

LUNAR HOTEL

by Claudia

"Look, Captain. What does that mean?" Otho pointed at the laser fax. "If that's true we'll have visitors tomorrow."

Future took a step towards the device and read the text which just had come in. It was a message from "Brody Enterprises", who asserted their newly acquired ownership of the moon and announced they would send a delegation for an inspection of the site within the next 24 hours. And there was also sent the resolution of a New Yorker board Future had never heard of before, which officially constituted the legal base for the ownership.

"This can only be a joke, or a mistake." he remarked, unmoved. "The moon belongs to nobody, it is mankind heritage." And without any hesitation he deleted the message.

Future was just eating up his breakfast when Grag flounced in.

"My, my, I think we have some visitors right now, Captain!" he cried excitedly. "A space craft with the inscription "Brody Enterprises" has just landed outside, in the crater. A group of people has just got off; they are heading for the base. What are we going to do now?"

"Easy, Grag.", said Future to calm him down, as he was drinking up his coffee. "I'm sure there is some sort of misunderstanding." He left the last bite of his donut, rose and went out with Grag, Otho and Simon to the airlock. The newcomers introduced themselves as a group of architects and engineers from the "Brody Enterprises Group". The airlock-scanner searched them routinely for hidden weapons, virus and germs before they were admitted. Both women and men took off their oxygen helmets, and a short Asian girl, whose hair was cut in a faultless, neat bob, stepped forward and promptly reached her hand out to Future.

"You must be Captain Future, it's a real pleasure to meet you! My name is Lan Wang and I'm going to design the interior of the new hotel. This is my team, led by my Chief Technical Engineer Steve Mitchell."

Future was about to ask a question when Miss Wang cut him short, gazing around uncomfortably.

"I can't believe you're living here, Mr. Future." she added unbelievably, adjusting her fancy designer glasses. "Who can bear such a place?"

The members of the Future-Crew looked at her uncomprehendingly.

"What exactly do you mean?" asked Professor Simon.

Suddenly Miss Wang stepped back with a shriek.

"For heaven's sake, what is that?" she breathed heavily. "The thing scared me to death!"

Future and Simon exchanged looks without saying a word and both knew that they had to get rid off this team of architects and engineers as fast as possible.

"The "thing" is Professor Simon Wright." explained Future, who was getting slightly annoyed with Miss Wang. "And I am not exaggerating when I say that Professor Simon already knows more about any technical and mathematical aspect of architecture than your team will ever be able to learn."

A murmur of protest rose from the group of visitors, but Miss Wang silenced them again with a gesture.

"Well, that sounds remarkable." she said in a disinterested tone. "But that's not what we actually came for."

"What did you actually come for, then?" asked Otho impatiently, as he thought everything was going far too slowly.

"But we informed you yesterday about the purpose of our visit." Miss Wang returned by looking at Otho critically. "Didn't you receive our fax?"

"Well... we did." said Otho. "But we thought it was a joke."

Lan Wang laughed and turned to her team, who in their turn burst out laughing. Abruptly, she turned to the Future-Crew and her subordinates, who had gone quiet again.

"Believe me, dear Captain, "Brody Enterprises" doesn't make jokes. In four weeks we'll start with the construction of the "Brody Lunar Hotel", and to be precise we only need some signatures from you. And while my engineers are measuring and marking the site, we'll come up with some ideas for the rearrangement of your base."

She grabbed the briefcase she had put down beside her and undertook to inspect the moonbase, walking straight past Future. The Captain was aghast. This couldn't be true!

"Miss Wang, as far as I know, the moon is mankind heritage and belongs to no one, officially. How can you then make claims of property?"

"Mr. Brody is a generous sponsor of science, Mr. Future. Without his support, the institute for interstellar rights, which is independent from the federation, wouldn't exist, if you know what I mean. Besides, one of the most modern space telescopes will be installed within the hotel. And research is in the interest of all mankind, isn't it?" She smiled without emotion, and although she had quite short legs, he had to walk fast to keep up with her brisk step. Suddenly she stopped and looked around.

"Did we just go in circles?" she asked, astonished when she found herself again in front of the airlock through which she had come in.

"Yes, apart from the hangar, the shape of the base is circular." answered Future.

"I like that." answered Miss Wang fiercely. "Corners can really make one sick. But we absolutely have to talk about the colors, Captain. Eventually one can become melancholic in here!"

Future frowned and tried to understand what the Chinese was talking about.

"What do you mean...?"

"Well Captain, how can the tourist feel good when everything looks just this repellent? I can really picture these walls in a creamy white paint; some modern pictures with a diffuse lighting that would open up the long round walk; here and there a feathery fern..."

But only one word had caught Future's attention. "Tourists???"

Miss Wang gave him a look of surprise.

"Who else, Mr. Future? Even if they are surrounded by all possible luxury, as will be the case in the new hotel, our wealthy clients won't spend their holidays on a bleak, grey block of stone without visiting the moon base of the famous Captain Future." She was smiling. Future was boiling.

"Miss Wang, how could you believe I would accept something like that? Not only do you have the nerve to intrude on our private gathering, but you disturb our work unacceptably and stop us from studying important documents the government entrusted to us. I really don't think President Cashew would approve of your projects".

"Can you imagine: a small cafeteria out of this room?" Future and Wang had just reached the little kitchen of the moonbase, and it seemed the interior designer had not paid the slightest attention to the captain's last words.

"Beside coffee and donuts, there should other things available." she added, glancing at the left-overs of Future's breakfast. "Perhaps some macrobiotic snacks?"

Future looked at the little woman in disbelief.

"Miss Wang, did you listen to me at all?"

"But of course." retorted the Chinese while inspecting the fittings of the kitchen even further.

"You like to threaten me. But I feel the arrangement of this kitchen is far more threatening. The microwave is at a very unfavorable angle to the dishwasher. This creates a negative flow of energy. And what can I say about the color of the units!"

Although Future was a master of self-control, that was the last straw.

"Miss Wang, if you don't..."

He was interrupted by Miss Wang's transmitter. She took out the device and had a quick glance at it.

"Ah, I'm afraid we'll have to continue our discussion another time, Captain. Steve seems to have a problem with the measuring outside. Thanks for your coop... patience. So long."

Before Future could reply anything, Miss Wang put her helmet back on, and disappeared through the airlock, leaving a speechless Future-Crew.

"I guess she has bats in the belfry!" Otho finally uttered.

They didn't hear anything about the matter for three days. Then, unexpectedly, Joan Landor got in touch with Future through the tele-transmitter in his study room.

"Hello, Curtis! I heard you had visitors lately?"

"How do you know?" asked Future, surprised.

"Well, we had to make arrests at the company management of "Brody Enterprises". It was about falsification of documents and corruption, to a large extent. After checking the data and documents Ezella discovered that a group of architects had already paid you a visit..." Joan tried to repress a laugh. "... for the construction of a hotel."

"You're laughing but this interior designer was really unbearable." The very thought of the little woman with the sharp tongue could make his hair stand on end.

"You can be relieved now, Curtis." said Joan. "The hotel-project wasn't based on any legal ground. The company management just tried on grubby methods and failed, luckily. Although...I think a hotel close to your base would have offered some interesting possibilities..." she winked at him.

"Joan, you can choose the most beautiful hotel in New York and I'll invite you there. But the moon is my workplace, above all."

Joan smiled. "I shall think a lot about this offer, in any case." With these words, she rushed off to disconnect.

"So long. I love you."

"So do I, Joan."