He thought this one out carefully. The generator was not turned by the main turbine, but by a small reciprocating engine. The steam, however, came from the same boiler. And the boiler, of course, had emptied itself through the hole in the turbine. And the condenser, of course—

"The condenser!" he shouted.

He fumbled for a while, until he found a small flashlight. By the light of this, he reinspected the steam system, and found about three gallons of water frozen in the condenser. The condenser, like all condensers, was a device to convert steam into water, so that it could be reused in the boiler. This one had a tank and coils of tubing in the center of a curved reflector that was positioned to radiate the heat of the steam into the cold darkness of space. When the meteor pierced the turbine, the water in the condenser began to boil. This boiling lowered the temperature, and the condenser demonstrated its efficiency by quickly freezing the water in the tank.

Evans sealed the turbine from the rest of the steam system by closing the shut-off valves. If there was any water in the boiler, it would operate the engine that drove the generator. The water would condense in the condenser, and with a little luck, melt the ice in there. Then, if the pump wasn't blocked by ice, it would return the water to the boiler.

But there was no water in the boiler. Carefully he poured a cup of his drinking water into a pipe that led to the boiler, and resealed the pipe. He pulled on a knob marked "Nuclear Start/Safety Bypass." The water that he had poured into the boiler quickly turned into steam, and the steam turned the generator briefly.

Evans watched the lights flicker and go out, and he guessed what the trouble was.

"The water, man," he said, "there is not enough to melt the ice in the condenser."

He opened the pipe again and poured nearly a half-gallon of water into the boiler. It was three days' supply of water, if it had been carefully used. It was one day's supply if used wastefully. It

was ostentatious luxury for a man with a month's supply of water and twenty-one days to live.

The generator started again, and the lights came on. They flickered as the boiler pressure began to fail, but the steam had melted some of the ice in the condenser, and the water pump began to function.

"Well, man," he breathed, "there's a light to die by."

The sun rose on Williamson Town at about the same time it rose on Evans. It was an incredibly brilliant disk in a black sky. The stars next to the sun shone as brightly as though there were no sun. They might have appeared to waver slightly, if they were behind outflung corona flares. If they did, no one noticed. No one looked toward the sun without dark filters.

When Director McIlroy came into his office, he found it lighted by the rising sun. The light was a hot, brilliant white that seemed to pierce the darkest shadows of the room. He moved to the round window, screening his eyes from the light, and adjusted the polaroid shade to maximum density. The sun became an angry red brown, and the room was dark again. McIlroy decreased the density again until the room was comfortably lighted. The room felt stuffy, so he decided to leave the door to the inner office open.

He felt a little guilty about this, because he had ordered that all doors in the survey building should remain closed except when someone was passing through them. This was to allow the air-conditioning system to function properly, and to prevent air loss in case of the highly improbable meteor damage. McIlroy thought that on the whole, he was disobeying his own orders no more flagrantly than anyone else in the survey.

McIlroy had no illusions about his ability to lead men. Or rather, he did have one illusion; he thought that he was completely unfit as a leader. It was true that his strictest orders were disobeyed with cheerful contempt, but it was also true his mildest requests were complied with eagerly and smoothly.

Everyone in the survey except McIlroy realized this, and even he accepted this without thinking about it. He had fallen into the habit of suggesting mildly anything that he wanted done, and writing orders he didn't particularly care to have obeyed.

For example, because of an order of his stating that there would be no alcoholic beverages within the survey building, the entire survey was assured of a constant supply of home-made, but passably good liquor. Even McIlroy enjoyed the surreptitious drinking.

"Good morning, Mr. McIlroy," said Mrs. Garth, his secretary. Morning to Mrs. Garth was simply the first four hours after waking.

"Good morning indeed," answered McIlroy. Morning to him had no meaning at all, but he thought in the strictest sense that it would be morning on the Moon for another week.

"Has the power crew set up the solar furnace?" he asked. The solar furnace was a rough parabola of mirrors used to focus the sun's heat on anything that it was desirable to heat. It was used mostly, from sun-up to sun-down, to supplement the nuclear power plant.

"They went out about an hour ago," she answered, "I suppose that's what they were going to do."

"Very good, what's first on the schedule?"

"A Mr. Phelps to see you," she said.

"How do you do, Mr. Phelps," McIlroy greeted him.

"Good afternoon," Mr. Phelps replied. "I'm here representing the Merchants' Bank Association."

"Fine," McIlroy said, "I suppose you're here to set up a bank."

"That's right, I just got in from Muroc last night, and I've been going over the assets of the Survey Credit Association all morning."

"I'll certainly be glad to get them off my hands," McIlroy said. "I hope they're in good order."

"There doesn't seem to be any profit," Mr. Phelps said.

"That's par for a nonprofit organization," said McIlroy. "But we're amateurs, and we're turning this operation over to professionals. I'm sure it will be to everyone's satisfaction."

"I know this seems like a silly question. What day is this?"

"Well," said McIlroy, "that's not so silly. I don't know either."

"Mrs. Garth," he called, "what day is this?"

"Why, September, I think," she answered.

"I mean what *day*."

"I don't know, I'll call the observatory."

There was a pause.

"They say what day where?" she asked.

"Greenwich, I guess, our official time is supposed to be Greenwich Mean Time."

There was another pause.

"They say it's September fourth, one thirty A.M."

"Well, there you are," laughed McIlroy, "it isn't that time doesn't mean anything here, it just doesn't mean the same thing."

Mr. Phelps joined the laughter. "Bankers' hours don't mean much, at any rate," he said.

The power crew was having trouble with the solar furnace. Three of the nine banks of mirrors would not respond to the electric controls, and one bank moved so jerkily that it could not be focused, and it threatened to tear several of the mirrors loose.

"What happened here?" Spotty Cade, one of the electrical technicians asked his foreman, Cowalczk, over the intercommunications radio. "I've got about a hundred pinholes in the cables out here. It's no wonder they don't work."

"Meteor shower," Cowalczk answered, "and that's not half of it. Walker says he's got a half dozen mirrors cracked or pitted, and Hoffman on bank three wants you to replace a servo motor. He says the bearing was hit."

"When did it happen?" Cade wanted to know.

"Must have been last night, at least two or three days ago. All of 'em too small for Radar to pick up, and not enough for Seismo to get a rumble."

"Sounds pretty bad."

"Could have been worse," said Cowalczk.

"How's that?"

"Wasn't anybody out in it."

"Hey, Chuck," another technician, Lehman, broke in, "you could maybe get hurt that way."

"I doubt it," Cowalczk answered, "most of these were pinhead size, and they wouldn't go through a suit."

"It would take a pretty big one to damage a servo bearing," Cade commented.

"That could hurt," Cowalczk admitted, "but there was only one of them."

"You mean only one hit our gear," Lehman said. "How many missed?"

Nobody answered. They could all see the Moon under their feet. Small craters overlapped and touched each other. There was—except in the places that men had obscured them with footprints—not a square foot that didn't contain a crater at least ten inches across, there was not a square inch without its half-inch crater. Nearly all of these had been made millions of years ago, but here and there, the rim of a crater covered part of a footprint, clear evidence that it was a recent one.

After the sun rose, Evans returned to the lava cave that he had been exploring when the meteor hit. Inside, he lifted his filter visor, and found that the light reflected from the small ray that peered into the cave door lighted the cave adequately. He tapped loose some white crystals on the cave wall with his geologist's hammer, and put them into a collector's bag.

"A few mineral specimens would give us something to think about, man. These crystals," he said, "look a little like zeolites, but that can't be, zeolites need water to form, and there's no water on the Moon."

He chipped a number of other crystals loose and put them in bags. One of them he found in a dark crevice had a hexagonal shape that puzzled him.

One at a time, back in the tractor, he took the crystals out of the bags and analyzed them as well as he could without using a flame which would waste oxygen. The ones that looked like zeolites were zeolites, all right, or something very much like it. One of the crystals that he thought was quartz turned out to be calcite, and one of the ones that he was sure could be nothing but calcite was actually potassium nitrate.



"Well, now," he said, "it's probably the largest natural crystal of potassium nitrate that anyone has ever seen. Man, it's a full inch across."

All of these needed water to form, and their existence on the Moon puzzled him for a while. Then he opened the bag that had contained the unusual hexagonal crystals, and the puzzle resolved itself. There was nothing in the bag but a few drops of water. What he had taken to be a type of rock was ice, frozen in a niche that had never been warmed by the sun.

The sun rose to the meridian slowly. It was a week after sunrise. The stars shone coldly, and wheeled in their slow course with the sun. Only Earth remained in the same spot in the black sky. The shadow line crept around until Earth was nearly dark, and then the rim of light appeared on the opposite side. For a while Earth was a dark disk in a thin halo, and then the light came to be a crescent, and the line of dawn began to move around Earth. The continents drifted across the dark disk and into the crescent. The people on Earth saw the full moon set about the same time that the sun rose.

Nickel Jones was the captain of a supply rocket. He made trips from and to the Moon about once a month, carrying supplies in and metal and ores out. At this time he was visiting with his old friend McIlroy.

"I swear, Mac," said Jones, "another season like this, and I'm going back to mining."

"I thought you were doing pretty well," said McIlroy, as he poured two drinks from a bottle of Scotch that Jones had brought him.

"Oh, the money I like, but I will say that I'd have more if I didn't have to fight the union and the Lunar Trade Commission."

McIlroy had heard all of this before. "How's that?" he asked politely.

"You may think it's myself running the ship," Jones started on his tirade, "but it's not. The union it is that says who I can hire. The union it is that says how much I must pay, and how large a crew I need. And then the Commission ..." The word seemed to give Jones an unpleasant taste in his mouth, which he hurriedly rinsed with a sip of Scotch.

"The Commission," he continued, making the word sound like an obscenity, "it is that tells me how much I can charge for freight."

McIlroy noticed that his friend's glass was empty, and he quietly filled it again.

"And then," continued Jones, "if I buy a cargo up here, the Commission it is that says what I'll sell it for. If I had my way, I'd charge only fifty cents a pound for freight instead of the dollar forty that the Commission insists on. That's from here to Earth, of course. There's no profit I could make by cutting rates the other way."

"Why not?" asked McIlroy. He knew the answer, but he liked to listen to the slightly Welsh voice of Jones.

"Near cost it is now at a dollar forty. But what sense is there in charging the same rate to go either way when it takes about a seventh of the fuel to get from here to Earth as it does to get from there to here?"

"What good would it do to charge fifty cents a pound?" asked McIlroy.

"The nickel, man, the tons of nickel worth a dollar and a half on Earth, and not worth mining here; the low-grade ores of uranium and vanadium, they need these things on Earth, but they can't get them as long as it isn't worth the carrying of them. And then, of course, there's the water we haven't got. We could afford to bring more water for more people, and set up more distilling plants if we had the money from the nickel.

"Even though I say it who shouldn't, two-eighty a quart is too much to pay for water."

Both men fell silent for a while. Then Jones spoke again:

"Have you seen our friend Evans lately? The price of chromium has gone up, and I think he could ship some of his ore from Yellow Crater at a profit."

"He's out prospecting again. I don't expect to see him until sun-down."

"I'll likely see him then. I won't be loaded for another week and a half. Can't you get in touch with him by radio?"

"He isn't carrying one. Most of the prospectors don't. They claim that a radio that won't carry beyond the horizon isn't any good, and one that will bounce messages from Earth takes up too much room."

"Well, if I don't see him, you let him know about the chromium."

"Anything to help another Welshman, is that the idea?"

"Well, protection it is that a poor Welshman needs from all the English and Scots. Speaking of which—"

"Oh, of course," McIlroy grinned as he refilled the glasses.

"*Slainte, McIlroy, bach.*" [Health, McIlroy, man.]

"*Slainte mhor, bach.*" [Great Health, man.]

The sun was halfway to the horizon, and Earth was a crescent in the sky when Evans had quarried all the ice that was available in the cave. The thought grew on him as he worked that this couldn't be the only such cave in the area. There must be several more bubbles in the lava flow.

Part of his reasoning proved correct. That is, he found that by chipping, he could locate small bubbles up to an inch in diameter, each one with its droplet of water. The average was about one per cent of the volume of each bubble filled with ice.

A quarter of a mile from the tractor, Evans found a promising looking mound of lava. It was rounded on top, and it could easily be the dome of a bubble. Suddenly, Evans noticed that the gauge on the oxygen tank of his suit was reading dangerously near empty. He turned back to his tractor, moving as slowly as he felt safe in doing. Running would use up oxygen too fast. He was halfway there when the pressure warning light went on, and the signal sounded inside his helmet. He turned on his ten-minute reserve supply, and made it to the tractor with about five minutes left. The air purifying apparatus in the suit was not as efficient as the one in the tractor; it wasted oxygen. By using the suit so much, Evans had already shortened his life by several days. He resolved not to leave the tractor again, and reluctantly abandoned his plan to search for a large bubble.

The sun stood at half its diameter above the horizon. The shadows of the mountains stretched out to touch the shadows of the other mountains. The dawning line of light covered half of Earth, and Earth turned beneath it.

Cowalczk itched under his suit, and the sweat on his face prickled maddeningly because he couldn't reach it through his helmet. He pushed his forehead against the faceplate of his helmet and rubbed off some of the sweat. It didn't help much, and it left a blurred spot in his vision. That annoyed him.

"Is everyone clear of the outlet?" he asked.

"All clear," he heard Cade report through the intercom.

"How come we have to blow the boilers now?" asked Lehman.

"Because I say so," Cowalczk shouted, surprised at his outburst and ashamed of it. "Boiler scale,"

he continued, much calmer. "We've got to clean out the boilers once a year to make sure the tubes in the reactor don't clog up." He squinted through his dark visor at the reactor building, a gray concrete structure a quarter of a mile distant. "It would be pretty bad if they clogged up some night."

"Pressure's ten and a half pounds," said Cade.

"Right, let her go," said Cowalczk.

Cade threw a switch. In the reactor building, a relay closed. A motor started turning, and the worm gear on the motor opened a valve on the boiler. A stream of muddy water gushed into a closed vat. When the vat was about half full, the water began to run nearly clear. An electric eye noted that fact and a light in front of Cade turned on. Cade threw the switch back the other way, and the relay in the reactor building opened. The motor turned and the gears started to close the valve. But a fragment of boiler scale held the valve open.

"Valve's stuck," said Cade.

"Open it and close it again," said Cowalczk. The sweat on his forehead started to run into his eyes. He banged his hand on his faceplate in an unconscious attempt to wipe it off. He cursed silently, and wiped it off on the inside of his helmet again. This time, two drops ran down the inside of his faceplate.

"Still don't work," said Cade.

"Keep trying," Cowalczk ordered. "Lehman, get a Geiger counter and come with me, we've got to fix this thing."

Lehman and Cowalczk, who were already suited up started across to the reactor building. Cade, who was in the pressurized control room without a suit on, kept working the switch back and forth. There was light that indicated when the valve was open. It was on, and it stayed on, no matter what Cade did.

"The vat pressure's too high," Cade said.

"Let me know when it reaches six pounds," Cowalczk requested. "Because it'll probably blow at seven."

The vat was a light plastic container used only to decant sludge out of the water. It neither needed nor had much strength.

"Six now," said Cade.

Cowalczk and Lehman stopped halfway to the reactor. The vat bulged and ruptured. A stream of mud gushed out and boiled dry on the face of the Moon. Cowalczk and Lehman rushed forward again.

They could see the trickle of water from the discharge pipe. The motor turned the valve back and forth in response to Cade's signals.

"What's going on out there?" demanded McIlroy on the intercom.

"Scale stuck in the valve," Cowalczk answered.

"Are the reactors off?"

"Yes. Vat blew. Shut up! Let me work, Mac!"

"Sorry," McIlroy said, realizing that this was no time for officials. "Let me know when it's fixed."

"Geiger's off scale," Lehman said.

"We're probably O.K. in these suits for an hour," Cowalczk answered. "Is there a manual shut-off?"

"Not that I know of," Lehman answered. "What about it, Cade?"

"I don't think so," Cade said. "I'll get on the blower and rouse out an engineer."

"O.K., but keep working that switch."

"I checked the line as far as it's safe," said Lehman. "No valve."

"O.K.," Cowalczk said. "Listen, Cade, are the injectors still on?"

"Yeah. There's still enough heat in these reactors to do some damage. I'll cut 'em in about fifteen minutes."

"I've found the trouble," Lehman said. "The worm gear's loose on its shaft. It's slipping every time the valve closes. There's not enough power in it to crush the scale."

"Right," Cowalczk said. "Cade, open the valve wide. Lehman, hand me that pipe wrench!"

Cowalczk hit the shaft with the back of the pipe wrench, and it broke at the motor bearing.

Cowalczk and Lehman fitted the pipe wrench to the gear on the valve, and turned it.

"Is the light off?" Cowalczk asked.

"No," Cade answered.

"Water's stopped. Give us some pressure, we'll see if it holds."

"Twenty pounds," Cade answered after a couple of minutes.

"Take her up to ... no, wait, it's still leaking," Cowalczk said. "Hold it there, we'll open the valve again."

"O.K.," said Cade. "An engineer here says there's no manual cutoff."

"Like Hell," said Lehman.

Cowalczk and Lehman opened the valve again. Water spurted out, and dwindled as they closed the valve.

"What did you do?" asked Cade. "The light went out and came on again."

"Check that circuit and see if it works," Cowalczk instructed.

There was a pause.

"It's O.K.," Cade said.

Cowalczk and Lehman opened and closed the valve again.

"Light is off now," Cade said.

"Good," said Cowalczk, "take the pressure up all the way, and we'll see what happens."

"Eight hundred pounds," Cade said, after a short wait.

"Good enough," Cowalczk said. "Tell that engineer to hold up a while, he can fix this thing as soon as he gets parts. Come on, Lehman, let's get out of here."

"Well, I'm glad that's over," said Cade. "You guys had me worried for a while."

"Think we weren't worried?" Lehman asked. "And it's not over."

"What?" Cade asked. "Oh, you mean the valve servo you two bashed up?"

"No," said Lehman, "I mean the two thousand gallons of water that we lost."

"Two thousand?" Cade asked. "We only had seven hundred gallons reserve. How come we can operate now?"

"We picked up twelve hundred from the town sewage plant. What with using the solar furnace as a radiator, we can make do."

"Oh, God, I suppose this means water rationing again."

"You're probably right, at least until the next rocket lands in a couple of weeks."

PROSPECTOR FEARED LOST ON MOON

IPP Williamson Town, Moon, Sept. 21st. Scientific survey director McIlroy released a statement today that Howard Evans, a prospector is missing and presumed lost. Evans, who was apparently exploring the Moon in search of minerals was due two days ago, but it was presumed that he was merely temporarily delayed.

Evans began his exploration on August 25th, and was known to be carrying several days reserve of oxygen and supplies. Director McIlroy has expressed a hope that Evans will be found before his oxygen runs out.

Search parties have started from Williamson Town, but telescopic search from Palomar and the new satellite observatory are hindered by the fact that Evans is lost on the part of the Moon which is now dark. Little hope is held for radio contact with the missing man as it is believed he was carrying only short-range, intercommunications equipment. Nevertheless, receivers are ...

Captain Nickel Jones was also expressing a hope: "Anyway, Mac," he was saying to McIlroy, "a Welshman knows when his luck's run out. And never a word did he say."

"Like as not, you're right," McIlroy replied, "but if I know Evans, he'd never say a word about any forebodings."

"Well, happen I might have a bit of Welsh second sight about me, and it tells me that Evans will

be found."

McIlroy chuckled for the first time in several days. "So that's the reason you didn't take off when you were scheduled," he said.

"Well, yes," Jones answered. "I thought that it might happen that a rocket would be needed in the search."

The light from Earth lighted the Moon as the Moon had never lighted Earth. The great blue globe of Earth, the only thing larger than the stars, wheeled silently in the sky. As it turned, the shadow of sunset crept across the face that could be seen from the Moon. From full Earth, as you might say, it moved toward last quarter.

The rising sun shone into Director McIlroy's office. The hot light formed a circle on the wall opposite the window, and the light became more intense as the sun slowly pulled over the horizon. Mrs. Garth walked into the director's office, and saw the director sleeping with his head cradled in his arms on the desk. She walked softly to the window and adjusted the shade to darken the office. She stood looking at McIlroy for a moment, and when he moved slightly in his sleep, she walked softly out of the office.

A few minutes later she was back with a cup of coffee. She placed it in front of the director, and shook his shoulder gently.

"Wake up, Mr. McIlroy," she said, "you told me to wake you at sunrise, and there it is, and here's Mr. Phelps."

McIlroy woke up slowly. He leaned back in his chair and stretched. His neck was stiff from sleeping in such an awkward position.

"Morning, Mr. Phelps," he said.

"Good morning," Phelps answered, dropping tiredly into a chair.

"Have some coffee, Mr. Phelps," said Mrs. Garth, handing him a cup.

"Any news?" asked McIlroy.

"About Evans?" Phelps shook his head slowly. "Palomar called in a few minutes back. Nothing to report and the sun was rising there. Australia will be in position pretty soon. Several observatories there. Then Capetown. There are lots of observatories in Europe, but most of them are clouded over. Anyway the satellite observatory will be in position by the time Europe is."

McIlroy was fully awake. He glanced at Phelps and wondered how long it had been since he had slept last. More than that, McIlroy wondered why this banker, who had never met Evans, was losing so much sleep about finding him. It began to dawn on McIlroy that nearly the whole population of Williamson Town was involved, one way or another, in the search.

The director turned to ask Phelps about this fact, but the banker was slumped in his chair, fast asleep with his coffee untouched.

It was three hours later that McIlroy woke Phelps.

"They've found the tractor," McIlroy said.

"Good," Phelps mumbled, and then as comprehension came; "That's fine! That's just line! Is Evans—?"

"Can't tell yet. They spotted the tractor from the satellite observatory. Captain Jones took off a few minutes ago, and he'll report back as soon as he lands. Hadn't you better get some sleep?"

Evans was carrying a block of ice into the tractor when he saw the rocket coming in for a landing. He dropped the block and stood waiting. When the dust settled from around the tail of the rocket, he started to run forward. The air lock opened, and Evans recognized the vacuum suited figure of Nickel Jones.

"Evans, man!" said Jones' voice in the intercom. "Alive you are!"

"A Welshman takes a lot of killing," Evans answered.

Later, in Evans' tractor, he was telling his story:

"... And I don't know how long I sat there after I found the water." He looked at the Goldburgian device he had made out of wire and tubing. "Finally I built this thing. These caves were made of lava. They must have been formed by steam some time, because there's a floor of ice in all of 'em.

"The idea didn't come all at once, it took a long time for me to remember that water is made out of oxygen and hydrogen. When I remembered that, of course, I remembered that it can be separated with electricity. So I built this thing.

"It runs an electric current through water, lets the oxygen loose in the room, and pipes the hydrogen outside. It doesn't work automatically, of course, so I run it about an hour a day. My oxygen level gauge shows how long."

"You're a genius, man!" Jones exclaimed.

"No," Evans answered, "a Welshman, nothing more."

"Well, then," said Jones, "are you ready to start back?"

"Back?"

"Well, it was to rescue you that I came."

"I don't need rescuing, man," Evans said.

Jones stared at him blankly.

"You might let me have some food," Evans continued. "I'm getting short of that. And you might have someone send out a mechanic with parts to fix my tractor. Then maybe you'll let me use your radio to file my claim."

"Claim?"

"Sure, man, I've thousands of tons of water here. It's the richest mine on the Moon!"

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ALL DAY SEPTEMBER ***

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