



*Newton Park's
Twisted Tales Pt 2*

Man On The Moon



Man On The Moon

Friday 18th December 2020

Dear Diary,

My weekly delivery arrived today and I'm not sure whether it was a mistake or not, but on top of all the food rations were some books. This was very welcome, as I've read all the books in my pod at least twenty times. But to my surprise, within the bundle of books I found this diary. I never asked for a diary and I've never had one before, but it'll be nice to feel like I'm actually talking to someone.

I've been stuck in this pod up here on the moon for almost nine months now. It's a very lonely experience. I have my daily work to do, which is pretty boring, then I come back here and just watch the clock. I have a small screen which is very basic, having one channel which broadcasts the news twenty-four hours a day. These reporters are really the only human interaction I have, but at least I can stay on top of current affairs and the sports results.

Nothing much ever changes up here, I have my routines that keep me sane, but it is difficult to keep myself motivated. I think of my family back home and wonder what they're doing. Whether they're missing me at all or whether they're just really excited about Christmas. I haven't spoken to them since I arrived and I'm going to be honest, that's the hardest thing about living this way.

The loneliness is enough to make any man lose his mind. A week to go until Christmas. I know if I were at home my wife would have everything under control. The shopping would be done, presents would be wrapped, with the tree up shining brightly in the corner of the living room. The scent of pine and cinnamon drifting around the house, mixing with the warm aroma of mince pies baking in the oven.

The excited kids would be breaking up from school today too. They are all so grown up now, I'll probably struggle to recognise them when I get back home in the new year. They grow up so fast. But the sight of all those presents, wrapped up and sitting under the tree will still excite them and get them in the festive spirit.

I would give anything to be with them all right now, being away from my family and the people I love at Christmas is a torturous thing.

Unfortunately, I have a job to do. It's an important job and I get paid well for it, so I mustn't grumble too much. It was Jack's turn last year, so it's only fair we do the moon shift on a rotation.

Anyway, I've enjoyed this entry. It's really quite nice to feel like I'm having a conversation. I know you're not real and fundamentally I'm just talking to myself, but maybe in years to come I'll look back on these words and I'll realise how truly blessed I am to have a wonderful family, amazing friends and a life full of love. I've probably only really appreciated it since it's been taken away, I will never take it for granted again.

Good night dearest diary, I'll see you again tomorrow.

Much love, Rob x

Saturday 19th December 2020

Dear Diary,

Hello again. I thought I got a bit too emotional yesterday, so today will be a factual entry about me, my life and my job. I am Captain Robert Howlett, I work as a scientist and an astronaut studying the complexities of space exploration. My specialist area is the study of lunar life, whether or not the moon has the capacity to support human life or whether it once was a home for organisms of any kind.

Obviously, it's not like Earth. With temperatures ranging from about one hundred and twenty degrees Celsius when the sun is shining to minus one hundred and seventy degrees in the dark, there is no way humans could live on the surface. There is also no air for us to breathe either, so any form of human would have to live a similar existence to me. This is not to say it's impossible.

Where I am based at the lunar south pole, temperatures seem to average out at about zero degrees centigrade, which is cold, but not too cold. There is also a huge reservoir of frozen ice, from which we have found a way to convert that ice into water. I am here to log the daily temperature and to conduct different experiments to find ways of extracting water from the frozen wilderness on my doorstep.

I only venture out in short bursts to make sure the equipment is working correctly, which so far during my stay it has and the results I am getting are very positive. Going out onto the surface of the moon is exhilarating, but full of danger. There is so little gravity that every step I take has to be thought out thoroughly, as I don't want to go floating off into space. Though bouncing around and bunny hopping along is a lot of fun.

Anyway, after I've checked all the scientific equipment, I come back home and study my daily findings. This is dull for most, lots of numbers and statistics, so I won't bore you with the details.

I never go hungry. I have plenty of meals and snacks, although ready meals and energy bars all eventually taste the same. Eating isn't really enjoyable anymore, it's a necessity and forms a big part of my routine which helps keep my mind active.

I go out once more before dinner to do my final checks before night draws in, then I sit down and watch the news for a bit. I read for an hour before bed. Presently, I'm reading the Grapes Of Wrath by John Steinbeck. It's an interesting book detailing an important if not challenging part of American history. I find it comforting, as Steinbeck describing the barren, desert like fields very much resemble the lifeless rocky dunes of the moon. It's good that the life I'm living is not totally alien to all of mankind.

Finally, I write in my diary, which is obviously new to my routine but I enjoy it nonetheless.

Until tomorrow dearest diary.

Much love, Rob x

Sunday 20th December 2020

Dear Diary,

I finished my book last night. It was the best book I've read so far during my isolation. There's always an element of sadness when you reach the end of a story that you've grown so attached to. It's a type of mourning, I guess. But on the positive it means I get to choose another book, another world for me to leap into. The choice is simple. On top of the pile sits the Charles Dickens tale, 'A Christmas Carol.'

This is bitter sweet to me, as I love the story and the many film adaptations that I've seen over the years, but it reminds me of my favourite adaptation that I saw last year. My best friends run a theatre group and throughout the year they put on many productions, all of which are incredibly engaging and well presented. I'm always very proud of them and in awe of their abilities. Their talent to make me feel a full spectrum of emotions as I watch the people I know transform into wonderful characters, with the power to make me laugh, cry, rage or fill me with joy. It's an unbelievable ability and I'm so proud to call them friends.

Anyway, last year they performed, 'A Christmas Carol' and it was fantastic. It was the first time Mila and myself took the kids to watch one of their shows and I remember we all left feeling full of Christmas spirit. We waited outside the theatre for my friends and when they eventually bounced out so full of life they stopped to chat to every audience member who had waited to congratulate them on another successful show. Finally they saw us, they smiled and skipped towards us, hugged us all so warmly and seemed so grateful that we came to support them. Afterwards, we all drove to a local Christmas market. We merrily drank mulled wine and the kids ate mince pies as we all sang along to a choir singing carols. It was such a perfect day.

By the time we got home the kids were so tired they went straight to bed. Mila and myself just cuddled under a blanket and watched the TV until we slept. Mila is truly the best woman, I couldn't ever ask for a better partner. She is so supportive of me and all the things that I do, it's not easy living with me and my job, but she is always there when I need her.

I love her so incredibly, words could never do that justice. I'm never happier than when I'm snuggled up next to her, she strokes my head softly and slowly, the rest of the world seems to evaporate into nothing. It's just us, us against the world. I'm so lucky, I've got the most amazing wife and the most incredible kids, it's torture feeling like I'm so far away from them all.

I do hope they're OK. Christmas just won't be the same without them all.

I'm sorry dearest diary, I can't think about this any more. It's making me too sad. Goodnight and I'll see you again tomorrow.

Much love, Rob x

Wednesday 23rd December 2020

Dear Diary,

I feel awful. I'm sorry I've left it so long to speak to you again. I got myself in a real state last time we spoke and I think I was scared to revisit those emotions again. I need to keep this communication going though, however tough it is. Isolation is the hardest thing, being on your own with just your thoughts locked up in your mind can be a soul destroying place. I'm pleased you're here with me, diary, you help, you help get those thoughts out of my head. It makes space for me to think about the future, not just dwell on the past and the times I've lost.

I've been watching the news a lot these past two days. Lots of stories about Christmas, people doing good things, food shelters preparing to feed the homeless, people organising gift baskets for children who have very little. It's one of the things I love about this time of the year, it can bring out the best in humanity. We can show such love and compassion for our fellow man, it's a shame this only ever gets airtime at Christmas.

My eldest child, Emily, is a very giving young girl, she does a lot for charity already. Bakes cakes, does charity runs, she has a lot of love and compassion in her just like her mum. The boys aren't quite as thoughtful though my eldest son, Michael, does like boxing up his old toys and taking them to charity shops for other children to play with. The youngest, James, does help when he can, but to be honest I think they all do more than I do. That's something I can definitely do in the future, maybe I should do some volunteer work next Christmas. I get so bogged down with my job and doing things I enjoy, I should really think of others more often.

Maybe I'm comparing myself to Scrooge a bit too much? I don't feel like I'm a humbug at all, I mean I do enjoy Christmas, but sometimes it's good to get a reality check and realise what Christmas is truly all about.

I remember when I was younger my favourite Christmas story was, 'How The Grinch Stole Christmas,' by Dr Suess. I always remember the line at the end:

"What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas... perhaps... means a little bit more."

And it does. Christmas is a time that we should all spend with the ones we love and we should share that love to all who need it.

Anyway, that's enough preaching for one day. Thanks for listening dearest diary.

Much love, Rob x

Thursday 24th December 2020

Dear Diary,

Christmas Eve.

I'm still alone, not a single card or a single present or a single decoration. It's fair to say I'm not feeling very festive at all stuck up here on my own.

On this day, I would usually be rushing around the shops panic buying gifts for my family. Unlike my darling wife, I'm not that organised, I tend to leave everything until the last minute. I rush around crazily running from one shop to the next, filling baskets full of presents I think people might like. I know it sounds like utter chaos, but generally I do alright and I don't get many complaints from the family. I then speed home, wrap all the gifts and then we all go to visit my parents.

Mila sorts out everything for the kids as I've already said, we tend not to buy each other presents. To be frank, we don't really need anything, but what we try and do is buy each other memories. We take it in turns to do something each Christmas that we've never done before. Whether it be the ballet, the opera, piano concerts by candle light, sky diving, wine tasting or one year, pizza making. Just random things we can do together and just enjoy each other's company. We both believe moments are more precious than possessions. It's lovely that we share the same philosophy.

I digress, Christmas Eve. We take my speedily gathered and wrapped gifts to my parents and spend the afternoon there. We have our first festive meal and play board games as soon as my sisters and nephews arrive. I have a big extended family and enjoy the time I get to spend with them. Christmas Eve is one of those rare days where we can all just relax, with no work stress or other things to rush to, we can just kick back and have some fun. We eventually exchange our gifts, then we all go home and get ready for Santa to arrive.

When the excitement finally settles down and the kids are all fast asleep, I slouch on the sofa with Mila, a bottle of wine and a nice cheese board. Perfection.

Then I go to bed happy, knowing that the next day I'll be with Mila, the kids, my parents, sisters and nephews. There'll be laughter, love, fun, noise, food and never ending merriment.

But not this year. This year I'm off to bed knowing that tomorrow it'll be me, the news, the moon, my book and a microwave lasagne.

Merry Christmas everyone and Merry Christmas to you dearest diary.

Much love, Rob x

Friday 25th December 2020

Dear Diary,

Christmas is here.

I woke up, got dressed, went for my morning checks, the temperature, the frozen lake, stopped to look at the beautiful blues and greens of Earth so far away in the distance. It looks amazing from up here and everyone down there will be waking up to spend the day with their loved ones. I trudge slowly back to my pod, feeling more sullen and alone than I ever have before.

When I get back, my mood is lifted slightly as it's delivery day and a box has been left outside my pod. I lift the heavy metallic crate inside and place it on the floor by the door. I remove my space suit and open the lid of the box. I take out the rations of food and store them away safely in the cupboards and refrigeration unit. Then I notice something. There's a package attached to the side of the crate. I carefully remove the thin, flat container and read the inscription. The words, 'open me,' have been etched into the metal case. I carefully open the shiny envelope and a mobile phone drops onto the table.

As soon as it lands it begins to ring. I answer quickly in a state of panic and excitement. The screen lights up and I'm staring straight into the beautiful eyes of my Mila, I immediately well up, I've missed her more than words could express. She smiles sweetly and says, "Merry Christmas handsome, I miss you and love you so much. I hope you're doing OK."

Before I get a chance to respond the phone is ripped from her grasp, Emily, Michael and James all scream, "Merry Christmas, Daddy," at me. It's amazing just seeing all their faces.

They tell me about all the wonderful things they've been doing and show me all of their favourite presents. I speak to my mum and dad, my sisters are there too. Even my theatrical friends are there to wish me good tidings. Everyone I love is there in that room together, all there to see me and show me how much they love and miss me. It's an incredible surprise and I'm so over-come with emotion, I'm actually lost for words.

I compose myself and spend the whole morning just talking to everyone, even managing to sit and have lunch with them all.

Finally, I have to leave as my battery dies, but it has been the most incredible Christmas miracle, just to see my family and loved ones was the best present I ever got. I say goodbye, try to express how much I love them and that I will see everyone again soon.

With that the phone cuts out, I clutch it to my heart and a warmth fills my body. I smile happily and don't feel so alone anymore. Even though I am physically on my own, just hearing from the ones I love made me feel a part of their Christmas, a part of their thoughts and if I'm in their hearts and minds I'll never be alone.

Merry Christmas dearest diary, merry Christmas to you all.

Much love, Rob x

Saturday 26th December 2020

Dear Diary,

Good morning my friend. What a difference a day makes. Although it's Boxing Day and I'm stranded on the moon, miles away from another living being I feel pretty positive. I've already bounced gleefully through my morning chores, so full of energy after hearing from all my loved ones yesterday.

In addition, I had the most wonderful dream last night. I dreamt I awoke in my soft, warm bed back on Earth. I rolled over and put my arm over my Mila. I softly kissed her cheek as she slept peacefully, murmuring something quietly in her still dreaming state. She makes the cutest noises when she sleeps. We laid together serenely, in blissful peace until the three kids burst in. They were full of excitement and literally dragged us out of bed, pulling us downstairs to see what Santa had brought us all. We were not disappointed, as beneath the beautifully, precisely decorated tree lie a seamlessly endless pile of presents. James eagerly handed out the gifts while I watched from the kitchen making tea for Mila and myself. The joy continued all through to lunch, as my parents arrived, my sisters and nephews too. Mila and I finished preparing the lunch, happily sipping on our red wine, singing, occasionally hugging and the odd cheeky kiss under the mistletoe. From the living room, the cheery sound of laughter and games drifted merrily into the kitchen. Mila looked at me and smiled sweetly, content and happy.

Eventually, we all sat down and enjoyed our plentiful feast, the kids pulled crackers and I kept the adult's glasses full of wine. I had great fun telling the terrible jokes from the crackers. 'Who brings the cats of the world presents at Christmas? Santa Paws of course.' I laughed uncontrollably at the horrible humour while Mila playfully rolled her eyes in defeat. After clearing the table we moved back into the living room. The kids played, while the adults relaxed in front of the fire listening to Christmas songs. I snuggled up to Mila and felt my eyes close as she gently stroked my head.

Then my alarm went off.

I may be alone this Christmas, but next Christmas I will have the exact day of my dreams and I can't wait. I've started making plans already and in making these lists I feel closer to my family. It's only a year away and that will be here in no time at all. Although it's tough and dark today, tomorrow will be brighter and it's not too far away. Anyway, I've got work to do. Thanks for listening dearest diary and I'm positive next year will be the best Christmas ever, I'm going to make sure of it.

Never give up on your hopes and dreams, however distant that life may seem.

Much love, Rob x

The End