

The daily darkness and light alternately fell across the face of Earth as it had done since the time long before Man. But now, as well as the real Moon, there was an odd-shaped mini-moon that orbited at the same distance of 238,000 miles and was constantly chased by the Moon as they both circled the Earth on their 28-day orbits.

The centre of the mini-moon was a neat stubby cylinder of bright white, merely 170 feet in diameter and nearly the same in length, out from which stuck six legs of deepest black, each of which was five miles long, only visible when they obscured the stars. At the far end of each of the six legs sat a compact cylinder, also bright white, barely the height of two men and even less across. However sometimes the smallest things are the most important of all.

Inside the large central cylinder remained the bones of two men: one, decayed and putrid and the other deprived of much of its flesh. One astronaut looked down upon the Earth from that cylinder, for he - Tim - was alive while the other astronaut, Gemi was not, although neither was she dead.

The name of their spacecraft, AQUA LIBRE, ran down the side in giant garish red lettering: lettering that Tim, Gemi and the other five had not seen since they had entered ten centuries before.

It was Tim's 1,040th birthday if the Aqua Libre's time-keeping was to be believed and for the first time in nine hundred years his mind was lucid. Of course he hadn't actually lived all of those years: that would be impossible.

Perhaps it was his decision to finally leave the solar system, or that the last scraps of 'food' were finally gone. Or the realisation that he would never speak again, and in fact he would be the last human ever to speak.

Whatever the reason he now felt like talking.

With his grubby tattered sleeve Tim wiped the lens of the camera set into the wall of his cabin. He pressed record and squinted at the blinking amber light.

"You know, now I think about it, it was inevitable. One way or another we would have done it to ourselves, shot ourselves in the foot - both feet - and dug our own graves. Humanity in general, I mean. It was only a question of how and when. Everyone saw what was coming but none would change; at least no-one that counted. But it's too late now to drag that past out into the light.

"Whoever you are who sees this: should I ask for forgiveness for all that I did? There are

some deaths - a few - that I do not deny lay at my door. But for the tens of billions on Earth who died I was an extra, on the same hamster wheel as everyone else.

“As for the events before and after, I will tell you what I know of them and as I remember them. What comes next? I will take this ship firstly where it was built to go, then after, as far as it will go; after all, there is nothing here for me, for us, now. Then who knows? I certainly shall not.”