

The only grave on the Moon is mine.

My burial plot is a crater near the southern pole, three hundred feet wide and fifty feet deep. My casket is a polycarbonate and brass cylinder, small enough to hold in both your hands. My headstone is the wreckage of a crashed satellite, the hearse that brought me here so long ago.

Why the living sent me here, I don't know. But I don't think they meant to do me any harm. They must have thought it was what I would have wanted. They could not have known that my spirit would travel up here with the little capsule. I bear them no resentment, though I do wish I had more company sometimes.

Up here I am all alone. I cannot recall the sound of a human voice other than my own, nor the sight of a human face. In my mind, they all blend into one and fade away. But even though I cannot picture them, I see every human at once whenever I look at the sky. Earth looms large above me, a splash of brilliant blue in a sea of black. I watch it turn around and around for hours, and I wonder if someone down there is looking up at me too.

I am all alone, but I am not lonely. I have millions of friends in the stars, and I go on long walks to the dark plains just to visit them. If you watch the stars for as long as I have, you will see that each one glints in its own special way. I have given them all names, like Hypatia and Kesil and Rasalased. Sometimes I try to find the constellations I remember from Earth. Most of the time, however, I trace the stars with my fingers and build pictures of my own.

My favorite friends are the ones who come from Earth. Not the living, who haven't been here in a long time. Instead they send their wonderful creations in their place. Clever machines with names like Opportunity and Polaris and Pioneer. I like to believe that they can see me with their cameras, or at least sense when I am near. They all have important jobs to do, and I help

them in any way I can. I follow them wherever their mission leads, keeping them free of dust and away from the steep cliffs. And when their mission is done, when they have no more power to stay awake, I stay with them until they fall asleep for the last time. I try not to mourn my friends too long, because I know they served the living well. And I know that when a new friend arrives, it will be a more ingenious machine than the last. It always is. What else has been invented back on Earth, I can only dream of.

I cannot see for myself what Earth has become. I tried to go back, but I think my soul must now be bound to this other world. So, I wait and hope that the living will come to me instead. Not only to explore, but to stay. I wait to see the landing of the first ships and the rise of the first buildings. The living could flourish here, I believe. They could even build a home here that would rival Earth itself. Once they do, perhaps they will reach even further into the stars. Or they might even come looking for me, to pay their respects and to bury their own dead. All I know for certain is that I will greet everyone who arrives, whether living or dead.

The only grave on the Moon is mine. But someday, I hope, it will only be the first.