



Another Fine Mess: Life on Tomorrow's Moon

SPECULATIVE NONFICTION BY
By Pope Brock

We've gotten into another fine mess, destroying the planet and all. So where will we go next? Is it time to colonize outer space? Acclaimed essayist Pope Brock takes us on a vivid satirical journal to learn just what life might look like living on tomorrow's moon.

Now that we've pretty much ruined planet Earth—no big secret—science tells us the human race could be doomed. Well, not all science, but some of it, enough to have sparked a lively interest in setting up someplace else.

But where?

The answer is the moon of course, and that's what this book explores: the many ways in which today's scientists, entrepreneurs, architects and, yes, a few loonies are working to get colonies established there ASAP. Filled with research, interviews and expert projections, these pages reveal how a web of fantastic new technologies could give mankind a brand new start off-world.

The only worm in the ointment is human nature. It's the one thing pioneers in this business almost never discuss. Yet it's of vital concern: given a second chance on the moon, will we use it to create at last a sane and peaceful society? Or will we make a desperate hash of things all over again?

Here's your doorway to the moon of tomorrow. Pass through and decide for yourself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pope Brock is a writer, teacher and DJ living in Arlington, Massachusetts. He is the author of three books: *Indiana Gothic* (Doubleday/Nan A. Talese), about the murder of his great-grandfather; *Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam* (Crown), about the most successful quack in American history, and *Another Fine Mess: Life on Tomorrow's Moon* (Red Hen Press, forthcoming), a work of what might be called speculative nonfiction. His articles have appeared in *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Rolling Stone*, *London Sunday Times Magazine*, and many other publications. Since 2005 he has taught in the low-residency MFA Writing Program at the University of Nebraska.



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MEDIA CONTACT

Keaton Maddox

Associate Editor/Publicist

626-356-4760

publicity@redhen.org

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ips@ingramcontent.com

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FROM ANOTHER FINE MESS

I was slung in my favorite deck chair, drink in hand, having a gawk at the night sky. Andromeda, Pisces . . . I trawled the constellations, mind flung wide, still aware in some curve at the back of my brain that the world is coming apart at the seams and we're all fucked, and enjoying the gentle paradox of it, the clink of the ice in my glass and the slumber of the dog.

By and by I found my gaze lingering on the moon. There it was, the great provider: breeder of wonder, werewolves and all those songs. The place where beauty meets philosophy, where hope and despair alike are lost.

Gnawing through the romance though was a little something I'd read not long before. An astrophysicist had claimed that the moon could save our planet. Not immediately: this would be in about 4.5 billion years when the sun explodes and roasts us in wrath and fire unless we get out of the way. Frankly, the notion of Earth making a break for it seemed implausible to me, but this Canadian professor said we could do it by shooting off an army of rockets on the far side of the moon. Slammed out of its orbit by the collective blast, the moon would sail off with Earth, yoked by gravity, trailing behind it. A thousand years' travel and we're out of harm's way—albeit dark and freezing unless we initiate phase two of the plan. As the sun recedes in the distance, we would replace its rays with a trillion lunar argon arc lamps. A flip of the switch and the moon becomes the sun: blue sky, puffy clouds, everything just as before.

I'm gazing up at the night, not quite in a reverie thanks to the gnats, but thinking yes, well, lovely. Imagine the parades. Still, to get that opportunity the human race would have to last (*long pause, phone math*) 22,500 times longer than it has already. At that point I heaved myself up and went inside for more booze. Looking back, I believe that night marked the shift in my thinking from save it (Earth) to save us (me). Or if not me, someone. Because when you've got surfing champs riding the curl from an ice wall collapsing in the Arctic, when an Ivy League egghead offers mathematical proofs that the human race is doomed if we don't get off-world, and Stephen Hawking and others are ululating on the same theme, and thousands are tunneling and stockpiling ahead of TEOTWAWKI (The End of the World As We Know It), then you have to start wondering if it's not time to break camp. Or at least to establish a beachhead on the moon, just as some governments, corporations, scrappy start-ups and freestanding oddballs are trying now to do.

Granted, we've heard such talk before, back in the days of the Apollo program. Lunar colonies they promised us, farms, industries, a platform to the universe. What did we get? June 2008: "Space Station Resident Fixes Toilet." The big difference today is that some people are actually serious about it. In the 60s it was just something to say. For despite all the soaring rhetoric the only thing Washington really cared about then was beating the Soviets there.

As a kid when I heard the word *Soviets*, I got a taste in my mouth like lead pencils. I remember a *Weekly Reader* from maybe fourth grade with a picture of J. Edgar Hoover beneath the headline, "What You Can Do in the Fight Against Communism." What winning would mean—*Let's Win the Cold War!*—no one ever explained, but the consequences of losing were clear. The Kremlin and the Kingston Trio agreed, when the big one hit, we'd all go, next year, next month, tomorrow . . .



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