

Under the Moon

ROWENA AKINYEMI

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UNDER THE MOON

The sun is a huge, burning ball of fire. On the planet Earth we cannot live without heat and light from the sun. Around our planet, there is the ozone layer, which protects us from the sun's fire. But what happens if the ozone layer breaks up? Today there are already small holes in it, and some people say they will get bigger and bigger – until one day there will be nothing between us and the sun's fire.

It happened in 2222. So the people of Earth made the AOL – the Artificial Ozone Layer. Another thousand years of life for the beautiful planet Earth. Trees grew again, rain fell, there was water in the rivers . . .

But now it is 2522, and the AOL is already breaking up. The new forests are beginning to burn, the rivers are running dry. Kiah and Rilla, from their spaceship, see the danger, but what can they do? Their friends in the colony under the moon are a long way away, and Gog, the Earth Commander, will not listen to them.

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Universal Planet News
01.01.2222

**ALWAYS REMEMBER TODAY!
A WONDERFUL DAY FOR
PLANET EARTH!**

**THE ARTIFICIAL OZONE
LAYER (AOL) IS FINISHED!**

Today the last Ship arrived from space at 1500 hours. In Kisangani, fifty thousand people waited for Ship OL-20, the last of the AOL Ships.

Ship OM-1 is staying in space with its satellite. They are watching the AOL, day and night.

Now Earth can begin to live again! Under the AOL the sun cannot burn us. Trees and people can now have water again and stay alive. The AOL is good for a thousand years!

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The AOL in 2522

Five hundred kilometres over Europe, Ship OM-45 moved north. In a room at the back of the ship, Kiah watched the numbers on the computer in front of him.

‘Time for dinner,’ Rilla said.



Kiah watched the numbers on the computer.

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The AOL in 2522

The numbers changed quickly and Kiah's eyes didn't move. Rilla went across the room to his table. She began to watch the numbers, too.

'What's wrong with the satellite?' she asked. She was a beautiful girl, about twenty years old, with long black hair and big eyes.

'Nothing's wrong with the satellite,' Kiah answered quietly. 'It's the AOL.' He began to write the numbers in the book on his table.

Suddenly, the numbers stopped changing. Kiah looked at Rilla. 'Over Europe,' he said. 'It's happening. The AOL is breaking up. There are big holes in the AOL and they're getting bigger.'

'You're right! Shall we see Captain Seru now, before dinner?'

Kiah stood up. He was nearly two metres tall, with dark eyes and hair. 'Yes, come on,' he said.

Quickly, they went to Captain Seru's room. They waited at the door.

'Come in!' Captain Seru called. She was a little woman with a fat face. 'Come in! Would you like a drink?'

'No, thank you,' Kiah answered. 'I'd like you to look at these numbers.' Kiah gave Captain Seru his book.

Captain Seru looked at the numbers. Suddenly, her face changed. 'No, no,' she said. 'I don't want to talk. It's late and I'm tired. Sit down and have a drink.'

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Kiah and Rilla sat down. There was a big window in Captain Seru's room. Kiah looked out of the window at the dark sky. He saw the Moon. It was cold and white in the dark sky.

'Captain Seru,' he began. 'It's important. Look at those numbers carefully. The AOL is beginning to—'

'Stop!' Captain Seru stood up and put her hands in her pockets. She went to the window and looked at the sky.

'Three hundred years ago, Earth nearly died,' Rilla said. 'Earth stopped dying because of the AOL. But now, over Europe, the AOL is breaking up. We would like you to talk to Earth Commander.'

Captain Seru did not move. 'Do you remember Adai?' she asked. She didn't wait for an answer. 'I was on his ship, two years ago. One evening, the satellite gave us interesting numbers about the AOL. We went back to Earth and saw Earth Commander.' Captain Seru stopped speaking.

Rilla looked at Kiah. 'And then?' she asked Captain Seru.

'Gog was angry, very angry,' Captain Seru said. 'In the end, he sent Adai to the Moon. Adai's there now, Commander of the Moon colony, under the Moon.'

Kiah waited for a second or two. 'I know about Adai. But we need to talk to Earth Commander again. These numbers are worse.'

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The AOL in 2522



'Do you remember Adai?' Captain Seru asked.

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Captain Seru's face went red. 'You don't understand. I'm not going to talk to Gog. Last time, he sent me to a weather ship in the Antarctic! This is my first Ship for two years!' And Captain Seru began drinking.

Kiah stood up. 'Thank you, Captain Seru.'

Captain Seru said nothing.

Kiah and Rilla left the room, and walked slowly downstairs. The Ship was dark and quiet. It was eight o'clock and everybody was at dinner.

'What are we going to do next?' Rilla asked.

'I need to talk to Adai,' Kiah said.

'OK, talk to Adai. But he's far away on the Moon colony,' Rilla said. 'Let's visit Commander Zadak.'

'Zadak? Commander of Australia? He's famous!'

'Yes. He's my father's friend. He worked with my father in Brazil ten years ago. Perhaps he can help us.'

Kiah smiled. 'Good! We return to Earth next week. I can phone Adai from Kisangani and then we can go to Australia. But now, I'm hungry! Let's get some dinner.'

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Visit to Australia

On Friday, after three weeks in space, Kiah and Rilla finished work and left Ship OM-45 on a space plane to

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE SAMPLE.

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