

# Chapter 1

**I**t was one of those foggy March mornings; a day off to do as I pleased. With a hot cup of coffee in my hand I was already plotting my weekend schedule. This past week had been especially difficult for me and I was glad to have it over. There was that loose muffler I had to fix, and of course I needed to mow the lawn.

I got tired just thinking about all the work I had to do, so I made an executive decision; I am going fishing! The last time I went fishing was at least six months ago and I had a lot of preparatory work to do. First I had to find my tackle box and fishing pole. It took a while but I managed to gather everything. I made a few sandwiches, picked up my coffee thermos and a six pack of beer. I threw them into the boat, tied the lines on the trailer, and was ready to go. As I kissed my wife, Tasoula, she said in a teasing way, “Are we going to have another super fish dinner, dear?”

“Don’t hold your breath, honey,” I said and was on my way. It took about thirty minutes to go to the marina and another thirty minutes to put the boat in the water and park the trailer out of the way. Once the boat was in the water it took me another fifteen minutes to get to my favorite fishing hole. The sun was rising fast now and I had no illusion that I’d catch any fish, but I kept the line in the water anyway. But then, I didn’t come here to catch fish, I came here to get away from it all. I should do this more often; this place is so beautiful and quiet. It was 10:30 a.m. by my watch and although a few clouds started to obscure the sun it was still a nice day by Northwest standards. One learns to live with the weather changes here in the San Juan Archipelago. I turned off the motor, secured the line, and let the tide take me home. I was looking at a floating log when I noticed something shining on the water. I bent over to take a closer look and still couldn’t figure it out. It looked like a light blue electric current floating on top of the waves. It was about twenty feet in diameter and perfectly round.

The atmosphere felt electrified. I felt as if I were in some kind of empty space; a funnel, or a vortex. My hair stood up and I got goose bumps - - I was scared. A period of time passed; whether it was minutes or hours or even weeks I would not have known. The only thing I could feel was numbness. Vivid colors went through my mind; red, yellow, green and finally black. It was a sensation I had never felt before. Without a doubt, I was in another dimension, another world.

But where is the boat? Where is the sea? I must be dreaming. That’s it—it’s a dream, it’s a nightmare. I start to count, “One, two, three, wake up!” I had heard somewhere that this was the best way to snap out of a nightmare. Slowly, I open my eyes to avoid the sun’s glare. I feel the coolness of grass on my face. I must have lain here for some time. The sun is too high above the horizon. I feel cold, nauseated, and very tired.

I am lying on a hill covered with luscious green grass. There is a creek only a few yards from where I am. It snakes its way down towards the flat land covered with pine trees.

Meanwhile, back at Nick’s house Takis answers the phone.

“M-o-m-m!”

“Now what do you need again, Takis?”

“Grandma’s on the phone.”

“Okay, I got it. Thanks.”

“Mom, what’s up?”

“Oh--not much--how about you, dear?”

“I am doing fine; we are all doing fine here.”

“Well, the reason I called is that Father wants to know if you and Nick are still interested in that piece of property. You know the price is very good and it’s not that you can’t afford it--buying land is always a good investment.”

“I know, Mother. We have talked about it many times, but if Nick gets his promotion as he hopes, we don’t know where we are going to end up.”

“Well your father wants to talk to him anyway.”

“Oh, Nick isn’t here, he went fishing but he is due to come home anytime now. I’ll have him call Dad as soon as he comes back.”

“How is Nick doing these days?”

“He had a very difficult week, that’s why he went fishing.”

“Oh poor Nick, give him my love, will you dear?”

“I sure will, Mom.”

“Well, I’ll be talking to you soon. Bye for now.”

The day was beautiful, there were no clouds in the sky; it was warm but not hot. It felt like a typical Northwest spring day and yet I felt very sick and my face was clammy and feverish. Although I felt miserable and confused I tried to put some order in my thoughts. I looked at my watch to check the time but it had stopped. I felt my face to see if I had any whiskers, (I had shaved this morning), but my face felt smooth. So if I don’t have any whiskers, this episode could not have lasted long, a few hours at the most. I know now for sure that I am not dreaming, but then what happened, why am I here, and why do I feel so sick?

On a beautiful day like this there should be a lot of life around, but I see no birds flying or twittering, and no other sounds for that matter. Then a sudden harmonic chime sounded, and about ten feet in front of me there appeared a sheet of blue light about seven feet high by four feet wide. A young woman in her late twenties, with blue eyes, blond hair, and wearing some kind of uniform appeared on the screen.

“My name is Norina. We are going to transport you to a safe place as soon as we get your coordinates. How do you feel?”

“Not so good. Actually I feel very sick and feverish.”

“We will have you in a safe place pretty soon.”

“Where am I, what happened to me, and why do I feel so sick?”

“We will tell you as soon as we get you over here.”

This was all too much for me. Nothing made sense anymore, so I closed my eyes and let things go as they would. It didn’t take too long. The blue screen that was in front of me all this time disappeared and was replaced by an intense yellow light. Seconds later I was bathed in it. I noticed two robot-like beings close by. I felt numb and soon after that I went blank.

“35-A calling 35-B.”

“35-B here, state your request.”

“Patient from year 2000 with radiation poisoning delivered to room 401. It is suggested that he be put in vat 15.”

“State vital statistics.”

“Male, age 34, 1meter, 99 cm, dark hair, dark eyes, of the gene 12-cti, 0 electronic implants; healthy human specimen. Information completed, 35-A terminates transmission.”

“Message received and coded. 35-B terminates transmission.”

“35-B calling Megacephalos.”

“Megacephalos here, state your request.”

“Please advise as to prognosis and diorthosis of human patient 12-cti.”

“Acute radiation poisoning, therapy for diorthosis as per program c.f.2. Patient will be submerged in cyanohidrosis in comatose state as per required time. Megacephalos terminates transmission.”

A computer was emitting the natural sounds of birds and other small animals busy in the early morning. Norina loved nature and she had programmed her computer to wake her every morning with this lively natural concert.

“Good morning, Norina, how can I help you this morning?”

A robot came into the room. It was an anthropomorphic robot, one of the latest models, the 12-C series, one that contained the latest programs in psychoanalyses. It could be made to look any age or sex. In this case it looked like a man between 25 and 35 years old---- a handsome guy.

“Good morning, Ner, I would love a cup of hot coffee and then the usual, thanks.”

“Yes Ma’am, right away.”

Ner knew not only Norina’s breakfast menu but also lunch and dinner for many weeks at a time. He would remind her of all her appointments. He was also her chauffeur whenever he was needed and at times he was her confidant. Ner called her for breakfast and she was more than ready. She was very careful with her diet. Her breakfast consisted mainly of fruit and cereal but she never gave up her coffee which she drank plain.

The news was flashing in front of her, on a screen which was part of the table. She pushed her plate and her cup to the side to have a better view of the picture and the letters that were unfolding with great speed. She was not satisfied with the two dimensional-pictures so she asked for three-D. A hologram of a naked young man was shown as he was about to be submerged in a crystalline vat containing deep blue liquid. The man appeared to be in suspended animation, lying in a hammock which was gently lowered into the vat.

“Huh, nice looking fellow but I wouldn’t like to be in his shoes right now.”

She quickly made a verbal notation to her wrist unit to find out more about this latest arrival. Then she called Ner.

“How can I help you, Miss Norina?”

“I would like to hear my schedule for the day, Ner.”

“It is now 7:00 a.m. and your first appointment is at 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. with Dr. George Dylos.”

“Is it about the recent time travel accident?”

“Yes, Miss Norina, and I would like to remind you that you communicated this problem to Dr. Dylos before, but he did not respond.”

“I see, carry on, Ner.”

“Your next appointment is at 12:00 noon with Miss Lana Duvick. You will have lunch at Perifimo restaurant, and may I remind you that she is a media person and you should be very

careful with your answers. You have two free hours between your first and second appointments. The rest of the afternoon you are scheduled to be in your office. Would you like me to make any changes in your schedule?"

"No, that will be all, thank you, Ner."

"You are quite welcome, Miss Norina."

"I better get ready for my first appointment with Dr. Dylos. A few more weeks and I will finish my service, and then I will leave this God-forsaken Megalopolis and go home where I belong. I may even take that trip to Mars and spend a few weeks at the Hellas Resort. Oh Norina, Norina, stop dreaming and get going so you won't be late again." She arrived at Dr. Dylos' office on time.

"I don't need to tell you, Norina that this time we are in real trouble. The previous seven times we picked up birds, fish, and a cow, but this time we managed to pick up a real human being. Please tell me what happened. Don't we have a special filtration system to keep out human D.N.A.?"

"Dr. Dylos, according to my records I show that I brought this problem to your attention three months ago, but you did not act upon it."

"Don't tell me that we have picked up more humans in the past?"

"Actually we have picked up only two mammals; one human and one cow the rest were fish and birds."

"Rufus, please locate Miss Norina's report regarding the Voyager-A5."

"Yes, Dr. Dylos, right away."

"What's wrong with your voice?"

"I am sorry, Dr. Dylos, I need to make a minor adjustment—is that better?"

"Yes, that's fine, please continue."

"Just tell us what's pertinent to these accidents."

"The report was filed by Miss Norina Anderson, on July 12, 2500 at 10:00 a.m."

"We seem to have problems with the warp speed adjuster on the Voyager-A5 and I recommend we cancel use of this ship until the problem is rectified. The malfunction of the time speed adjuster has caused the ship to jump into the wrong epochs. It seems to calibrate the year 2000, usually spring, between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon. Instead of parking at its scheduled portals to pick up its cargo, it goes anywhere at random. Its cargo doors open and pick up whatever is in front of it then brings it to our time and dumps it anywhere. So far it has picked up fish and birds, but if this continues I would not be surprised at all if next time it picks up mammals. I need authorization to stop the Voyager for repairs."

"On July 15, 2500 the Voyager-A5 malfunctioned again. It jumped back in time to March 28 in the year 2000 at precisely 10:00 a.m. This time it picked up a cow and fortunately it dumped it into a safe area. The cow is temporarily in quarantine."

"And how is the cow doing health-wise Norina?"

"Oh it's doing very well considering what it has gone through."

"Thank you, Rufus, you may go now."

"You are welcome, Dr. Dylos."

"This time the Voyager A-5 picked up a human being and by law I must report it to the authorities," said Norina.

"Is there anything else I should know, Dr. Dylos, before I proceed with my report?"

"First of all I must thank you for your prompt report, and I am very sorry I didn't keep you abreast of what's going on within my department. But I should tell you that we have been busy

trying to repair the VoyagerA-5 ever since you submitted your first report. But we had strict orders not to let anyone know about the accident at that time. We have been using the Techno-Nanos on the Voyager to repair most of the problems, but as you know, we are not out of the woods yet.”

“I understand your dilemma, Dr. Dyllos, but these accidents, and especially the last one, fall under my jurisdiction and I must file my report as soon as possible unless I hear otherwise from higher authorities within the day.”

“That won’t be a problem, Norina. In the meantime be very discrete about it, and especially with the media people.”

“Miss Norina, this is Ner. I am sorry to disturb you at this time but before you left you made a notation in my memory data about seeing the human from the year 2000. I thought that this would be an appropriate time to remind you of it.”

“Thank you, Ner, I’ll see to it right away.”

“Hello, how are you feeling today?”

“Much better, thank you.”

“The doctors told me that you are in excellent condition considering what you have gone through lately. I would like to ask you a few questions if you don’t mind.”

“And I also have to ask you a few questions if I may.”

“Of course you may.”

“My name is Norina, what is your name?”

“My name is Nick.”

“Well now that we know each other’s names perhaps you will allow me to ask you a few questions.”

“Go right ahead.”

“What’s your last name?”

“Papas.”

“What kind of name is that?”

“It’s Greek.”

“I see, and how old are you?”

“May 6th I will be 34.”

“Are you married?”

“Yes.”

“Do you have any children?”

“Yes, I have three; one boy, Takis 7, and two girls, Sophia 5, and Julie 3. My wife’s name is Tasoula and she is 33. The doctor was here this morning and gave me this electronic pad and he asked me to write down my personal history which I did this morning.”

“Oh I am so sorry. I should have asked you if you had already done it. However this makes it a lot easier for both of us. May I take a look?”

“Please do.”

‘Physicist employed by N.A.S.A.’

“I heard about N.A.S.A. when I was a student in the university.”

“Now may I ask you a few questions too?”

“Of course, please do.”

“You may think that I am crazy, but before I found myself here I was fishing at my favorite fishing hole. I was about to go home when I was picked up by something and was thrown onto a

grassy hill. I felt very sick and then I think I saw you as some kind of a hologram. I woke up here in this room with a doctor telling me that now I am fine and not to worry at all. Will you please tell me what's going on?"

"Dr. Papas, that is precisely the reason I am here to see you, and you are not crazy at all."

"You can call me Nick."

"And you can call me Norina; I would like that very much. As I said, you are not crazy, Nick. You were picked up by the Voyager A-5 and brought 500 years into the future."

"If this is one of those jokes to make me feel better it has already gone too far."

"Nick, this is not a joke. I am telling you the truth. Surely you don't think that this is the year two thousand do you? Take a look around. I can assure you that none of these technologies were discovered by the year two thousand. But as your therapy progresses and you have all your implants everything will make sense to you."

"I had thought all along that I must have been kidnapped by terrorists because of my position as a physicist at N.A.S.A.; perhaps for ransom or some political reasons, and that I had been taken to a country far away from home. I had never imagined that I would end up five hundred years in the future. And what do you mean about putting implants? What sort of implants are you talking about?"

*While Nick was talking I was blaming myself for being so matter-of-fact with him. I could have waited one or two more days before I broke the bad news. But how could I guess about a person who has come five hundred years from the past? After all, English is not my language, and it has not been spoken since the Confederate Government of Earth adopted the international metric language in 2208. I should have consulted Ner; he would have given me a few good ideas. Poor Nick, how terrible he must feel away from his loved ones and so far from home.*

"We all have implants that are installed in our brains from the day we start kindergarten and they are updated every so often. They are very important in our lives; without them we couldn't function. They are like computers were to you in the twenty-first century only more so for us because we rely on them one hundred percent. I am sorry, Nick, but it looks as if you are going to be with us for a while. Of course for the duration, you need to live like we do. When we are ready to send you back to your time zone, we will remove your implants."

"In the year two thousand, traveling to the past or to the future was only a fantasy. I am excited but scared to be here, five hundred years in the future. All my loved ones died hundreds of years ago and that is very painful. But let me ask you something. Suppose you send me back in time before all my trouble started; wouldn't that solve my problem?"

"That is one of the difficulties we are facing, Nick. If we miscalculate even by a nanosecond, you will be thrown years off and then it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to recover you again. You see this is not the kind of thing we do every day. You were picked up by mistake because the Voyager malfunctioned. You and the cow are the only two mammals we have picked up since we have been able to travel in time. The cow has been examined by the vets and is now living in the zoo. But you are one of us, Nick, and whatever we do to you will affect us in some way. So we must be very careful to send you back to the exact time and place the Voyager found you. It is the "Prime Directive" of our policy. And yes, if we manage to send you back to your time zone and at the exact place where we picked you up, all of your loved ones will be just as you left them and you will remember nothing of this."

"That is the best news I've heard so far. But why was I so sick with radiation, was it the time travel?"

"No it was the place you landed. It is one of the many places you people managed to

contaminate and now we pay the price for your mistakes. But as you are aware we saved you on time, and from the last report I have seen from your doctors, you have made a complete recovery.”

“What happens now, how long do I have to stay here?”

“As I said, the only thing that remains to be done now is to install your implants which will take one or two days at the most.”

“Norina, you have been very helpful to me and I want to thank you. You are my first contact in this New World, and I hope that you’ll come to see me again because I trust you.”

“Don’t worry, Nick, I promise I’ll come to see you again when you have your implants installed and believe me, you won’t feel as lost as you feel now. I’ll take you out and show you around, O.K.? You should know that you have been assigned two doctors both of whom you have met; Dr. Liza Green and Dr. John Miller. They are the only people you should talk to. We have taken all pertinent precautions for your own safety. We also made sure that no holographic visitors would come to see you here. If you would like to communicate with me, just press the button here and call my name. I am the only one who can visit you as a hologram. I need to go now, I’ll see you later, Nick.”

“This is indeed a different world. If this place is a hospital it looks much different from the ones I have seen in my world. For one thing this room looks more like an egg than the square rooms I am used to. The texture of the wall feels like a combination of terra cotta and some kind of an alloy. When I touch it, it even feels like an egg shell. The colors on the walls change like neon from white to blue to pink and they shimmer and pulsate. The only furniture that I can see is the bed I am in. There is no bathroom but I never feel the need to use one either. I have no covers over me but I don’t feel cold. There is a light blue color that covers my body from toes to neck. It also pulsates--it must be some kind of chromo therapy.

The ceiling is white along with part of the upper wall, there is a soft white light on all the ceiling and part of the white wall, but light comes from within, like phosphorous. There are no switches to turn it on or off anywhere that I can see. There is a wide bracelet attached to my left wrist with a pulsating red and green light. There is no doubt that I am living in the twenty-fifth century. How long have I been gone from home? Have they missed me yet? I suppose it all depends if I make it back on time or not. Norina said that even a nano second’s delay from the exact time and place could throw me years off. Christ, what a mess I have gotten into. And still I am not out of the woods. I should have gone to the baseball game with Takis. Didn’t I promise that I was going to take him to the game this weekend? Had I known that I was going to find myself so abruptly in the future I would never have gone fishing. But now here I am in a world in which I was not meant to be. I wonder why the light is dimming.”

“Oh, I see. Dr. Miller, I was hoping that you would visit me live and not as a hologram.”

“Hi Nick, that was just to let you know that I was about to visit you in person. We need to be very careful with your security, that’s all.”

“This is something I need to discuss with you, Dr. Miller. Why am I kept in such strict security?”

“Well Nick, for one thing you are in quarantine until we are sure you don’t carry any of those dreadful diseases from the twenty-first century and kill us all. Also you haven’t had your implants yet. Another thing is that you are the first man ever to have come to the twenty-fifth century. Without a doubt