

WELCOME TO PARADISE

By Allyn Donnelson



A civilian like me has no business getting mixed up in top secret government projects. But this one I got into—and you should be as lucky!

President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I don't know who else to appeal to about the fix I'm in, because I'm afraid I would be revealing top secret material to someone who isn't entitled to hear it. That's why I wouldn't tell the FBI anything and that's why I told them I don't want a lawyer.

I know you've got lots on your mind, Mr. President, and I hope hearing about my blunder doesn't throw you off your game this weekend or anything like that, but I sure would appreciate it if you could find time to help me out.

You see, I'm not a spy, and I sure didn't stumble into this stuff of my own accord, but how was I to know I was setting off a spark that had something to do with space travel? After all, when you stop to think about it, I only did what the foreman told me to, but he didn't know any better either, so I wouldn't want to get him in Dutch.

You see, I work at the Diversified Metal Products Co. up here in Chicago. I'm a spot welder and one job I had to do about every six weeks was make six welds on a geedunk we called a "manhole cover." We didn't know what they were, except that they were something special for the Signal Corps, and they looked about as much like manhole covers as anything else.

Well, the way the work is supposed to be scheduled, my welding job is the first thing after it comes off the presses, just before the

little coils are put in. So the foreman comes over to me one night—it was October 10, the last day of the World Series—and shows me one of the covers after it's been wired up. One of the welds has come loose—maybe because the material was dirty or something like that—and it looks like the whole thing will have to be scrapped.

So he says to me "Tuck" (my name is Joe Peters, but they call me Tuck for Kentucky where I come from)—he says, "Tuck, do you suppose you can save this piece by welding it again, right there between those two coils?"

I look the geedunk over, and there isn't much room to play around, but I decide it's not near enough the coils to melt the wires. So if I spoil it, so what? It'd be scrap anyhow. How was I to know the points of the welder would establish an electrical contact?

So I take the piece and tell him I'll try it after I finish the truckload of stuff I'm working on. But along about coffee time, I go and burn my hand kind of bad on the welder, and have to get the nurse to bandage it up for me, and that slows me up a good bit.

Everybody else in the department had left for washup by the time I put the gismo in the machine. I kicked the pedal just like I always do, and whoosh! I was out like a rookie the first time he faces Allie Reynolds. Seems like I saw a flash of bluish-greenish light, but I don't know for sure.

Next thing I knew, a squatty guy with broad shoulders and bushy eyebrows was standing over me. He said, "Well, did the Yankees win the Series?" and his accent sounded like he should be following the Dodgers instead.

I looked around. It was kinda dark, like just after the sun goes down. I was sitting on a big strip of limestone, and I could see a few trees and some small hills, and lots more of those limestone rocks, or cliffs. It wasn't like any part of the country I've ever seen before.

The guy starts giving me the once over, too. "What monkey in that zoo they call the Pentagon picked *you* for a job like this? I knew the Defense Department was hard up, but I didn't think they were *that* hard up!"

Then I notice this geezer has a uniform sporting top sergeant's stripes. I jump up and back away from him.

"Look," I says, "I don't know what happened, but I know I didn't volunteer for no army job, and I'm too old to be drafted again. I must have had amnesia. I wanna lawyer. Lemmee out of here—you're not giving me that army routine again—no siree."

(Mr. President, please don't misunderstand me. I'm as patriotic as the next guy, and I assure you I won't shirk no duty if I'm needed, but I don't have to *like* it, do I?)

The guy's dumbfounded. He doesn't give me a strong-arm deal like I'd expect from a top-sarge—he just looks as if he can't figure it out. Then he grabs me by the shoulder.

"Wait a minute, Mac, let's sit down and talk this over. Who the hell are you? Where did you come from? Who sent you?"

I'm about to say "Groucho sent me," but I decide maybe I'd better be serious. I tell him my name, and that I ain't got the faintest idea where I am.

"Okay, Tuck," he says. "They call me Yogi. Now let's take it from the beginning, slow and easy, huh?"

So I tell him what happened in the plant, and before I get done Yogi is laughing like crazy, in fact he sits down on the rock and almost knocks himself out.

"Well, what in Sam Hill is so all-fired funny? Who kidnapped me while I was knocked out and dumped me on this God-forsaken army post?"

Yogi manages to stop laughing. He takes me across a strip of this funny-looking, bare limestone rock, where a contraption is standing that looks like a radio tower about ten feet high. Inside it is a box about the size and shape of those reducing cabinets you see in cartoons. The top to the box is open, and Yogi points to it.

"Is this the kind of doohicky you're talking about—what you call a manhole cover?"

I look close, and sure enough, that's just what it is. I nod to Yogi, and he sighs real serious like.

"Well, Tuck, my boy, you maybe made yourself famous tonight. One thing for sure—you're the first civilian to travel by HHF, and the first one to set foot on Lunette."

"And where on God's green earth is Lunette?"

"That's what's so funny, Tuck. It's not on God's green earth at all. Lunette is a satellite of the Earth, discovered just a few months ago. It's a sort of little moon—that's why we named it Lunette. It's got enough atmosphere so we don't need space suits, and it's about half-way between Earth and the moon."

I guess I was giving him a "tell me another" look. He pointed in back of me. "Look at the moon coming up over there, if you don't believe me. Did you ever see anything like that on Earth?"

That convinced me. The old moon was huge, and I could see mountains and rivers and seas on it, and even that natural bridge I'd read about. Besides, I could even see the curve of the ground on Lunette!

But how in blazes did I get here?

"This contraption," Yogi explains, "we call a Matter BARS, short for Matter Broadcasting and Receiving Station. It works on HHF—hyper high frequency—and instead of sending out the ordinary type of radio wave lengths it broadcasts matter. It won't work between two points on Earth; it has to have a distance of at least 200,000 miles to bounce from. We bounce stuff off the moon, and broadcast people, equipment—anything of less than 250 pounds—between Earth and Lunette."

"Who bounces them? Who in tarnation bounced me here?"

"You bounced yourself, friend. Your spotweld machine set up a contact here between these two coils. Our regular operators establish contact by moving these two balls near each other like a Leyden jar. Your machine had the same effect, and whoosh, here you are."

"Look, Bud, I remember a Leyden jar from high school science, but durned if I follow the rest of that malarkey."

Yogi's getting impatient with me. "It's very simple, Peters. Suppose you wandered into a TV studio when the circuits were open—your picture and voice would be broadcast over that station. Well, that

Matter BARS cover was set at the right frequency for sending objects or people to Lunette and you were broadcast here. You wouldn't have been knocked out if you had been inside the insulating cabinet; it would have just felt like a sneeze."

"So what are you doing here?" This guy is selling me fast.

"Guess I'd probably better let the CO talk to you about that. But first tell me about the Series."

So we bat the breeze a while about what is going on back on Earth, and I start to wonder how am I going to get back there. Yogi tells me to let the CO worry about that, and in the meantime offers to show me around the joint.

There's not much to see on Lunette—nothing but salt water lakes, limestone cliffs, a few scrawny trees, and some weird bushes with round things dangling from them that you'd think was grapefruit, or something like that, until you found out they were hard as coconuts.

All of the plant life looked like the chlorophyll people had been there already, and had taken a big haul back to their toothpaste factories. The grass and leaves were either a kind of chartreuse or a pale color like weak orangeade. Finally we take off for the CO.

The Captain turned out to be a right guy, but he sure was upset about the security angle. He couldn't help grinning, though, when Yogi said,

"I still think it's damned funny that a civilian could stumble into a top secret army base 100,000 miles from home!"

"Well, Peters," the Captain said, "we can't very well send you back tonight anyway, because both the regular station and the test station at your plant in Chicago are closed now. Under ordinary circumstances I'd have to lock you up, but I don't see how you can escape from us! Go bunk with Yogi and let me think it over."

He stopped us as we started out of the tent. "And men, keep your lips buttoned."

We join the fellows and talked about baseball for a couple hours. We organized a game for the next day, and I agreed to play shortstop, even though I'm hoping I won't be around for it. The Captain's remarks hadn't made me feel too easy on that score.

I ask Yogi how come all the bicycles over by the pueblo castle and he explains that they can be broadcast, unassembled, where the parts to a jeep or any other big vehicle would be too heavy for the Matter BARS to handle. He says they're used by the crews assigned to surveying and mapping Lunette, making geological and botanical surveys, and that sort of thing.

Yogi gets me a sleeping bag and we stretch out under the stars in front of the limestone castle. (Man, that thing is pretty in the moonlight, Mr. President.) Lanterns hanging in some of the caves made it sparkle here and there like a giant hunk of jewelry. And I never breathed such fresh, sweet air as that, anyplace.

The next day the CO calls Yogi in for a conference that doesn't include me, so I get in on the baseball game after all. It was a lot of fun, too. Lunette's gravity is much less that of Earth so I made some pretty wild throws until I got oriented.

At chow time I latched onto Yogi. "Hey, kid, when do I get out of here? This is a fine adventure, but after all, I got obligations back on Earth."

"It may not be that easy, Tuck. The Captain doesn't know what to do. HQ is going to bust a gasket when they find out about you. After all, the Captain is the only one who has made any trips back since we got here, and the project is so secret that not more than 20 people on Earth have any inkling of it."

I began to flip my lid. "Yogi," I said, "how much does this project cost?"

"Plenty, Tuck, more than you'd imagine. The equipment the guys use for their surveys is pretty high-powered stuff. Why?"

"Because it's coming out of my pocket, that's why. And me and a lot of my buddies who are paying the freight on these deals are getting sick of hearing that only two or three or twenty people in the whole USA knows about this or that secret project. Security is okay, but don't you think we ought to know something about what our money's going for?"

Boy, am I a genius at putting my foot in it! The lighter gravity on Lunette must of gone to my head. Yogi gave me a real funny look, got up from the mess table, and walked off.

I started to sweat. What the heck made me blow off like that? Now they really would think I was a security risk, and maybe they'd decide not to let me go back at all, at least not until they had a court-martial or something. Naturally I have plenty of respect for military secrets; it's just that I think voters should have a little more information and a little more say-so about how our money is spent.

It's a sore point with me. But what a stupid time I pick to sound off about it!

A soldier comes along and tells me the CO wants to see me. Now I know this is it.

But Yogi and the Captain both looked as friendly as ever. "Peters," the CO said, "I think you can be useful to us."

Oh, oh, here it comes. They're going to try to talk me into staying up here.

"I suppose you have figured out by now what the Lunette Project is all about," the Captain went on. "You remember stories in the papers a few years ago on the possibility of creating an artificial satellite to use as a base for guided missiles in case of war?"

I nodded.

"The stories were hushed up pretty fast, and the reason was that Lunette was discovered just about then. They stopped talking about it just as they stopped talking about atomic research after the Manhattan project started."

"Listen, Captain, please," I said. "Beg pardon for interrupting, but please don't tell me anything a civilian isn't supposed to know, because—no offense—I don't want to get roped into the Army just because I know too much."

"No offense to *you*, Peters—I'm not trying to get you into the Army." He grinned, and I felt a lot better. "Let me go on. Yogi tells me that he explained to you something about the Matter BARS. Did you understand it?"

"Pretty well, sir. He should have been a teacher if he could make me see a glimmer of light in that stuff."

The Captain laughed and Yogi got red.

"He was. Assistant Professor of Electronics at Columbia, before the Signal Corps persuaded him to become a Space Cadet."

My face was red then.

"Well, on the military nature of our mission we have just a few more wrinkles to iron out," the Captain went on, "but something else has come up that we think has a lot more significance than guided missiles."

"I told the Captain I thought you'd help us," Yogi said, "because of what you said about secret projects a while ago."

Now I *am* confused. So I don't like so much secrecy, so they think I can help their project? I don't get it. I don't get it at all.

"Yogi will explain the science part," the Captain said. "I'm just a publicity man myself, not a teacher. But as a publicity man, Peters, I think we can use you. Would you be game to try a job that could be very important?"

I nodded, still confused but willing.

Yogi started by explaining that Lunette came into existence about a hundred million years ago, a figure the geologists came up with by measuring the radioactivity of the uranium here and comparing it with that of uranium on Earth.

"But, in studying the radioactivity of the elements here," he said, "we have discovered something else ... something that could

change the whole picture of things back on Earth. We found out about it, at least a glimmer of it, almost as soon as we got up here, but we wanted to run a whole slew of experiments before we let ourselves believe that it was true.

"Say, Tuck, what's that bandage on your hand for?"

I was surprised at his sudden change of subject, but I told him how I had burned my hand on the spotweld machine the night before.

"Does it hurt now?"

"Heck, it ain't nothing, Yogi. Let's get on with my physics lesson."

"Do me a favor, please. Take off the bandage."

He was real serious, so I unwound the bandage the nurse put on. There was just a tiny white scar where the burn had been. It looked like I had done it at least a couple of weeks ago!

Yogi and the Captain looked at each other and grinned like they were real proud of something.

"That's part of the lesson, Tuck. Our big discovery is that the increased radioactivity of the elements here on Lunette seems to have a miraculous healing power on any infectious or communicable disease, and on any injury to body tissues. Maybe you remember reading a little about the strange effect that the Bikini tests had on some of the animals used experimentally."

I nodded.

Yogi continued. "We don't know yet just how this radioactivity works on the body. In fact, we're not even sure it is the radioactivity alone. There may be some added effect from the

Lunette climate or water. But we have proved, to the satisfaction of everyone here, that almost all Earth diseases and most injuries can be cured on Lunette.

"The mess sergeant had a trick knee when he came here. The trouble disappeared completely when we arrived. One of the geologists had an ulcer. Hasn't felt a pain since the second day. Another guy had some bad powder burns from a lab experiment that disappeared over night, just like your burn did.

"When we first suspected what was going on, we asked the crew at Silver Spring to send up white rats, guinea pigs, and dogs, with everything from cancer and T.B. through rabies to polio, and the results were one hundred per cent perfect, with complete recovery in every case inside of a week. *And*, this is important, they stayed cured when sent back to Earth."

Yogi's eyes were burning like one of them gospel preachers at a revival, and his voice was shaking. I was catching the excitement myself. The Captain took over the story.

"I suppose you're wondering what we want of you?"

"I sure am. This is a big deal, isn't it?" I looked at the little scar on my hand again, to convince myself nobody was kidding.

"Here's our problem, and our plan, Tuck. Yogi told me what you said about the taxpayers' right to know where their money is going, and it ties in with what a lot of us up here have been discussing.

"Most of our fellows are like Yogi—technicians who chose their line of work because they thought they could help make the world a better place to live in. Now that they have the chance to make the biggest contribution of their whole lives, they're all hemmed in by

military rigamarole and red tape. It goes against the grain for scientists."

"You mean the Army is keeping the place top secret, so it can't be used for a ... well, a health resort?"

The Captain nodded. "I'm not arguing with the military reasons for security. Maybe they're right on that score. But in the meantime, thousands of people are dying every day of disease, needlessly, while the Army keeps the secret that could end those deaths. The people will find out about it eventually, and I don't think they'll like it. Suppose your mother were to die of cancer a few months from now, and you were to find out later that her death was unnecessary, and that your own government could have stopped it. What would you think? How about it, Peters, are you with us? What do you say?"

The Captain had been talking louder and faster till he was practically out of breath.

"I got just one thing to say, Captain. My baby sister died of T.B. just before her eighteenth birthday last year. You can bet your bottom nickel I'm with you on this deal, right down the line. Just give me the scoop. I'll go along."

Yogi and the CO slapped me on the back.

They explained to me, Mr. President, all about this secret Congressional hearing to be held on the Lunette project next week, and how I should go to Washington and get my Congressman to spring me as a surprise witness—a civilian who had been to Lunette and knew the score.

They knew all about what strings to pull to be sure I could get in, and they helped me figure out what I should say. They seemed to think that my word, you know, the guy on the street or something like that, would carry some weight and make Congress see that the health angle on this Lunette project is a darned sight more important than keeping the secret of a guided missile station. Why, for Pete's sake, Mr. President Uncle Sam owns Lunette, doesn't he? When the other side hears about this they'll want to get in on it so bad they'll be awful anxious to stay in our good graces. Probably turn out to be an even better military defense than guided missiles.

Time was important now, so just at five o'clock, when I generally report for work, Yogi and I walked down to the Matter BARS and shook hands. Yogi took a polaroid picture of me standing there and gave me the print. You know, Mr. President, I kind of hated to leave. That Lunette sure is a pretty place.

Yogi moved the two little balls together, and sure enough, like he had told me, I felt like I was catching a fit of sneezing. That was all, and there I was back at Diversified, in the restricted Signal Corps section, with the inspector staring at me.

He looks ready to pull a gun on me, so I laugh at him, nervous as heck inside but trying not to show it. "What's the matter, you seen a ghost?"

"How did you get in that cabinet, Peters?" He's really mad, and I'm wondering if I can pull it off.

"Well, I know you spend all your time over here by yourself, so I thought maybe someone should break the monotony. I just crawled in there a couple of minutes ago to surprise you." (That was true in a way, wasn't it?)

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