

Chapter 1

Fly Me to the Moon

The first thing she noticed were the lights, searingly bright that she had to shield her eyes. As her eyes started to adjust, she saw that the lights were actually just the sunlight passing through the various amps above, beating down on her face through a window. She started to notice the sound of bustle and laughter as she took in the sight of people having spirited conversations with large mugs of beer, wiping the froth away from their lips. Some seemed to genuinely be in a celebratory mood while for most, as inspector Nancy often noticed in bars, the booze was the only cause for celebration in a lifetime of mundanity. "You up for another?" asked a deep voice emanating from her left. She jerked her head in the direction of the voice, mildly startled and feeling a tad delirious. "Err.. Maybe I..." she started but that was all the face behind the voice needed. "Two more please!" said the man before Nancy could object. "You know, we really ought to hold back a bit on the booze Nancy.", he said. "That's what I was going to say before you went ahead and put words in my mouth and ordered the next round.", she snapped irritated discovering that her head had started to pound. "Okay! Okay! I'm sorry. This is the last one. It's just that I don't want our conversation to end.", he said with a rather unapologetic tone. "You know what's strange? I'm having a very hard time recognizing who exactly I'm having this conversation with and here you are talking as if we've known each other for years." "Come on Nan, don't play games with me. I know we've had a little too much of 'the Martiani' to drink, but surely you know me? Forget years, you've known me your whole life!" said the smooth baritone of a voice with a devious chuckle. The voice started to sound familiar though she couldn't yet put her finger on where she had heard it before. But to Nancy's bewilderment, as she finally regained her senses and got a good look at the figure behind the charming voice, it came from a face and body she had seen countless times before and often had reasons to despise. The voice, she was hearing all this while was not coming from the face of a man but from a woman who was none other than she herself. Unable to process this, she jumped up from her seat and stumbled backward, her gaze transfixed on her apparent newfound and unwelcome twin with the deep male voice. "Who are you!?" she found herself shouting and suddenly the whole bar went silent and pitch black as if the Sun's light was turned off by a flick of a switch. Blinded again, this time from darkness, Nancy started groping about and flailing her arms in frustration not having the remotest clue as to what was going on. "Think goddamn it! You're a fucking detective for crying out loud.", she muttered to herself. "Was she or rather 'it', my clone? But it was ruled a crime to clone humans after the presidential scandal way back in 73'. Where did they pull my DNA data from? The global DNA registry? No way that can be hacked that easily and no one's going to go to all that trouble to create a clone of me. You're a nobody. And what's with the damn sun light getting cut off? Are the amps malfunctioning?" "That's right detective. Do what you do best and rationalize what's going on. But here's an eye-opener for you... Not everything makes sense and neither does it have to. Just go with the flow!", came the same voice as before but this time from behind her, interrupting her train of thought. "Who the hell are you and how are you inside my head? What do you want from me?!" screamed Nancy. "Oh, it's not much really. I just want you to sing. I NEED you to sing Nancy Kolady.", the voice replied maintaining the same delicious charm that Nancy just couldn't shake from her mind and knew sounded unbelievably familiar. "Some elaborate joke this is mister or whoever you are. This is NOT

funny! Let me go!” she protested vehemently. “So be it.”, said the voice and Nancy found herself hurtling through empty space, falling endlessly into a dark bottomless abyss. Nancy tried to scream her lungs out but she couldn’t hear a thing. Silence had never felt so deafening to her before and the whole world now seemed to be covered in a blanket of darkness and quiet. Nancy felt sick and thought she was going to pass out when her fall was stopped with such a violent jerk that she could have sworn that it would have snapped her neck in two. She was now floating and she noticed specks of twinkling light all around her. “Are those stars? Am I floating in space!?” she thought alarmed when she felt a sharp pain in her throat. “Now sing!” demanded the same voice which came from Nancy’s own mouth this time. She clasped her mouth shut, petrified, only to discover that she had started to lose all control of herself. Slowly, her lips opened and closed to the lyrics of one of her all-time favourite songs from one of her favourite artists. People like her in 2098 were rare for the music scene is quite a bit different from that more than a century ago. But to Nancy the songs from that era are timeless classics and just couldn’t be replaced with the mindless bass heavy and autotuned tracks that dominated the charts today. As she was sucked into the magical tune of the song emanating from her own throat, she stopped fighting and let go of any little control she was desperately trying to regain. Detective Nancy was crooning the lyrics of Frank Sinatra’s “Fly me to the Moon” in the voice from the bar before that she now instantly recognized as Frank Sinatra’s. Just as she thought things couldn’t get even more surreal and magical even, the searing pain in her throat she had forgotten about in the wake of her discovery of her new talent, increased to unbearable levels. A slow trickle of blood started to flow through her hands which she had cradled over her neck. The trickle then became a steady stream which continuously seemed to increase in intensity. Nancy started to panic and desperately tried to stop the blood with her hands to the point where she was choking herself but discovered that she didn’t need to breathe while floating around in space, still singing the song which seemed quite situational save for the abject terror she was in as opposed to feelings of love and happiness it signified. “In other words...”, came out Sinatra’s crescendo when her throat burst with a fountain of blood gushing out.

Nancy jumped from her bed and instinctively felt her neck all over. A wave of relief washed over her seeing that it was in one piece and that it was just a ‘silly nightmare’. “Damn this case has really struck a nerve.”, she mumbled and wiped the beads of sweat that had collected on her forehead. She realized that her whole t-shirt was soaked in sweat and glanced at her bedside screen which announced that it was half past four in the morning, Earth time(UT) and (equivalent time on Mars).