

MOON MALL: VENUS IN ALIGNMENT

By Hector Ramos

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Panel 1: Establishing shot of the mall courtyard decorated with balloons and streamers. The courtyard is in the shape of a semi-circle with two corridors leading down to the left and right. The curve of the courtyard is completely made of window, showing a view of the moon and the Earth in the distance. There is a glass dome overhead and three levels of stores on both sides. A large banner hangs over the courtyard with the phrase “Moonisversary” on it. About ten to thirteen Silhouettes of mall patrons litter the page. Not enough to take away from the scenery, but enough to show that the mall is currently open.

Caption: March 16th, 2143.

Caption: Springtime at the Moon Mall.

Caption: A usually joyous and festive time of year...

Caption: ...**usually**.

Panel 2: Closer establishing shot of the first level of the courtyard. A raised stage with lights hanging above it is in the process of being set up. A worker or two is hammering together panels of wood and another worker is securing the framework for the lights. This section of the courtyard is roped off. Behind the stage is a sign with “7 Days Until the Mooniversary”.

Panel 3: View of Port Sports’ storefront. Port Sports has a bay window type display showing off a jet ski with a sale sign on it reading “50% off for the Mooniversary”. Buck Gordon, dressed in khakis and a polo shirt is seen polishing the jet ski.

Panel 4: A curvy woman passes by the front of the shop with a hand raised to her mouth in a giggle. Buck is still by the jet ski display, but this time with a toothy grin. raised brow and flexing his arms in a muscle man pose.

Panel 5: View of Galaxy Games’, the video game store, storefront is more of a garage with the entire front being the door. Racks of video games create a barrier between the mall corridor and the store. A vertical banner hangs behind both of the racks reading “Buy One Get One Free”. A couple of patrons are seen walking into Galaxy Games.

Caption: This time of year, **everyone** gets into the spirit.

Panel 6: An aerial view of one of the corridors with a watch kiosk in the middle. There are people walking in both directions on either side. A couple can be seen conversing with the salesman behind the counter.

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Panel 1: Candy Kane, dressed in a pink and white striped blouse with a white apron over it, stands in front of Sweet Tooth. She's holding a circular tray with purple star shaped pastries. To her right is an A-frame chalkboard sign with curly handwriting, Candy's handwriting. The sign reads "Ask about our Moon Cakes".

Panel 2: Candy holds out the tray to a few people who stop and reach for a pastry.

Candy: Moon Cakes! Getcha self a specially made Moon Cake while they last!

Mall Patron #1: I'll take one!

Mall Patron #2: Mmmmmm!

Panel 3: A crowd surrounds Candy, who grips the tray closer to herself. The tray only holds crumbs now.

Caption: A **hungry** crowd is a dangerous thing.

Panel 4: Close up of a nervous Candy, who clutches the tray against her body. She holds the tray as if to defend herself against the crowd. Her eyes are wide and drops of sweat begin to form on her temple.

Candy: Alright everybody, I know I've ran out of samples...

Crowd: Aw! Really?!

Candy: ...**but** I'll have a fresh batch made in no time.

Panel 5: Candy whispers.

Candy: You can buy some at a discount all this week until the Mooniversary Celebration.

Panel 6: Candy slumps against the wall as the crowd is gone. Her eyes are closed, and her mouth is shaped as she has released a sigh of relief. This is at a diagonal showing Candy closest and, in the distance, Farney Bife, peaks from around the corner. Only his face and his hand gripping the wall can be seen.

Candy: That was close.

Candy: Can't **believe** how popular these are.

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Panel 1: Candy is in Sweet Tooth's kitchen. The kitchen is very modern with stainless steel appliances. She is putting a tray of Moon Cakes in the oven. There is a splattering of frosting on her right cheek.

Candy: Almost done.

Panel 2: Candy holds a Moon Cake over a display rack on the counter of Sweet Tooth. The view is from the side to show the counter with Candy behind it and the front door that Farney is walking through.

Farney: Hello, Miss. Candy.

Panel 3: Candy smiles at Farney. Farney blushes as he gazes at the Moon Cakes.

Farney: Are those your famous Moon Cakes?

Candy: Yessir! Freshly baked as well.

Candy: Would you like a sample?

Panel 4: Farney chews on a Moon Cake, crumbs dust the corners of his mouth and his eyes are closed in satisfaction.

Panel 5: Lionel Atticus, a well-dressed and tall man is behind Farney, who half turns sheepishly. He knows he's in trouble. Candy shies back into the kitchen, trying to be undetected.

Lionel: Farney, shouldn't you be patrolling the mall instead of stuffing your face?

Panel 6: Farney rushes out of the door with a handful of Moon Cakes. Both doors are thrown open and motion lines follow Farney. Lionel stands tall with one hand reaching for a Moon Cake. He sneaks away a Moon Cake.

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Panel 1: Candy is again in front of Sweet Tooth with a tray of Moon Cakes. She smiles bigger than before. Buck is walking by in a different colored polo and khakis, twirling a keychain around his index finger and whistling.

Panel 2: The tray and Moon Cakes are thrust at Buck's face. His body is bent away from the tray as he dodges it. His eyes are wide, and his mouth is slightly open. He's half startled and half scared.

Panel 3: Candy holds up the tray to Buck still, her smile is a bit creepy. Buck shyly grabs a pastry.

Candy: Hey, Buck! Wanna try a Moon Cake? They're freshly baked.

Buck: Sure, Candy. Thanks.

Panel 4: Buck walks away cleaning off one of his fingers in his mouth. Candy grips the tray and gazes at Buck's retreating figure dreamily. Eyes wide, slight flush, and small smile.

Panel 5: Candy heads back into Sweet Tooth. In the background, Buck stumbles to Port Sports.

Panel 6: Buck's eyes droop and he slumps against the doorframe.

Panel 7: Buck sits against the door frame and snores.

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Panel 1: Candy is back in the kitchen. She spills some of the batter she's mixing in a bowl on the counter.

SFX (a body hitting the floor): THUD!

Panel 2: Candy barges through the door to the front of the store.

Panel 3: On the tiled floor is a passed out Farney in his uniform. He's cuddling the base of one of the nearby barstools.

Panel 4: Candy taps at her cellphone.

SFX (A screech of an intercom): EEEEEEEK!

Panel 5: Lionel slumps on his desk in his modern looking office. His head resting on the intercom button.

SFX (snoring— use jagged text to show it's over the intercom): HOKKKKKKK!

Panel 6: Candy holds the phone to her ear, a panicked look on her face. Her eyes are wide open, she covers her mouth with a hand, and her brow furrowed.

Candy: Sarah! It's Candy.

Panel 7: Sarah Sheif, smartly dressed, holds a phone to her ear and scribbles on a piece of paper. Her face emotes uninterest, mouth in a straight line and eyes half closed.

Sarah: What is it now, Candy?

Panel 8: Candy peers out of the window to the corridor. There are several people on the ground fast asleep.

Candy: I think we have a problem. Come to the Sweet Tooth!

Panel 9: Sarah walks out of her office, phone in hand, and spots someone sleeping on the ground by the door.

Sarah: What the-?

Panel 10: Sarah drops her phone and looks directly out, almost as if making eye contact with the reader. Her eyes are more open than before.

Sarah: This might be a problem.

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Panel 1: Sarah, walks down one of the mall corridors, her hands clasped behind her back. Behind her are several people asleep in different places. Some are leaning against the wall, others are sprawled out on the floor, one is sitting down and cradling their head on a table.

Panel 2: Sarah stands in front of the Sweet Tooth. A passed-out body lays in front of the store.

Sarah: This outta be good.

Panel 3: Candy paces beside a passed out Farney. She chews on her thumb and hugs herself.

Panel 4: Candy stops by Farney's head and looks down at him worriedly. Her eyebrows are furrowed, and her mouth is pressed together tightly.

Candy: What the heck is going on?

Panel 5: Sarah enters the front door of Sweet Tooth and sees Candy standing next to Farney's passed out body. Sarah looks unimpressed

SFX (front door rings) – DING!

Candy: Oh, thank God!

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Panel 1: Sarah squats down over Farney's body and pokes his cheek. Candy hovers behind her, chewing on her nail and her other arm is crossed over her stomach.

Sarah: Well, he's doing the same amount of work as always.

Farney (Small unintelligible letters – we can't understand his mutterings).

Panel 2: Farney pulls the stool in closer and rubs his cheek against the base.

Sarah (off-panel): He's out like a light.

Panel 3: Sarah, her hands resting on her hips and her face serious, turns to Candy, who's still chewing on her nail.

Sarah: What happened?

Sarah: When did you find him?

Panel 4: Candy twiddles with her hands. Her head bowed to show her nerves.

Candy: I ran out of samples and was in the back baking more.

Candy: I heard a loud thud and came to check it out and when I did...

Panel 5: Candy gestures to Farney's body.

Candy: I found him.

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Panel 1: Candy shuffles her feet. She covers her mouth with her hand. Tears form at the corners of her eyes.

Panel 2: Sarah flinches away as Candy begins crying next to Sarah.

Candy: I don't-don't know what-what happened...

Candy: ...I just wanted to-to make sweets for-for everyone.

Panel 3: Sarah shifts closer to Candy who sobs into her hands.

Panel 4: Sarah awkwardly pats Candy's shoulder.

Sarah: There, there. It's okay. We'll figure this out.

Panel 5: Candy looks up to Sarah.

Candy: R-really? You'll help me figure it out?

Sarah: Sure, why not.

Panel 6: Candy jumps and hugs a stiff Sarah.

Candy: Oh my God, Sarah, you are so nice. I don't care what everyone says about you...

Candy: ...You're such a nice person! Trying to make me feel better.

Panel 7: Candy faces away from the reader and Sarah pats Candy's back.

Sarah: Thanks, Candy. **Just** what every girl wants to hear.

Panel 8: Candy holds out a Moon cake to Sarah.

Candy: By the way...

Candy: ...I haven't given you a sample yet.

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Panel 1: Sarah scrutinizes the pastry. Her arm is half extended and her brow furrows.

Sarah: Thanks...

Panel 2: Sarah brings the Moon Cake towards her open mouth. Candy smiles at Sarah, invading her personal space.

Candy: No problem. I made these myself...

Candy: I usually use the recipe my granny created but this year I wanted to try something different.

Panel 3: A closeup of another hand slapping the Moon Cake out of Sarah's hand.

SFX (hand slapping) – SLAP!

Sarah: Hey!

Panel 5: The Moon Cake is squished on the floor. The frosting splatters across the tile.

Sarah: What the hell?!?!?

Candy: That was from a **fresh** batch!

Panel 6: Sarah reaches for her taser and points to out of frame. Candy looks frightened and shrinks in on herself to make her seem smaller and gasps out.

Sarah: Explain yourself mallrat!

Olman: Poisoned.

Panel 7: Olman, a shabby man with a glassy-eyed stare, jumps back from Sarah's taser and begins whispering. Candy cowers behind Sarah.

Sarah: What? What is poisoned?

Olman: This can't start again. Deep sleep. Deep Sleep.

Panel 8: Olman points at the destroyed Moon Cake. Sarah and Candy follow his finger, both confused. Sarah has an eyebrow raised and puts away her taser.

Sarah: What? What can't start again?

Candy: "Deep sleep"?

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Panel 1: Sarah grips Olman's dusty coat and brings him close in.

Sarah: Start talking old man. You know something about this?

Panel 2: Candy places a hand on Sarah's arm.

Candy: Ease up a bit, Sarah, you're hurting him.

Panel 2: Sarah shoves Olman to the floor.

Sarah: What do you know Olman?

Olman: Flower. Poison. Moon. Poison. Deep sleep. Need to wake up...

Sarah: He's not making any sense.

Panel 3: Candy kneels in front of Olman, who has a far-off look.

Candy: Olman, we're not gonna **hurt** you, but you need to focus and tell us what you know...

Candy: ...Can you help us?

Panel 4: Olman's gaze locks with Candy. Sarah moves in and kneels in front of him also.

Olman: The original colonists, they didn't know what it was either, until it was too late...

Olman: ...Venus Spritzer, they called it. Beautiful but dangerous. It only grows once a year.

Olman: Don't eat sweets. Don't eat sweets.

Sarah: Don't eat-

Panel 5: Sarah whirls on Candy and grips her shoulders. Candy cowers away from Sarah.

Sarah: Candy, you said you tried **something different** this year...

Sarah: ...What did you put into these cakes?!

Candy: I-I found a crushed flower when I had that terrible cold last week...

Candy: ...The color was pretty, and I thought it might help with the frosting, but it had some gunk on it.

Panel 6: Candy escapes Sarah's grip and backpedals.

Candy: So, I put it in a Ziploc bag. When I got back to the shop, I decided to mix it into the all the frosting I had.

Candy: It was like two containers full and I've been using the same batches since.

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Panel 1: Sarah's eyes widen and Candy slips from her grip. Candy is shocked still.

Candy: Sarah? Sarah? I-I had no idea this would happen...

Candy: ...You have to believe me. Sarah?

Panel 2: Sarah shakes herself off and her face softens. Candy looks worried with furrowed brows. Sarah is hesitant.

Sarah: It's not your fault, Candy. You're just really naïve...

Sarah: ...Like I said, we'll figure this out.

Panel 3: Candy buries herself into Sarah and sobs lightly. Olman gazes at the two women.

Candy: I'll do whatever it takes to fix this.

Sarah: Oh, you bet **you're** gonna help me with this. They don't pay me enough to fix everyone's messes by myself.

Panel 4: Sarah and Candy stand up and head towards the door. Candy looks expectantly at Sarah.

Sarah: Now, show me where you found this flower.

Olman: Venus Spritzer. **Deep sleep.**

Sarah: Uh, I guess Olman can come too. He does seem to know more about what's going on.

Olman: Original colonists. **Poison.** Deep sleep.

Panel 5: Sarah and Candy leave the Sweet Tooth and walk down the corridor. Olman is seen following behind. There are several passed out bodies on benches, against walls, and on the floor.

Sarah: Damn, Candy. How many people did you force your cakes on?

Candy: We better hurry. Who **knows** what will happen if they don't wake up soon?

Olman: Venus Spritzer. Venus Spritzer. Venus Spritzer.

Panel 6: Sarah looks over her shoulder at Olman, who stumbles behind them.

Sarah: I'm asking to be transferred as soon as Lionel wakes up from nap time.

Candy: You wouldn't really **leave** us, would you Sarah?

Sarah: ...I don't think you want me to answer that.

Candy: What?