

Chapter 11

Moon Media

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ABSTRACT

This chapter takes a leap forward and reimagines what it will mean to colonize the Moon and one day even Mars. It investigates advances in technology and attempts to configure how traditional and new media will accommodate the needs and interests of those populating or commuting to new territories in space. What would it be like to report from the Moon? The latest trends and research in science and future studies help to provide a portrait of the possibilities and challenges ahead.

IMAGINE . . .

Amelia Diego settled into her apartment after her 360-degree immersive video presentation for NASA back on Earth. As a science writer, she was somewhere a journalist and scientist herself, having studied both. Exhausted and ready to relax, Amelia looked out her window at Earth as she had every night since her arrival on the Moon.

“Good night, Earth. Good night, Cow jumping over the Earth.”

Amelia’s apartment was small, but all the modern IOE conveniences were there. She had arrived only six months prior with her partner, Clifton Waggert. Both happily agreed to join the half business/half science Moon experiment as recent MIT grads. Established in 2029, the city of Artemis, Lunar Zone 1, was doing better than expected, given the small number of scientists, technicians, entrepreneurs, and the corresponding support staff living there. Most of the science writers such as Amelia and Cliff were in their thirties to early forties, all with advanced degrees. Everybody kind of knew each other and got along well. Amelia’s chart-filled report was titled, “Strugglers: Best Practices vs. Best Intentions.” If you were not a fit for the Moon—or the Moon was a fit for you, the resident psychologists weeded you out. Euphemistically called “Strugglers”—people who became abrasive or difficult to live and work with—about 5% of all terra-travelers were never able to make the transition to full-time Moon life. For

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safety reasons, Strugglers usually were identified early and sent home fast. Sometimes, the highly skilled ones came back for one more tour.

On the other hand, the robots were there to stay. Self-learning droids helped with work, served as clerks, builders, servers, friends, and assistants in nearly every capacity imaginable— even functioning as language translators during occasional disputes among the international team members. Regular upgrades in the AI made each robot more human-like, but early research that Amelia was following was inconclusive on whether that made them better or just weirder for a future report. The tourists, however, loved them.

Lately, an influx of space tourists interested in vacationing in Artemis walked the hallways and asked a lot of questions. Many of the wealthier visitors had experienced suborbital space cruises before making the decision to land for an excursion. Space tourist shuttles were becoming more regular, so it was a common occurrence to see new faces in the hallways. Amelia had authored some human-interest stories on them as freelance pieces. Most tourists stayed at the Hilton Terra Vista, fairly close to the Lunar Plaza, which was a “mall” with beautiful views of Earth. Project psychologists who studied the impact on communities when local grocery stores closed had determined that the experience of shopping in a shared space with a small lunch counter with play tables and games helped to keep towns together through communal interaction. Whatever goods Lunar Plaza could not provide, Amazon NexGen delivered via Blue Origin from the Jeff Bezos Memorial Space Park warehouse, but they were never dropped off at individual apartments. Instead, residents still needed to pick up their Amazon NexGen orders from self-accessing lockers located next to the lunch counter and the play tables.

Artemis itself was an experiment in architecture-as-communication and intentionally blended the real with the surreal. For example, Artemis, Lunar Zone 1, is the reification of the Moon city of our earthly imaginations. City planners went out of their way to create architecture that looked “retro-futuristic.” Roughly, that meant Artemis looked like the book jacket from an old sci-fi novel set on another planet. Organic, authentic original lunar cityscape aesthetics would evolve over time, the designers hoped, but until then, focus group testing revealed that the by-now corny images of fictional Moon colonies brought a certain familiar comfort to terra-travelers. Since a plurality of the residents had grown up dreaming of life in Moon colonies, interconnecting domes, towers, and laboratory blocks that looked like American cereal boxes and egg cartons spray painted white, the lunar pioneers felt less like they were going to a new world and more like they were “coming home.”

*Residents understood their research would help further space exploration and the establishment of human settlements across the universe, so they were willing to put in the hours. The workday was long, but because it was missional, nobody minded. Fitness centers helped keep the mind and body healthy by staving off depression and loneliness. Over time, residents began to assimilate and find new ways to be entertained through new recreational sports that would be impossible under Earth’s gravity, such as adaptations of terra-sports with a lunar twist. Others preferred staying indoors when not researching “in the field.” Amelia and Cliff had some work to finish so they decided to kick back for a bit and watch *Interstellar Media* either on their 3-D headsets or on the 100” parabolic, Chrystal LED-TV display with holographic features that rotated automatically to follow the viewer around the room.*

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