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# ASTOUNDING

## STORIES

### OF SUPER-SCIENCE

#### BRIGANDS OF THE MOON

*A Thrilling Interplanetary Novel  
of Intrigue and Adventure*

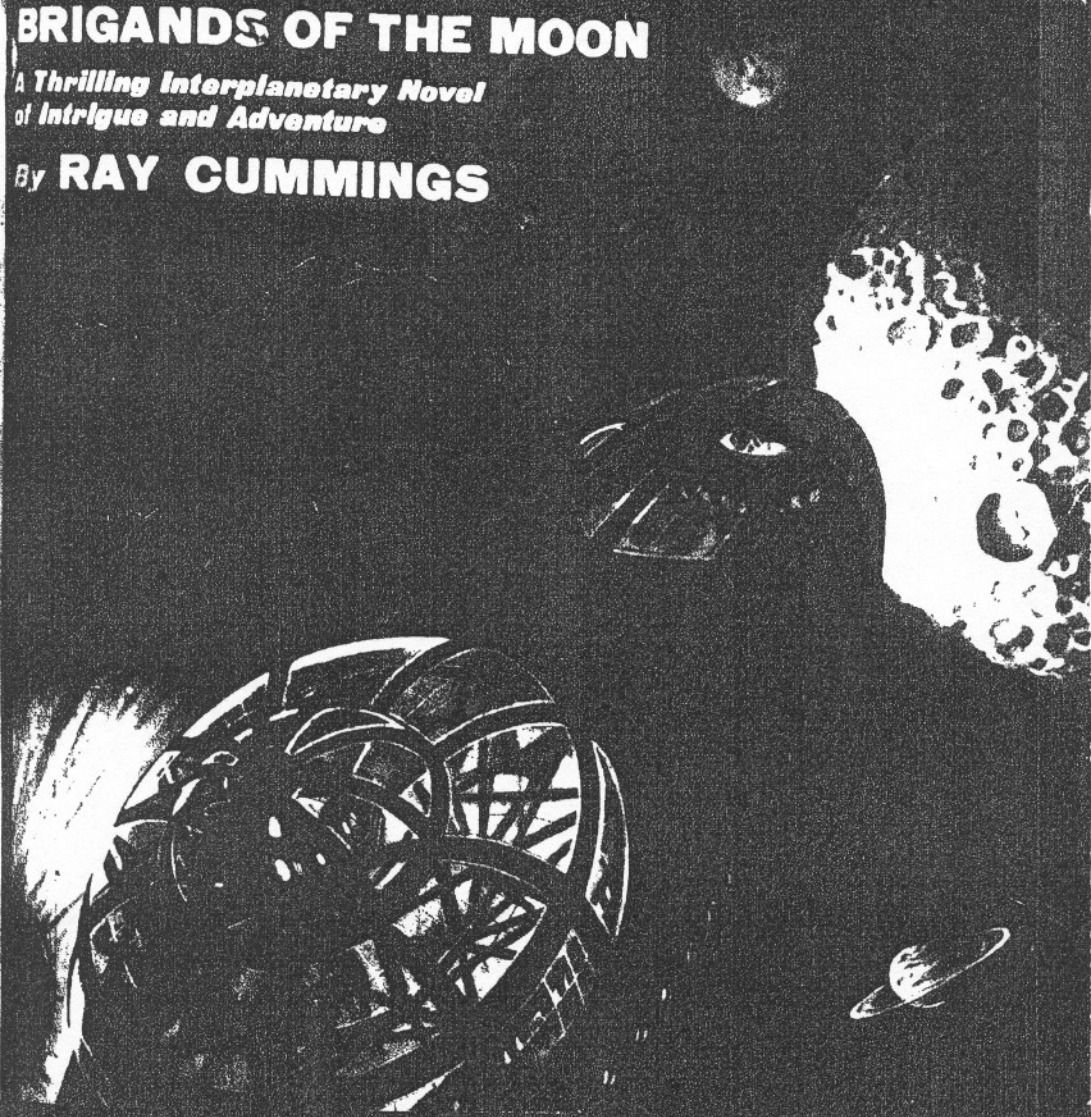
By **RAY CUMMINGS**

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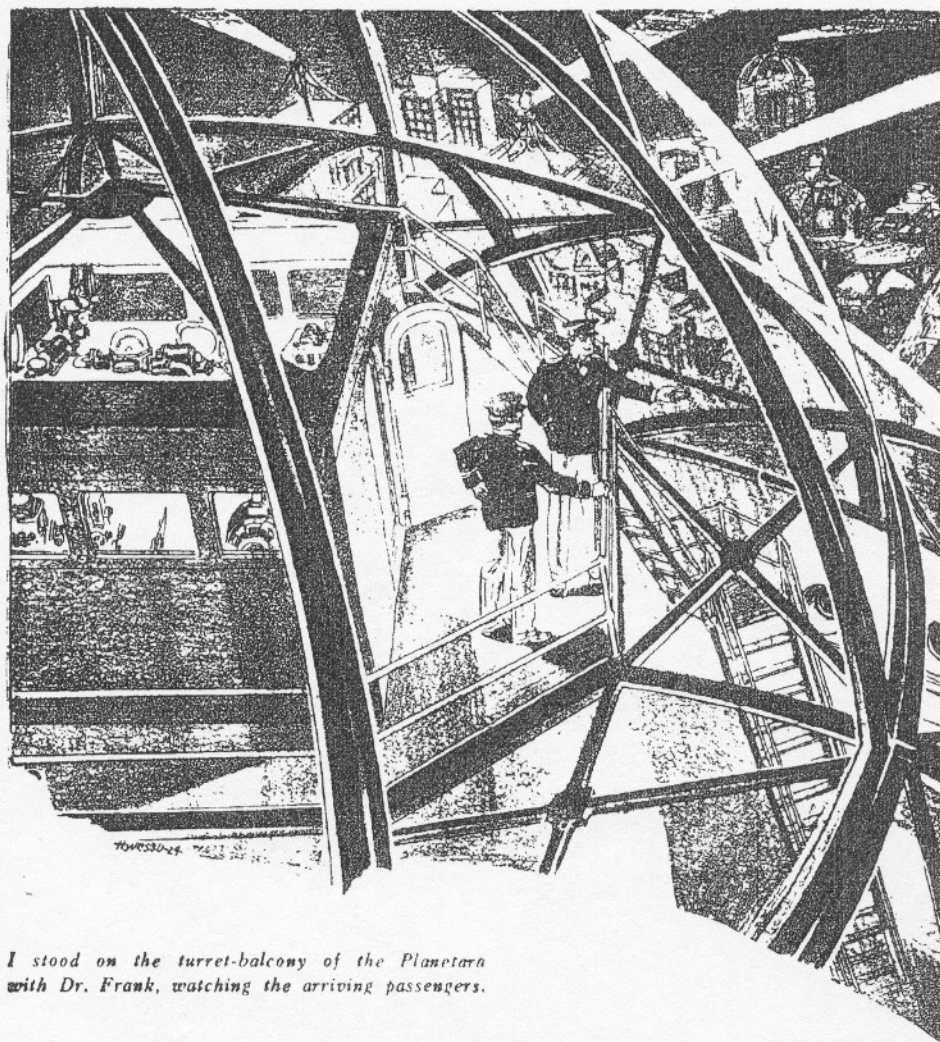
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*I stood on the turret-balcony of the Planetara with Dr. Frank, watching the arriving passengers.*

## Brigands of the Moon

(The Book of Gregg Haljan)

BEGINNING A FOUR-PART NOVEL

By Ray Cummings

Foreword by Ray Cummings

**I** HAVE been thinking that if, during one of those long winter evenings at Valley Forge, someone had placed in George Washington's hands one of our present day best sellers,

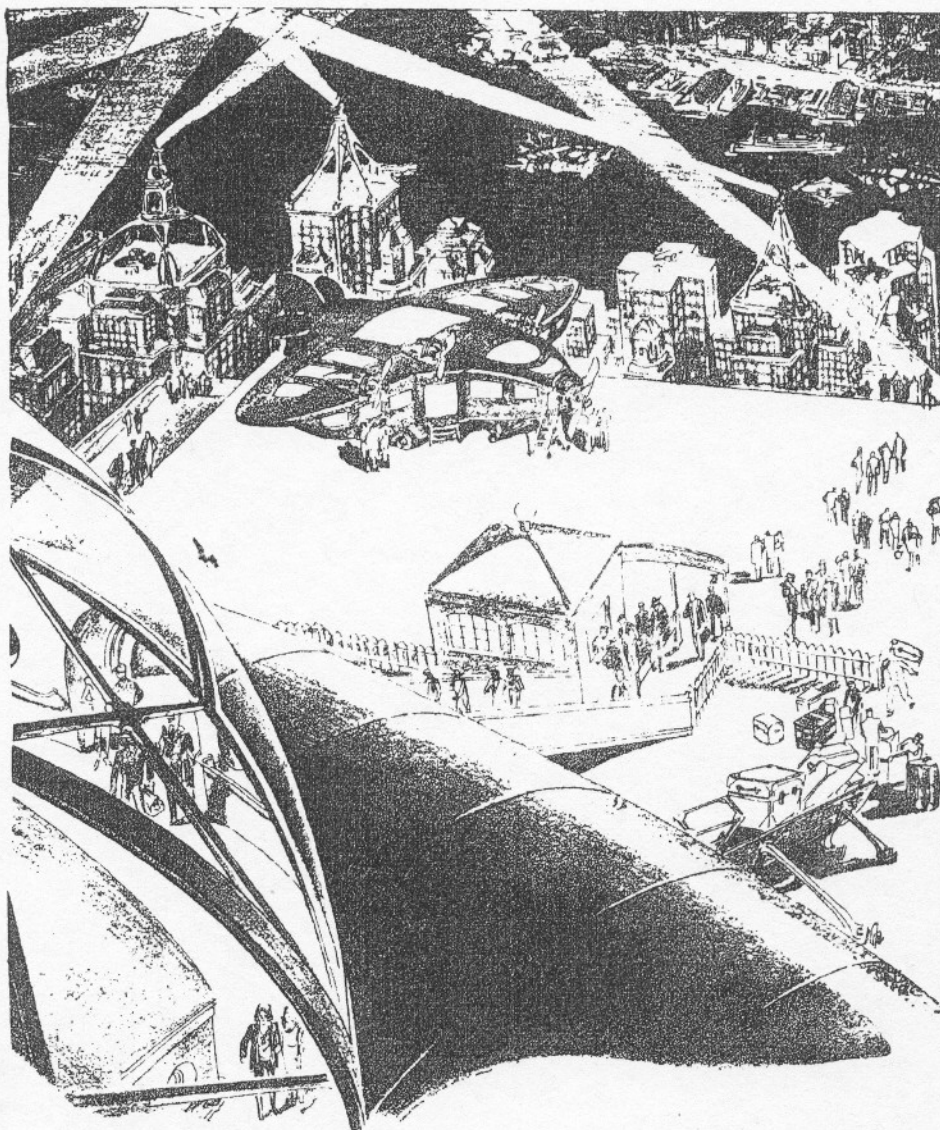
the illustrious Father of our Country would have read it with considerable emotion. I do not mean what we call a story of science, or fantasy —just a novel of action, adventure and romance. The sort of thing you and I like to read,

Black mutiny and brigandage stalk the Space-ship Planetara as she speeds to the Moon to pick up a fabulously rich cache of radium-ore.

but do not finish all.

But I fancy would have I you? It might factory girl George Washington at a sewing journeying in her work! She telephone her going to the listening to a be a climax, p



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but do not find amazing in any way at all.

But I fancy that George Washington would have found it amazing. Don't you? It might picture, for instance, a factory girl at a sewing machine. George Washington would be amazed at a sewing machine! And the girl, journeying in the subway to and from her work! Stealing an opportunity to telephone her lover at the noon hour; going to the movies in the evening, or listening to a radio. And there might be a climax, perhaps, with the girl and

the villain in a transcontinental railway Pullman, and the hero sending frantic telegrams, or telephoning the train, and then chasing it in his airplane.

George Washington would have found it amazing!

And I am wondering how you and I would feel if someone were to give us now a book of ordinary adventure of the sort which will be published a hundred and fifty years hence. I have been trying to imagine such a book and the nature of its contents.

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**L**ET us imagine it together. Suppose we walk down Fifth Avenue, a pleasant spring morning of May, 2080. Fifth Avenue, no doubt, will be there. I don't know whether the New York Public Library will be there or not. We'll assume that it is, and that it has some sort of books, printed, or in whatever fashion you care to imagine.

The young man library attendant is surprised at our curiously antiquated aspect. We look as though we were dressed for some historical costume ball. We talk old-fashioned English, like actors in an historical play of the 1930 period.

But we get the book. The attendant assures us it is a good average story of action and adventure. Nothing remarkable, but he read it himself, and found it interesting.

We thank him and take the book. But we find that the language in which it is written is too strange for comfortable reading. And it names so many extraordinary things so casually! As though we knew all about them, which we certainly do not!

So we take it to the kind-hearted librarian in the language division. He modifies it to old-fashioned English of 1930, and he puts occasional footnotes to help explain some of the things we might not understand. Why he should bother to do this for us I don't know; but let us assume that he does.

And now we take the book home—in the pneumatic tube, or aerial moving sidewalk, or airship, or whatever it is we take to get home.

And now that we are home, let's read the book. It ought to be interesting.

#### CHAPTER I

*Tells of the Grantline Moon Expedition and of the Mysterious Martian Who Followed Us in the City Corridor*

**O**NE may write about oneself and still not be an egoist. Or so, at least, they tell me. My narrative went broadcast with a fair success. It was pantomimed and

the public flashed me a reasonable approval. And so my disc publishers have suggested that I record it in more permanent form.

I introduce myself, begging grace that I intrude upon your busy minutes, with my only excuse that perhaps I may amuse you. For what the commercial sellers of my pictured version were pleased to blare as my handsome face, I ask your indulgence. My feminine audience of the pantomimes was undoubtedly graciously pleased at my personality and physical aspect. That I am "tall as a Viking of old"—and "handsome as a young Norse God"—is very pretty talk in the selling of my product. But I deplore its intrusion into the personality of this, my recorded narrative. And so now, for preface, to all my audience I do give earnest assurance that Gregg Haljan is no conceited zebra, handsomely striped by nature, and proud of it. Not so. I am, I do beg you to believe, a very humble fellow, striving for your approval, hoping only to entertain you.

My introduction: My name, Gregg Haljan. My age, twenty-five years. I was, at the time my narrative begins, Third Officer on the Space-Ship Planetara. Our line was newly established; in 2070, to be exact, following the modern improvements of the Martel Magnetic Levitation.\*

**O**UR ship, whose home port was Great-New York, carried mail and passenger traffic to and from both Venus and Mars. Of astronomical necessity, our flights were irregular. This spring, with the two other planets both close to the earth, we were making two complete round trips. We had just arrived in Great-New York, this May evening, from Grebhar, Venus Free State. With only five hours in port

\* As early as 1910 it was discovered that an object magnetized under certain conditions was subject to a loss of weight, its gravity partially nullified. The Martel discovery undoubtedly followed that method.

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An instant, while she had clung to me—and I had held her. A brief flash of something, from her eyes to mine—

and yellow stars—lay spread around us. The moon, with nearly all its disc illuminated, hung, a great silver ball, over

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As I stood and listened, I suddenly heard footsteps. From the direction of the bow a figure came. Purser Johnson.

He greeted me. "Cooling off, Gregg?"

"Yes," I said.

He went past me and turned into the smoking room door nearby.

I stood a moment at one of the deck windows, gazing at the stars; and for no reason at all I realized I was tense. Johnson was a great one for his regular sleep—it was wholly unlike him to be roaming about the ship at such an hour. Had he been watching me? I told myself it was nonsense. I was suspicious of everyone, everything, this voyage.

I HEARD another step. Captain Carter appeared from his chart-room which stood in the center of the narrowing open deck space near the bow. I joined him at once.

"Who was that?" he half-whispered. "Johnson."

"Oh, yes." He fumbled in his uniform; his gaze swept the moonlit deck. "Gregg—take this." He handed me a small metal box. I stuffed it at once into my shirt.

"An insulator," he added, swiftly. "Snap is in his office. Take it to him, Gregg. Stay with him—you'll have a measure of security—and you can help him to make the photographs." He was barely whispering. "I won't be with you—no use making it look as though we were doing anything unusual. If your graphs show anything—or if Snap picks up any message—bring it to me." He added aloud, "Well, it will be cool enough presently, Gregg."

He sauntered away toward his chart-room.

"By heavens, what a relief!" Snap murmured as the current went on. We had wired his cubby with the insulator; within its barrage we could at last talk with a degree of freedom.

"You've seen George Prince, Gregg?"

"No. He's assigned A 20. But I saw his sister. Snap, no one ever mentioned—"

Snap had heard of her, but he hadn't known that she was listed for this voyage. "A real beauty, so I've heard. Accursed shame for a decent girl to have a brother like that."

I could agree with him there, but I made no comment.

IT was now 6 A. M. Snap had been busy all night with routine cosmoradios from the earth, following our departure. He had a pile of them beside him. Many were for the passengers; but anything that savored of a code was barred.

"Nothing queer looking?" I suggested.

"No. Not a thing."

We were at this time no more than some sixty-five thousand miles from the moon's surface. The Planetara presently would swing upon her direct course for Mars. There was nothing which could cause passenger comment in this close passing of the moon; normally we used the satellite's attraction to give us additional starting speed.

It was now or never that a message would come from Grantline. He was supposed to be upon this earthward side of the moon. While Snap had rushed through with his routine, I had searched the moon-surface with our glass, as I knew Carter was searching it—and also the observer in his tower, very possibly.

But there was nothing. Copernicus and Kepler lay in full sunlight. The heights of the lunar mountains, the depths of the barren, empty seas were etched black and white, clear and clean. Grim, forbidding desolation, this unchanging moon! In romance, moonlight may shimmer and sparkle to light a lover's smile; but the reality of the moon is cold and bleak. There was nothing to show my prying eyes where the intrepid Grantline might be.

"Nothing at all, Snap."

And Snap's helio mirrors, attuned for an hour now to pick up the faintest signal, were motionless.

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