

# Flying to the Moon

*by* Linda Simoni-Wastila

There, behind the dusty heaps of crumpled doors and rusted engines, hidden from streetlights that banished the thin curve of the moon, they escaped. Below the hillock where they lay spread-eagled under Pegasus and Cassiopeia, the creek's thin gurgle whispered through cracked earth. Grass poked spears into the girl's thighs, and she momentarily worried about ticks and snakes, about today's school suspension and her mother's wrath still stinging her cheek. The boy reached for her hand, and squeezed. Night swaddled them.

"I always wanted to be an astronaut," she murmured.

She closed her eyes and the sky opened. A star cascaded in rainbows, fireworks in reverse, scattering spent ash. The warmth sanctified her, a mother's softer touch. Heaven tilted, the jinn spirits catapulted her higher faster towards the pock-marked orb, shining satin with benevolence. Asteroids showered silver rain as one horizon opened, then another, and another, galaxies bursting into an infinite slide-show of the absolute, and she reached up up up into blinding white to touch to hold to know to be.

"God?" she cried, and shuddered.

The boy leaned close, his breath golden clouds. "Fly, baby, fly," he said. "Fly to the moon."

Dew-wet fingers traced her lips, pushed in another bit of fleshy mushroom. The universe expanded, taking her with it.

