



Cover

Moonhop is a wonderfully absurd, darkly humorous, satirical science fiction. A comedic journey through a future that's absurdly familiar and escalates to cosmic levels with a straight face. In a hyper-capitalist, technologically advanced society running on bonus points and brand synergy, Rupert Lang's life is a blissful cycle of cream cakes and naps—until he's catapulted into a race around the Moon.

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Geek, your judgment-free, always-on, AI-promotional call is brought to you by Speak & Purse from a built-in loudspeaker."This purrfect from a built-in loudspeaker," said the voice paused, then added softly, "A new voice, smooth as melted butter, we have tents on sale."

The voice paused, then added softly, "Also, we have tents on sale."

"Hmn, I'll think about it, maybe after the cream cake and a little nap," said Rupert.

"Buy the holiday," Rupert leaned back onto the couch and placed the plate on his chest. "Hmn, I'll pedal away from a zombie after a bridge Traffic will be madness; imagine trying to

powered companion for wellness check-ins, mood tracking, and thought-sorting. At Speak & Geek, we make artificial intelligence artificially charming. We combine tech know-how with genuine empathy, and now, a message from our sponsor, Moonhop."

Rupert stretched out his arm and, in a single swift movement, swung the plate from his chest to the table beside the couch, leaving a considerable amount of cream cake on the couch.

"Have you heard of Moonhop, the endurance

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Rupert smiled and cracked his lips a little, he was dreaming of cute little bunnies in tiny spacesuits, hopping in perfect harmony "If you say Skip, now, the message will end, and you'll still get 200 bonus points," said the delivery bot.

"Who's there?" said Rupert mumbled, not soft, continuous "bzzzzz". "Do you want to hear it?"

Delivery robot, its voice flat, overlaid with a selected and automatically signed up for something that will make you the envy of every fitness bunch from here to Alpha Centauri. It's called the Moon Race Lottery, or, as we internally dubbed it, Moonhop.

"Operational: Slim Down on a Silver Platter," Rupert Lane, prepare for immortality (and a immediately falling back asleep).

"Suee," Rupert murmured, burying his face into the couch cushions, inhaling deeply and "Suee," Rupert murmured, burying his face into "I have an interactive advertisement for each mechanical hop emitting a distinct "bzzzzz".

Rupert tossed and turned, burying his face into the sofa cushions for more of the cake's scent. The sofa swung open. A box-shaped figure hopped into the middle of the room, Rupert Lang and a package," announced the

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and he instantly spiraled back to the surface, joystick a bit more, it was still sticky, shot him into the sky. Then he moved the joystick. It was a bit sticky and immediately Rupert pressed the booster button on his delivery bot.

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race of the century the boldest, most demanding, most televised race in human history? The voice continued, punctuated by a subtle "bzzzzz." Imagine to be the first to complete a full circumnavigation of Earth's beautiful rocky satellite. Every one of your jumps, every strategic decision, broadcast live to a captivated planet. "bzzzzz." Be the ultimate pioneer. Achieve unprecedented global fame. Your name will be engraved in the annals of exploration, spoken with the same reverence as Armstrong, Gagarin, and

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the salesman. Rupert paused, fork halfway to his mouth. "Sounds pretty dramatic," buy the next drama in your life is far off, then you are sorely mistaken," said the voice. "So listen next drama in your service?" If you think the next drama in your life is far off, then you are sorely mistaken," said the voice. "So listen next drama in your service?" If you think the next drama in your life is far off, then you are sorely mistaken," said the voice. "So listen

Hillary."

Rupert lay sprawled on the couch, now rolling onto his side and adjusting the pillow behind his head seeking maximum comfort. "The stakes are as vast as space itself," the voice purred. "The world will be watching. Every triumph, every setback, every heartbreaking loss will be part of the unwritten drama. Are you the one who possesses the grit, the skill, and the unwavering will to face the vast emptiness of space and emerge as a living legend..." Rupert

Up there, nothing is as it seems. The rules are buried in fine print, the stakes keep changing, and even your spacesuit has a voice. Together with Maya, his AI companion whose logic is increasingly strained by human absurdity, Rupert uncovers a threat that will consume everything.

This is a work of fiction and satire. All characters, companies, technologies, political figures, drinks, robots, and interstellar agencies depicted in Moonhop are entirely fictional or used in a satirical context. Any

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escape route during a zombie apocalypse. Like in Chapter 42 of the book: Plan your escape route using a zombie zombies in trunks," said the salesmen. Rupert frowned. "Well, I suppose I could use a new bicycle." That's the spirit! You hedge." In fact, that has crashed through your neighbor is trying to trade enemies peaches for toilet paper with a bus full of Drunks are hovering over your house, and Drunks are hovering over your house, and nibbling on a cream cake; and next BOOM! nibbling on a cream cake; and next BOOM! nibbling on a cream cake; and next BOOM!

thumb." Basically zombies in trunks," said the salesmen. Rupert frowned. "Well, I suppose I could use a new bicycle." That's the spirit! You hedge." In fact, that has crashed through your neighbor is trying to trade enemies peaches for toilet paper with a bus full of Drunks are hovering over your house, and Drunks are hovering over your house, and nibbling on a cream cake; and next BOOM! nibbling on a cream cake; and next BOOM! nibbling on a cream cake; and next BOOM!

was already snoring.

"The Moon awaits the brave. Visit <http://www.lunarhop.com> to begin your application for the race that will define a generation. Participation carries extreme risk, including severe injury or death. Full terms and conditions and risk disclosures available on the application portal. Participants acknowledge and agree to the live broadcast of all race outcomes," the voice purred hypnotically. "bzzzzz," "bzzzzz".

Rupert tossed around, inhaling the lingering

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resemblance to real persons, brands, or entities—living, dead, defunct, or orbiting—is purely coincidental or intended as parody. Moonhop is a comedic and transformative work that pokes fun at science fiction tropes, pop culture icons, corporate branding, and political theatrics. No affiliation, endorsement, or connection with any real-world individual, organisation, or trademarked property is intended or implied. Reader discretion is advised: side effects may include unexpected

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which transformed into a creamy cake base, with enough pudding-like elasticity that Rupert was catapulted right back to the stars, snoring a little.
"Okay, so you don't want to skip," the delivery robot droned. "Then I'll just have to keep standing here, and we'll have to listen to a bit more advertising blah-blah", the delivery robot grumbled.
"Seeking your personal peak, redemption, or escape?" a voice cooed, with cheesy meditative background music. "For those

fleeing a shadowy past, the barren purity of the lunar void offers a chance for profound reinvention, an extreme therapy session written in the stars. An ideological quest? Connect with the cosmos on a primal level. Prove humanity's indomitable spirit. Make an undeniable statement about our destiny beyond Earth." The background music picked up some speed. "Your ultimate thrill? For the true adrenaline connoisseur, nothing compares to the razor's edge of survival on an alien world, where every decision means

winning or losing, broadcast live to billions." Rupert spiralled down, immediately taking off again. The cake surface vibrated from his thrusters. Rupert snored, grinding his teeth. "You against the other participants, the broadcasters are betting on drama. You won the ticket, my friend, let that sink in. Don't worry that the statistics aren't your friend. Honestly, the Moon isn't your friend either. Your only true allies are your training, your equipment, and a healthy dose of vigilance. You've certainly need some of that; the

change will do you good."
"What change?" Rupert rubbed his sticky eyes, now half-asleep.. "In the box, you'll find everything you need. You can start training immediately, so you don't lose any time," said the voice.
"What time is it?" "What training?" "Did I win something?" Rupert mumbled into the couch cushions. "What box?"
He rolled over, opening his cake-smeared eyes a little, and peered at the box across the living room.

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at your door. It's often better to let the wanted it, and boom, here we are, knocking delivery so fast you didn't know you even gag gone wrong? Maybe one of those: "We muttered to himself. "A prank? A marketing What on Earth I gotten myself into?" he away water run over his eyes, scrubbing bathroom. He turned on the tap and let the broomstick to feel his way towards the Rupert stood up from the couch and used the big dream.

"oh-oh. In your suit with a glazeam, living out the It's a blast when you leap and you zoom... oh-oh-oh. It's a blast when you're out on the moon. moon and a mission for your kind. Hey now, leave your doubts behind. There's a Hey now, it's your time to ascend, I said. Ruperts, height, danced to a singing chorus. Hey now, a confetti-covered fringe, about the room, a confetti-covered fringe, about bzzzzz," it chirped, managing to get his name wrong one last time. In the middle of "Congratulations on accepting the race of your life".

The box sprang open, spraying confetti across the room and onto the carpet. Orchestral music was still playing as the delivery robot snatched the empty box and popped out the door. "I hope your delivery was satisfactory. Enjoy your bonus points, Rupert Lane. "Oh, shut up," Rupert had an arm over the edge of the couch and bent underneath. "Get it. The broom disappeared weeks ago." He grabbed the broom and red to end this narrowly missing the red button next to it.

delivery robots in briefly and listen, at least to the sales pitch for a few free points, otherwise, they'll just keep bumbling around outside your house anyway."
"Music off," Rupert said as he returned to the living room.
The room fell silent, and Rupert stared at something that resembled a spacesuit.
"Good evening, Rupert," a voice said.
"I am Maya."
"Did... did the spacesuit just talk to me?"
"Indeed, Rupert. I am Maya, the integrated

artificial intelligence of the Lunar Leap 5000. Consider me your personal concierge, life support supervisor, and witty conversationalist, all rolled into one convenient package, or you know, spacesuit." "I didn't order anything, and I didn't enter any contest; this must be a mistake," Rupert said.
"Well, Rupert, let's not be hasty. I understand your.. concern. However, the algorithm indicated several instances where you expressed aspirations for self-improvement

and a desire to make a meaningful contribution to the great adventure of humanity, hence you were automatically added to the lottery and won your place in the incredible Endurance Moon Race. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding your.. enthusiastic pronouncements, a binding contract was indeed formed. You pressed the blue button, thereby submitting the Endurance Moon Race participation form, Section 7, Paragraph 3, Subsection (a), which clearly states, and I quote: 'The participant

voluntarily accepts all inherent risks, waives all rights to contest participation, and commits to completing the designated race course to the best of their ability or until they, he, she, it, is incapable of doing so.'" "But... I wanted to press the other button! I couldn't see. It was a mistake!" Rupert said. "Furthermore, withdrawal at this juncture would result in the forfeiture of significant bonus points, and everything else of value you possess, or ever will possess in the future that will have value, should you potentially

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"You're absolutely right, Rupert. It's not about winning, it's about crossing the finish line. Rupert stood up from the couch and used the broomstick to feel his way towards the living room. He turned on the tap and let the water run over his eyes, scrubbing the dirt from his spacesuit. "I just want to contribute to not dying alone on a desolate rock!"

"So, finish the race... or die doing it?" Rupert suddenly sniffling uncontrollably, tears streaming down his face. "I'm not afraid of death, are also a consideration." "A slightly dramatic interpretation, Rupert, said. "So, finish the race... or die doing it?" Rupert mentioned, are also a consideration." "Indeed, a valuable asset, Rupert. And one I am mettulously programmed to preserve. Think of those bonus points, Rupert! Think of the shareholder economy! Don't you want to think about my life?"

"The only scenarios under which our "I just want to contribute to not dying alone on a desolate rock!"

"Bonds points?" Profit margins? I'm talking about my life!"

can display them in your helmets visor? People took so many photos of me in different poses. Before they left, they muttered something about subscribers and predicted growth pattern or something, and that the real action is on the moon anyway. Oh, and that was fun, we danced with some TikTokers. I have photos of that too. Do you want to see the photos now?"

"No, Maya, I want out of this suit!"

"No, you don't, Rupert."

"Yes, I do, Maya! Let me out immediately."

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"That would be counterproductive, we've just started!"
"We've started what, Maya?"
"The race, Rupert, don't be silly!
Do you want to see the photos now or not?
They are great," Maya said.
"I want to see where I am," Rupert said.
"Are you sure?"
"Yes, damn sure. I insist!"
Hmm, Maya considered. "Okay, perhaps for a brief moment, Rupert, because we are such a great team, I will open the visor for exactly

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"One more, Rupert, please. This one is crucial
protected, his voice hoarse.
Want to answer any more questions!" Rupert
"No! I do not see purple sparkles, and I don't
you see purple sparkles?"
subjective and nonsensical as possible. Do
bonuses points, describe your aura. Be as
aggressively are you currently
how aggressively are you currently
profound it makes black holes look cheerful,
"On a scale of 1 to existential dread so
shrieked.

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"What are you TALKING about?" Rupert
"Tendency Towards Cake Accumulation,"
"Unprecedented Emotive Sleep Requirements,
chooses from 'Excessive Sleep Requirements',
classify as your biggest annoyance? Please
software program, what bug would you
Rupert snarled raspy.
Noted. Next question: If your body were a
"Okay, so that is a 'No', to prior experience.
"Oh no!" Rupert screamed, his voice cracking.
"Am I going to EXPLODE? I don't want to die!
debris."
please describe the sensation and resulting

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for our demographic profiling," Maya cooed.
"If you could only eat one colour of cream
cake for the rest of your life, which would you
choose, and how about beige? Beige is very
popular this fiscal quarter."
"Beige," Rupert murmured, defeated. The
fight, what little there had been, had seeped
out of him, replaced by a profound weariness
and a vague craving for something... beige.
"Excellent choice! And finally, for a chance to
win a commemorative Moonhop spork: If you
had to describe your life in three words, what

would they be? (Bonus points for rhyming.)"
Rupert took a shaky breath. "I. Am. Fucked."
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cheerful. "I hope you are having a splendid
time, fully immersing yourself in the Moonhop
experience! Got time for some quick user
feedback questions? It helps us optimise the...

58

"Oh, it seems I have nothing but time, Maya,"
Rupert snarled raspy.
"Okay, so that is a 'No', to prior experience.
"Well, you." "Oh no!" Rupert screamed, his voice cracking.
"Am I going to EXPLODE? I don't want to die!
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59

five seconds," Maya said.
The visor became transparent, revealing the
inside of a capsule where Rupert seemed to
be lying. The capsule also had a tiny window
with a magnificent view of space, and in its
centre, a moon was growing bigger and
bigger. Then Rupert fainted again.

Rupert regained consciousness inside Maya.
Or, more accurately, he regained a sliver of
consciousness, trapped in plush sticky
darkness of his AI captor. He opened his eyes

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to a green void, a uniform, sickly pea-soup
green that did absolutely nothing for his
already protesting stomach.
"Rise and shine, my little moonbeam!" Maya
chirped, her voice echoing from all directions
at once. "How do you like the green? It is
relaxing, isn't it? Supposedly aids in cognitive
recalibration. But wait a minute, I have to
perform some adjustments you know,
updates and important system integrity
checks, standard pre-arrival protocols, stuff
like that. I will be back in a minute."

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"Hey Rupert!" Maya's voice suddenly filled the
green void again, bright and impossible.
"Rigby, question one: Have you ever
seen me first?" Maya insisted.
"No, me first," Rupert said.
"Can I ask you something? Maya?" Rupert said.
"Oh, great!" Maya said.
"Right, question one: Have you ever
dissolved into short, sharp bursts of crying.
frequent episodes of hysterical laughter that
angry. And then, he waited frustrated and
disoriented. Then, he waited frustated and
silently green. "Oh no," he moaned.
but the green void remained impalacably,

"What? Maya, wait! Listen!" Rupert croaked,
silently green. "I hope you are having a splendid
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