

# First Stage - Moon

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*They were the first men on Earth to reach the Moon and return. They were heroes of the world; they would be welcomed and acclaimed and feted for the greatest achievement in history. Nations would seek them out...*

"WHAT color's the sky?"

"Still black as the place the devils throw their old razor blades."

"We'll hear it when we hit air."

"Pretty soon now?"

"A few minutes yet."

"Man! My foot's working off at the knee."

"John awake? Hey, John, you awake?"

"How could I sleep through this? Whad'ya want?"

"Nothing."  
"What's she look like?"  
"Earth?"  
"Of course."  
"A blue beach-ball with a white halo 'round it."  
"What's below us?"  
"Part of Asia, I think. Lots of clouds... I see India."  
"Man, it's hot in here!"  
"Hell, wait'll we hit air!"  
"We all awake? Anyone asleep say *aye*."  
"Aye."  
"No one's asleep. I heard four voices."  
"If anyone can sleep through this they've got my blessings. Woof! My neck."  
"You think you've got it bad; they've got me squeezed in with the camera equipment; I'm bent at the knees and again at the waist."  
"Ah, but after we land."  
"Ah, after we land."  
"And *if* we land, of course."  
"*If* we land? Hell, listen to him; he's still got doubts! Unchain that libido, son, we're men of the world now!"  
"Of two worlds."  
"And speaking of worlds—we'll rule the world, gentlemen!"  
"For a day!"  
"Maybe a week!"  
"Three rousing huzzahs for us!"  
"Oops—stand back there, son; these gentlemen just got back from the moon!"  
"The first men on the moon!"  
"The discoverers of a new world!"  
"Hell, Pop, I knew it was there all the time!"  
"We'll be famous—our names will be on cereal boxes."  
"The hell with it; I'm tired."  
"Wish I could see out! What's it like?"  
"Same as before."  
"I can see someone's leg and the back of someone's head. Damn this lousy intercom. I can't even recognize voices."  
"What's it matter who we are? We're just a lousy pack of sardines 'til we hit Earth."  
"Good old Earth—hell with it."  
"Gentlemen—I would make a speech!"  
"Also the hell with you!"  
"I'm gonna drown if I keep sweating like this."  
"Shut up! I've got something more important to say than your groaning."  
"If we must."  
"The next speaker will be the honorable—who the hell are you anyway, bub?"  
"We... have just... visited... the moon!"  
"Hear!"  
"There's one more important thing we have to do before we land."

"You mean slow down?"

"One thing to talk over. Look ... Williams! I have a strong suspicion you signed on this trip for some reason beside glory. Right?"

"Cause Earth was getting too crowded for me."

"How about you, Wong?"

"Needed a change, too, I guess. Been breathing fresh air and seeing people too long. Got sick of it."

"And John?"

"Well... I suppose I know what you're heading at. This isn't exactly a Jules Verne type trip to the moon, *for the glory and advancement of science*. 'Least it isn't to me. I got sick of science when I was studying for my *master's*. Sick of seeing what people were doing with it. I thought a few new worlds might ease the tension back on Earth... before everything gets blown to pieces."

"That's what I mean; a few new worlds to explore might slow lousy man in his wild race to the backside of heaven. New frontiers. New excitements. It's bound to tie people closer together in spite of their prejudices."

"But the glory! Don't forget the glory!"

"The patriotic zeal!"

"Yeah, the patriotic zeal! I feel the same way you do. Here we're trying to bring the world closer together and we have to do it in the name of the arms effort of a single nation."

"War rocket experiment 282Z."

"Well, at least we'll be able to say what we think and we'll be important enough for a while so that people will listen to us."

"Yeah, when we get down, they're going to say 'speech!'"

"They are that!"

"And we are going to speak!"

"Heroes for a day!"

"Maybe two days!"

"And people will listen to us; not just America—the whole damn world. Show people a larger goal, one big enough for the planet, and all the little power goals will fall away fast."

"If we can say the right things..."

"They'll have to listen to us. The U.S.; Russia... all the little countries."

"Here she comes—I hear something!"

"Atmosphere!"

"We're back home!"

"Crisis number six. We can't fail now."

"Before it's too loud to talk... listen to me. When we land, don't say anything. We'll all get a good sleep and a bath before we say a word. Right?"

"Right!"

"Just give 'em the pictures and samples and demand a nap. Everybody ready for the final blasting?"

"Here's where I lose another two gallons of blood."

"I hope we fall in a lake. I'm thirsty as a horse."

"Man, it's hot!"

"A hundred-twenty seconds!"

"I'm not at all sure I can last this... that's straight stuff. Be ready to take over mine, too, Wong; just in case."

"Hell, you better last!"

"Sixty seconds!"

"Testing light signals—are they on?"

"O.K. here."

"Yeah."

"Thirty seconds! Got your lights, Mike?"

"Yeah."

"Mine, too."

"This is gonna be awful!"

"Ten seconds. Five. Four. Three. Two."

"O.K. Here she comes!"

"Well, man! man! man! Are we down?"

"We sure hit *something!*"

"We made it! Oh, God, we made it!"

"We're back! Did we get back?"

"Where'd we land?"

"Ocean. Atlantic."

"Well, break the hull. It's awful in here!"

"Hang on! You may get a ducking."

"Air! Real Air! Whoosh—don't let anyone go and poison this air with cobalt bombs."

"Everyone here? Help Joe up, there! Thataboy! how's it go?"

"Man, we're really here! Where's the reception committee?"

"They were watching us with telescopes; remember? They were going to clear all ships and planes out of the area we were heading for."

"Remember; no speeches 'til we get a rest."

"Yeah, and then I know what I'm going to say."

"We can't do much but we sure can do *something.*"

"Stage one: Moon. Stage two: Earth."

"Here they come... planes!"

"Look dignified."

"Man, look at that rocket out there; it's passing all the rest; coming down from above them."

"Looks practically wingless. It's going to beat the rest by a decade... hey, it's black!"

"Is it ever fast! What country is it? I can't see any identification."

"Say, it's going to pass us right by. Look out, it's diving."

"What's it dropping?"

"Look out! Bomb! Bomb! Bomb! Duck..."

