

Tranquility Base Pilot Script

Birthright

by
Charles Proser

From a Short Story
by
Edward Muller

The Moon

IT ZOOMS AT US FAST: Down to the surface, to the great Tranquility Sea, through a valley at rocketing speed. WHOOPS AND SCREAMS of excitement. A Dome appears in the distance, rapidly growing to a city, with outposts. We are Zipping over the surface just above the ground, the greatest carnival ride.

ANGLE

HALF A DOZEN SPACE HARD-SUITS IN LOOSE FORMATION - ZOOMING AT TWO KILOMETERS A SECOND JUST METERS FROM THE SURFACE...THE ULTIMATE EXTREME SPORT.

THEY ZOOM BY AN OBSERVATION DOME TO THE SCREAMS OF THE CROWD.

INT. SAGAN CITY OBSERVATION DOME ONE

INT. ANGLE OBS DOME

Set up like a Vegas Sports Book. Giant observation windows, large screen replays, odds and point spreads scroll. Tourists gawk. Cocktail waitresses deliver drinks to gamblers tracking the L2 Space Sailor Regatta, The Superbowl and the Pole to Pole Road Rally. Com Channels BLARE SCREAMS, HOOTS from the skimmers and Play by Play from other sports.

Skimmers shoot past the observation dome. Tourists gawk and take pictures. A pretty young woman with eyes a shade of blue too nuke-neon to be natural separates from the group and walks up to a Space Guard. Sergeant Kiri Chandar is tall, lunar lean and spacetanned in his midnight blue uniform.

ALLISON

Excuse me. Officer...

CHANDAR

Sergeant. Sergeant Chandar. Can I help you?

ALLISON

I'm new here...I'm a tourist. From Earth.

CHANDAR

(looks her over)

Yes, I know.

ALLISON

Yeah, don't quite have my lunar legs yet. It's all so exciting, but well, I paid all this money for a seat and I can hardly see them. Do they have to fly so fast?

CHANDAR

Only if they don't want to crash into the surface. Its orbital mechanics. Technically they're not flying, they're orbiting the moon.

ANGLE - Allison - Subtly flirting.

ALLISON

Can't they orbit slower?

CHANDAR

Not at perilune. The closer you get the faster you have to go to remain in orbit. At three meters they have to move at more than a kilometer per second. That's what makes it fun.

ALLISON

Fun? What if they...hit?

CHANDAR

Their suit computers and lunar traffic control track their position, but it's really not necessary.

HE POINTS TO A SCREEN DEMONSTRATING ORBITAL MECHANICS

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

There's no weather, no air friction. The passes are as predictable as a train on a track. It's so safe we even let tourists do it.

ALLISON

How come I keep seeing stories about skimmers plowing into the surface.

CHANDAR

Those are pros, trying to set the record for the lowest skim or doing some equally stupid stunt.

ALLISON

You ever done it?

CHANDAR

Me? No.

ALLISON

(flirting)

If it's so safe... Why not?

CHANDAR

It costs 300 Lunars.

ALLISON

\$L300! Forget it. If I wanna throw money away, I'll do it in the casino.

Another skimmer zooms by close to the dome.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

You can get whiplash watching this sport. Maybe that's why it's so empty in here.

She closes her eyes rubs the back of her neck.

CHANDAR

Just amateurs today. Not a draw for the serious fan. On a competition day, these seats go for over a hundred.

Rolls her head. Her eyes change to brown and purple.

ALLISON

No, really?

She takes hold of Chandar's arm, pulls him closer, against her. Her voice drops to a whisper.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Isn't that Dov Chaing?

Chandar follows the direction of a nod to a handsome young LunAsian man sitting in one of the reserved command chairs.

CHANDAR

Dov Chaing?... Yeah. Guess it is.

ALLISON

First human born off earth? A celebrity!

Chaing's attention is on the skim strip, on the dome entrance and the ramp leading down to the lunar surface.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Think he'd mind if I asked for his autograph?

CHANDAR

I think he'd love it.. He's been courting attention. Rumor is he's going to run for Sagan City Council.

ALLISON

Thanks.

CHANDAR

Sure.

She walks off as another skimmer appears in the lunar night sky just above the eastern horizon. For a few seconds it looks like a large star in the sky and then in a heartbeat the star grows to the spacesuit that zooms over the skim strip and shrinks back down to a star in the western sky. Tourists cameras pan the skimmers as they go by.

Chandar looks over at the tourist and Chaing smiling and chatting away like old friends. Ever the gentleman, Dov gets up and gives her his chair.

Another skimmer ZOOMS by. At that instant a LOUD CRACK followed immediately by A SMACK, RATTLE OF DEBRIS, THEN A HISS OF ESCAPING AIR. SIRENS BLARE!

The Feminine Voice in Chandar's receiver!

P.A.

ALARM! ALARM! Breach in Skim
Observation Dome One!

Chandar looks around, spots a crack in the transparent dome.

CHANDAR

Meteoroid strike, Dome One.

ANGLE - DOME SECTION

The MoonGlass self-seals. The HISS of escaping gas diminishes.

P.A.

The breach has been sealed.

Chandar reads his suit parameters and reports in...

CHANDAR

Sergeant Chandar in Dome One. Atmo
pressure holding. Single hit. Dome
Self Sealed.

P.A.

Quick Response team on the way.

CHAING

Help!

The cry comes from Dov Chaing. He stands next to the earth tourist. She's slumped forward in her chair. Blood cascades from her forehead in lunar slow motion.

CHANDAR

CODE 17. Human down. EMS Code 17!

Chandar checks for pulse. She has none. He checks the eyes but her pupils are fixed and dilated.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

She's dead.

CHAING

Dead?

Chaing pitches forward, starts to fall. Chandar grabs his shoulder and guides him down to the floor.

CHANDAR

Lie there. Don't move.

Chandar waves the EMS techs over, KEYS HIS SUIT COMMAND PA

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Attention. Please evacuate the dome.
The breach is sealed but we can't be
certain how long it will hold.

TOURISTS Gawk at the scene but move toward the doorlock.

An emergency response team in pressure suits with emergency gear arrive. A med-tech examines the woman.

EMS

What happened, Kiri?

CHANDAR

Micro meteor, looks like... A single.
Right through the dome...

EMS

(sights up the angle)
Jeez. One in a zillion shot. She's
dead.

CHANDAR

Yeah, I know. Leave her. See to
him.

EMS

He get hit?

CHANDAR

No.

EMS

Hey, Isn't he Dov Chaing?

An EMS goes to him. He looks weak. The tech helps him into a chair.

CHANDAR

Don't move her. Preserve the scene.
I need to collect the evidence. We
need to find out what killed her.

EMS

There was no warning?

CHANDAR

No. Something too small for Lunar Traffic to track. If it's a rock, its an accident, an act of God.

EMS

If it was space debris some lawyer's gonna sue somebody somewhere for criminal negligence. It's high-speed, through and through...

ANGLE - THE WOMAN

Chandar looks at the entrance and the wounds and follows an imaginary line across the dome. He looks behind the woman.

CU - THE WALL

Looks like a small metal rod sticking in the basalt wall.

ANGLE - CHANDAR

Close-up inspection.

CHANDAR

God's off the hook. It's not a rock. It's a carrier drone.

He scans a cigar-sized computer-controlled rocket imbedded in the wall.

EMS

Not your typical space debris.

CHANDAR

Self-guided miniature rocket. Payload data's too sensitive to risk interception by electronic eavesdroppers.

EMS

That legal?

CHANDAR

Not exactly.

EMS

Jeez, that's a first.

CHANDAR

Yeah. A guided missile.

EMS

I thought they were fail safe.

CHANDAR

Yeah.

He walks over to Chaing.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

How are you feeling?

CHAING

I...I don't know. I was just talking to her...and ...and..

CHANDAR

Yeah, I know.

FADE OUT:

INT. SPACE GUARD OFFICE - LATER

Captain Quaal is a tall man with a dour expression. He sits at a desk listening to Chandar's report. The room has a holo of Yosemite in springtime on the walls.

QUAAL

What did I tell you. You're not supposed to kill tourists no matter how annoying they are.

CHANDAR

(calls up her Visa image)

She was young.

QUAAL

Yes, very pretty.

CHANDAR

I was talking to her just before.

QUAAL

Councils' gonna be on my butt. Illegal debris, killing a tourist... Jeez

A tone rings. A face appears over Yosemite. His title says Hakim Mustafa, Medical Examiner, Crime Scene Tech.

INSERT HOLO - HIGH TECH CRIME LAB

HAKIM

Hey, Kiri, you win the five. The drone's clean. Totally wiped. Like it went through a gamma cloud or something.

QUAAL

No data, no ID code?

HAKIM

Not even a paw print. Something else, its a stealth. Nearly impossible to track, totally illegal.

QUAAL

(turns to Chandar)

You were saying? You were talking to her.

CHANDAR

Nothing. Nothing of note. Your loony tourist. Here, check the data.

He hits a button on his utility belt. His conversation with the woman, from his POV is projected on the screen.

HAKIM

And cause of death, just for the record, is a hole in the head you could whistle through.

QUAAL

Yeah, thanks Hakim.

HAKIM

Kiri, That fiver will be holding down a scotch at the Copa. By twenty-six hundred, it'll be gone.

CHANDAR

If I can make it...

HAKIM

Later.

He fades as he turns back to his equipment.

QUAAL

I've seen accidental death, people get hit by pieces off space stations, wayward tools, even flecks of paint can do a lot of damage... Jesus, tourism just starting to go back up. Go ahead, make my day. Tell me it was a Cosmic Accident.

CHANDAR

God doesn't play dice with the universe.

QUAAL

Sure he does, where you been? That's all he does. You're gonna upset me, aren't you.

CHANDAR

Run the data. Compute the odds.

QUAAL

And waste valuable police cycles?
Spill it out.

CHANDAR

Homicide.

QUAAL

Aw, shit. I knew it.

CHANDAR

I know...sounds crazy.

QUAAL

Not that crazy. There's always a first. I was wondering how long it would be.

CHANDAR

You bring that attitude from Earth.

QUAAL

Yeah, Like a chronic infection. Go On.

CHANDAR

There was no warning. The radar net didn't pick it up. Any surface dome's got micro coverage, especially where tourists are involved. It impacted the dome, broke through, wasn't deflected in any way. It was regular, manufactured, ballistic, probably in a spin like a rifle bullet, to guarantee a true line of flight. Space debris, would be irregular, center of gravity off center, ...would be deflected. It was graf-alum. Very hard, very dense. A micro-meteorite would fracture, spew like shrapnel, this stayed in one piece, flew true.

Quaal considers this for a beat, puts down his coffee, types on virtual keys. A picture of the dead woman along with the standard tourist bio appears on the view wall.

QUAAL

... Allison Gorbachevski. Recognize the name?

CHANDAR

No.

He types some more. Data streams

QUAAL

Look. She's a cousin of Arnold Hammer.

CHANDAR

The U.N. Rep? That Hammer?

QUAAL

Yeah, the one who'd outlaw Lunar births to preventing unrest.

(types again)

Oh, it gets better and better.

CHANDAR

He's a real pol... He'll use it for something. Say, how much vacation time do I have lined up?

QUAAL

No chance. You were first on the scene. You're catching this one. And you're going to keep me in the background as much as possible. I'm an old man and I need my retirement. An illegal drone, a death... AND a politician!...the hat trick! Shit.

He keys again. The holo wall opens, an attractive assistant walks in pulling in the political files with her.

QUAAL (CONT'D)

Dilly, you got the pol files.

DILLY

Yes, boss.

QUAAL

Brief him as you walk Inspector Chandar out.

CHANDAR

Inspector?

QUAAL

Acting Inspector. Politicians...You need more rank. Don't worry, I'll bust you back down next week.

INT. POLICE HQ HALLWAYS - TRAVELING

The holos accompany them as the political assistant briefs.

CHANDAR

So, Arnold Hammer...What's his angle, anyway?

DILLY

A perfectly loony one. He thinks that so long as the bulk of the moon's population is earth-born, Lunans will think of earth as their real home.

CHANDAR

You think he really believes that crap, or's just looking for an angle.

DILLY

He's a pol. Let's say he's looking for reality and his campaign platform to fly in loose formation.

CHANDAR

So..once a majority of Lunans are lunar born they'll be seen from earth as foreigners?...

DILLY

Yeah, Earth'll try to impose taxes and tariffs. They'll be a real danger of revolution.

CHANDAR

We'll have a NewBoston Teaparty?

DILLY

Yeah, well that's his theory, anyway.

CHANDAR

It's true Lunacy.

QUAAL

An independent Moon, scares a lot of people.

CHANDAR

Scares me if its gonna be run by people like him.

(A beat)

So, any danger of anyone taking this seriously?

They reach the Motor pool. The holo breaks, a holo of Quaal cuts in, interrupting...

QUAAL

A lot of Lunans consider Hammer an enemy. His cousin would make a target.

CHANDAR

You're kidding.

QUAAL

Please! Prove me wrong. Negligent Accident is bad enough! Use your sidekick. Stay in Con. I want to track this hourly.

CHANDAR

I did have regatta tickets...

QUAAL

Great. I have nephews.

He cuts out. Chandar, rolls his eyes at Dilly who smiles, hands him a computer chip of data and walks away.

INT. POLICE HQ - TRAVELING

Through the bullpen and down corridors.

CHANDAR

Molloy, Come on.

His virtual sidekick appears: A beautiful woman holo. She smiles at him. He talks to her, which is half-talking to himself.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

What do you have?

MOLLOY

Point 677 centimeters of K79 Ballistic moon glass. It drove 5.67 centimeters into Mooncore, a graphite titanium wall.

INT. POLICE MOTOR POOL -- CONTINUOUS

Molloy briefs him as he checks out a cruiser and straps in. With the flip of a switch on his arm control, Kiri changes from uniform to civilian sport dress. He reaches into the trunk of the cruiser, pulls out dark sport wings.

INT. MOTOR POOL - CRUISER -- CONTINUOUS

It lifts off, swing around and swoops out of the hangar.

INT. CRUISER COCKPIT - AERIAL

INT. SAGAN CITY DOME - GOVERNMENT QUARTER

The ship skims a park then swoops up and hooks on to a navigation beam, enters the traffic pattern and accelerates.

INT. CRUISER COCKPIT - AERIAL -- CONTINUOUS

She's calling up screensites and hacking the intel.

MOLLOY

...That says it was traveling...
approximately one point two kilometers
a second. The point of impact and
the breach in the dome gives a line
to extrapolate back.

She keys a 3D holo, the Obs Dome appears, dissolves to wire
frame. We see the projectile in reverse, leave the wall,
fly through the victim's head, through the dome and into
orbit.

INT - DOME - VIKING NATIONAL PARK - SPORTS AREA

The cruiser drops off the beam, swoops down to the parking
grid. Chandar gets out, walks toward the dome flying paddock.

CHANDAR

Zip it to lunar traffic control along
with time of death. Request a list
of spaceships, space stations,
anything else that missile could
have come from.

She nods and FADES...

INT. DOME SPORT FLYING AREA - UPDRAFT

Kiri straps on the wings, flexes them once or twice, spreads
them and steps into the updraft. With a flap to rigid, he's
carried aloft.

ANGLE - KIRI

He rises, circling, the dome spread out below. He looks up.

INT. AERIAL - KIRI'S POV -- CONTINUOUS

The rafters are massive titanium/carbon arches supporting
the moonglass dome and its structural members. He circles
up at the apex, joining other fliers.

INT. DOME THE RAFTERS

A FAVELLA - A HANGING CITY - of lost kids and others.
Catwalks, webs, and denizens flitting by on dark wings.

Chandar rolls out of the updraft and swoops down through the
maze. He swoops to a street kids hangout, spots a delinquent.

INT. DOME - CYBER HANGOUT

Kliim is a teenytech, a wired kid, freaky and multichannel.
He spots Chandar, and moves off his 4D multichannel, massive
game as others spot Chandar and slip away...

KLIIM

Hello, Officer. What brings you to these haunts? And out of uniform, at that.

CHANDAR

You wanna talk to me?

KLIIM

I'll even turn the music down.

CHANDAR

That thing we had, you know what I mean.

KLIIM

The thing connected to the other thing?

CHANDAR

Yeah, I could forget about it.

KLIIM

We could turn back time, like it never happened?

CHANDAR

What happened?

KLIIM

Wha'd ya need?

Chandar just smiles at him. Kliim, takes a beat, gathers his wings, and launches off the girder. Chandar follows. They swoop through a redwood forest of exotic comet trees, a labyrinth of air alleys. Like Pirates of the Caribbean in Space. A sharp spiraling dive and they come to a landing.

INT. ANGLE - FROM THE APARTMENT VESTIBULE

They sideslip, stall their wings and drop lightly on the platform, fold and unstrap their wings. They walk into a pleasant holo garden.

CHANDAR

Very nice. Where'd you get this?

KLIIM

Anonymous Email. I guess they're promoting something. Where's your pretty friend?

With a nod, Chandar calls up Molloy. She flirts softly with Kliim.

KLIIM (CONT'D)

You always had taste. How about
throwing in a clone?

He nods in Molloy's direction.

CHANDAR

Love to. She knows too much.

KLIIM

I could take a cut down version.

MOLLOY

It wouldn't be the same.

CHANDAR

Yeah, half the fun is what she knows.
Especially the classified stuff.

Kliim turns to Molloy, leans in.

KLIIM

So, what do you know?

In answer she calls up a holo of the killer drone, rotates
and zooms it. He grabs it. Quickly he's zooming all through
it, all the microcircuitry, down to the nano level.

KLIIM (CONT'D)

This is good. This is good. This
is a custom job. Not from around
here. Something you might find with
the weirdos out on Phobos and Deimos.

He gets up...hooked by the mystery, starts walking into the
next room, dragging the holo with him.

KLIIM (CONT'D)

Want a drink? Some fine loonyjuice
in the fridge.

Kliim pulls out...data, manipulates the data and the drone.
He slips into the technology, Chandar looks around, the
teenage kid's room, filled with holo vid stars, fast mooncars.

KLIIM (CONT'D)

I ran some voodoo, some Cabala...
nothing. This thing is worth a
fortune. It's not some rotating
piece of space junk. How did it
wind up with the authorities?

CHARDAR

It went through somebody's head.

KLIIM

Whoa. Not by accident, then. These things are failsafe on that. Somebody hacked it. And that somebody is good.

CHANDAR

What else can you tell me?

KLIIM

Who knows? Leave me the data. I'll go a little deeper. I'll call you if I get anything.

CHANDAR

You do that.

KLIIM

So that thing we had, that problem?

CHANDAR

What problem?

KLIIM

Thanks, man. You're okay for a civil servant.

EXT. SAGAN CITY - THE DOWN DRAFT - THE CRUISER

Kiri lands, folds his wings and stows them in the trunk. He gets in and powers up. Molloy appears in the right seat.

MOLLOY

A carrier drone doesn't have enough fuel to reach one point two kilometers... Most of its fuel's needed for course corrections.

CHANDAR

So something else had to get it up to fatal speed.

(a beat)

In other words, we're looking for a gun.

She programs a query.

MOLLOY

Traffic control has three candidates; Goddard Station, Lunar Surface Observation Satellite No. 32, and the skimmers... those who were orbiting when Gorbachevski was killed.

EXT. POLICE HQ - THE CRUISER -- CONTINUOUS

It angles out and up, over the city.

INT. CRUISER COCKPIT - AERIAL

CHANDAR

I think we can rule Goddard Station out.

MOLLOY

Why? They've got the accelerators you need to launch the bullet and the targeting mechanics to put it on target.

CHANDAR

Goddard station is in low earth orbit, three hundred thousand kilometers away. Even if they fired it from one of their bigger accelerator's it'd take hours to get here.

MOLLOY

A drone has an internal guidance system. It could be programmed to hit a fixed point inside the dome.

CHANDAR

It couldn't home in on a randomly moving target. If it came from Goddard Station the killer would have to know exactly where the target would be... hours in advance.

MOLLOY

Gorvachevski was sitting down when shot. A chair's a nice stationary target.

CHANDAR

Wasn't her chair. Dov Chaing was sitting in it. He gave it up to her. Maybe Chaing was the actual target. She just got in the way.

MOLLOY

All the way to the moon to get a hole in the head.

CHANDAR

They always said you had to have one to come here. Now. Who'd want to kill Dov Chaing?

MOLLOY

He was gonna run for Costello's seat on the City Council.

(MORE)

MOLLOY (CONT'D)

Costello's been slipping in the polls ever since he spoke out in support of the tariffs. Chaing is certain to beat him. That's a leap.

CHANDAR

It's also possible the drone was launched from somewhere closer. And Gorvachevski really was the target.

He projects the wireframe of the crime scene. He moves it around, rotating to see various angles.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

What was Dov Chaing doing in the Observation Dome that moment? Most people don't shell out \$100 for a seat unless a competition is going on.

MOLLOY

Think Dov Chaing had something to do with it?

CHANDAR

He's lunar born. Hammer's trying to outlaw lunar birth. But he didn't know the woman. He didn't know she would come up to him.

MOLLOY

Could have been conning her, had her approach you like that to set up an alibi.

CHANDAR

I like how you think. I don't agree with it, but I like it.

Molloy scowls, types a new command. Pictures and bio of the skimmers, appear. They mix and match. She calls up a bio of the vic, another of Chaing...parameters stream...then slow...a relationship... Chaing and a skimmer. Elan Yoshi's a young man with short red hair and green eyes.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Elan Yoshi... Also lunar born. He and Chaing are the same age. Might have grown-up together.

MOLLOY

So, they conspired to kill Gorvachevski? That's pretty thin.

CHANDAR

I know. Keep spinning it.

She starts up the data churn again.

INT. POLICE HQ - CHANDAR'S DESK/CUBICLE - BULLPEN

They walk into a holo zone where the death scene is reproduced from surveillance cameras in multimode, with wireframe of the ballistics.

CHANDAR

Yoshi fires off a rocket after his burn puts him in skim orbit. Orbital mechanics takes the rocket up to full velocity, the on-board engine could course correct it.

MOLLOY

Chaing maneuvers Gorvachevski into a position inside the dome. Gorvachevski dies.

They fit themselves into the moving wireframes of the victim and suspect, and walk through the crime.

CHANDAR

An accomplice maneuvers her into position at just the right moment? Ahhh... Too much to chance. Too many things to go wrong. No, Gorvachevski sought Chaing out. He didn't approach her. Didn't look like a set-up to me.

MOLLOY

Motive. Hammer. Help sell his argument if one of his relatives gets killed by a conspiracy of first generation lunar citizens.

CHANDAR

Politicians would kill for power?

MOLLOY

I know. Shocking!

They walk into another section of the police lab...This filled with screens of political intelligence.

CHANDAR

So, you did get that cynicism upgrade?

MOLLOY

No, just distilled some intercepts from you.

(a beat)

On the other hand if a pro-earth lunar politician killed the first

(MORE)

MOLLOY (CONT'D)

child born on the moon it would
inflame anti-earth sentiment.

He keys up holos of Hammer, of demonstrations, of Dov Chaing
and Costello...

CHANDAR

Maybe we're on the wrong track with
the setup idea. If the sniper was
close enough he could just sight and
fire at Gorvachevski.

MOLLOY

The skimmer couldn't have done the
shot. He'd need a gun, and we'd
know it. The suit optics' aren't
that good and the moon would have
been in the way for the bulk of his
orbit.

CHANDAR

How about that observation satellites.

MOLLOY

They have the targeting system.
It's nice and close.

CHANDAR

But someone would have to attach a
gun to the satellite. Check the
maintenance log. What crew did the
last maintenance?

MOLLOY

Okay. The records... a two-person
maintenance team serviced the
satellite four months ago.
Technicians... Thoraces Chen and
Wallace Tamil.

(She calls up a new
data screen.)

Tamil... is a founding member of the
Lunar Independence Movement. One of
the protesters arrested at the
observation dome last week.

Chandar smiles.

CHANDAR

And a radical at that! Good.

MOLLOY

I'll set up an exam of the satellite.
See if it's been tampered with.

CHANDAR

Yeah. In the meantime, just for fun, let's go brace Tamil.

MOLLOY

Why not just teleconf a subpoena?

CHANDAR

I like to get up close and smell 'em.

INT. SAGAN CITY UNDER - GODDARD RILL - LATER

Tamil's apartment is on the third story of a block of prefabs lining either side of a lava tube. Overflowing planters and holo murals on the walls offset the otherwise prison-like appearance of the living area.

Tamil stands in the doorway. He's massive, over a hundred kilos, mostly muscle. A tattoo of the Lunar Independence Movement; the Moon and Earth connected by a broken chain tattooed on his shoulder, is visible under a sleeveless T-shirt over dark shorts. They badge him.

CHANDAR

Sergeant Chandar, Inspector Molloy.
Lunar Police.

TAMIL

Very Impressed. What do you want?

CHANDAR

A woman tourist from earth, Allison Gorbachevski.

(a beat. No response
from Tamil)

Died in Skim Observation Dome One a couple of hours ago.

Tamil rubs bloodshot eyes

TAMIL

The hell's it got to do with me? I do sat maintenance, not dome maintenance. Can't pin this one on me. And my safety record is perfect.

CHANDAR

We suspect she was murdered.

Tamil stops rubbing his eyes and stares at Chandar.

TAMIL

Murder. That'd be a first.

(a beat, then accusing)

Wait a nano!

(MORE)

TAMIL (CONT'D)

You thinking of trying to pin it on the Lunar Independence Movement?

CHANDAR

Why, should we?

TAMIL

You always answer a question with a question?

CHANDAR

Why do you ask?

TAMIL

That's cute. They teach you that in the academy.

CHANDAR

Yeah, psychology 101. "Dealing with Dickheads". So, did ja do it? Help me out here.

TAMIL

No and No. That covers me, and the Movement. We have no reason. Its harassment. Or why would you even think of me?

MOLLOY

She was shot. In the head.

TAMIL

Its news to me.

MOLLOY

One of the satellites you work on was in a position to a fire the bullet.

TAMIL Steps forward forcing Chandar back onto the catwalk.

TAMIL

And you're accusing me of offing a tourist? You got a couple of loony moons of your own!

CHANDAR

Did you?

TAMIL

Hell no!

MOLLOY

She was related to Arnold Hammer.

TAMIL

The nut case?

CHANDAR

The UN rep.

TAMIL

The one who wants to make it illegal for people to have kids on the moon?

MOLLOY

That's right He's hardly a friend of the LIM. In fact he's probably one of the more outspoken opponents.

TAMIL

Hammer's flying with one attitude thruster plugged. Even if he did pass a law banning lunar births, how's he going to enforce it? Ban every woman who gets pregnant? Expose them to radiation and acceleration stress to get them outta here? Can you imagine the reaction? It'd BRING the revolution!

MOLLOY

A good thing, as far as your group is concerned.

TAMIL

What?! LIM stands for League of Idiot Morons?! If we're gonna commit terrorist acts, we wouldn't make our membership list public record.

ANGRY VOICES People come out to hear what's going on.

TAMIL (CONT'D)

We're a non-violent group. We've been working to prevent bloodshed. Lunar independence is inevitable but it doesn't mean war or terrorism.

(sees a crowd gathering)

Look, every maintenance I do. On every satellite. It's recorded. For insurance, for the LCT. There's proof right there. I didn't rig that satellite to kill anybody.

CHANDAR

Recordings can be faked.

TAMIL

Any programmer good enough to doctor that data wouldn't need a gun to

(MORE)

TAMIL (CONT'D)

kill people. Just check its orbit. Surface obs satellites are the size of basketballs. They only weigh a couple of kilos. Any gun attached to one would act like a rocket and change its orbit enough for lunar traffic control to pick up the wobble.

MOLLOY

Not if the gun fired equal masses in opposite directions. If the accelerations were equal the satellite's orbit wouldn't change.

TAMIL

Oh, jeez, I forgot. You got me there.
(he glowers)
Maybe you should look at Hammer, himself.

CHANDAR

Hammer killed his own cousin? Why?

TAMIL

Publicity. His movement is big news up here but most of the people on earth have never heard of him. He kills his cousin, blames us, press gets wind of it, suddenly his name and face is known to everyone from Earth to Lunar Orbit and beyond.

CHANDAR

Well, that's nice and insane.

TAMIL

I said he's flying with one thruster plugged. A pol who'd kill for power? What a concept! That's all I got for you. You want more, you come back with a warrant.

He steps back into his cube. The door slams shut hard. They turn, walk off past hard stares from the neighbors.

MOLLOY

Charming.

CHANDAR

That's why I love this job. I'm basically a people person.

EXT. / INT. LAVATUBE CITY -- CONTINUOUS

MOLLOY

What now, Boss?

CHANDAR

We take him up on it. Where's that sat now?

They get into the cruiser, power up.

MOLLOY

Right above Imbrium, on the approach.

CHANDAR

Okay, lets have a look.

EXT./INT. LAVATUBE CITY

The cruiser lifts off, zooms up the tube to a surface port.

EXT. MOON SURFACE - AERIAL -- CONTINUOUS

The cruiser rockets up into low lunar orbit, approaches the sat... a small sphere blinking in orbit.

CHANDAR

Set up a scan orbit.

MOLLOY

Roge that.

EXT. LOW LUNAR ORBIT.

The cruiser arcs around the sat, querying data.

INT. CRUISER COCKPIT

Multi-spectrum data appears in the HUD.

CHANDAR

Looks clean to me. Query the trajectory.

MOLLOY

Nothing. No anomalies. Strike one.

CHANDAR

Tamil may have motive but not the means to kill Gorvachevski. Elan and Chaing are back to number one. Have the skimmers come down yet?

Molloy checks lunar traffic control.

MOLLOY

Their ship's starting down now. If we hurry we can meet it at the pad.

EXTERIOR/ INTERIOR - SAGAN CITY TERMINAL

The oldest section of prefab MALEO: A giant cylinder buried under three meters of lunar soil. Boarding tubes stick out from the cylinder's sides like tentacles, connecting the terminal to landing pads.

The cruiser sweeps down into the western port.

INT. - SAGAN CITY TERMINAL

The skimmers come out the ramp in single file, still in hard space suits, with thruster vests, carrying helmets.

Molloy and Chandar spot Elan Yoshi from the holo in his bio file. They step forward, badge him.

CHANDAR

Elan Yoshi.

YOSHI

That's me. Is there a problem?

CHANDAR

We need to ask you a few questions.

YOSHI

My license is totally up to date.

It was a computer glitch.

He takes hold of Yoshi's arm, gently guides him toward a small meeting room.

CHANDAR

Don't alibi until I accuse you of something. It'll save us both time.

INT. MEETING ROOM

Molloy sits near the table. Chandar grabs the chair to Yoshi's right. They indicate he should sit. He sits.

CHANDAR

Do you know Allison Gorvachevski?

YOSHI

No.

CHANDAR

She died while you were making your skim.

YOSHI

No? Really? I'm sorry. That's too bad.

(MORE)

YOSHI (CONT'D)

(a beat. Chandar's
not forthcoming. a
play on nerves)

She skimming with us? I didn't see
her. Not in our group, I mean...

CHANDAR

She was in the dome.

YOSHI

The observations dome? I don't
understand...

CHANDAR

We believe she was murdered.

YOSHI

Murdered. Like in the movies?

CHANDAR

Yeah, just like that.

YOSHI

And, I'm sorry. I must be a little
slow. The excitement of the skim.
Always takes me a few minutes to
come down from that. ..So.. what's
that got to do with me?

CHANDAR

You're pretty good friends with Dov
Chaing.

YOSHI

Dov Chaing? No. Fraid not. I barely
know him.

MOLLOY

You grew up together.

YOSHI

Not really. Dov had private tutors
since kindergarten. We were in
kidcare, in school... He was off
being interviewed by the press,
cutting ribbons for some construction
project, endorsing some product, or
flying off to earth on a goodwill
mission. He couldn't keep up with
the rest of us. I still don't know
what's this has got to do with me.

CHANDAR

The murdered woman was with Dov
Chaing.

Yoshi looks and sounds genuinely confused.

YOSHI

And that's your connection? Pretty tenuous, isn't it.

CHANDAR

Its a start.

YOSHI

Yeah, up the down glidepath. Dov's around. I live here. I even run into him now and then.

CHANDAR

Not close friends.

YOSHI

No. Check the school record if you don't believe me.

CHANDAR

We will. Do you know a man named Arnold Hammer?

YOSHI

Who?

MOLLOY

You don't know who Arnold Hammer is?

YOSHI

No, no never heard of him.

CHANDAR

You follow politics?

YOSHI

No. Sports. Sports has rules.

Chandar stands and walks away. He turns, watching Molloy questioning Yoshi at the table. His datacom BEEPS.

CHANDAR

Chandar...Yeah, Okay, thanks, and do a cross ref. Arnold Hammer, Elan Yoshi.

(A beat)

Okay, thanks.

He walks back over to the table.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Says here you're a datatech. On the Far Side Mass Driver.

YOSHI

That's right.

CHANDAR

You shooting the moon?

YOSHI

Yeah, we're sending the mass up to build the South Pole Station.

CHANDAR

Big shots, huh?

YOSHI

Several hundred tons a pop.

CHANDAR

Good Job?

YOSHI

Pays well.

CHANDAR

Well enough to afford all kinds of lunar sports. Regoboarding. The Pole Rally... Bi-weekly skims...

YOSHI

Adrenaline junkie! That's me.

CHANDAR

Just happened to be skimming the Tranquility 12 pattern this morning.

YOSHI

Its my favorite orbit. It's in the records. You could look it up.

CHANDAR

You notice anything up there?

YOSHI

Everything.

CHANDAR

Anything out of the ordinary?

YOSHI

Two KPS at three meters? I'd say everything was.

Chandar looks at him. He shrugs. They move to the window wall to confer.

MOLLOY

Let him go?. Keep a leash on him?

CHANDAR nods, walks back over to the kid.

CHANDAR

You can go. But not too far. We still might have a few follow ups...Thanks for your cooperation. The officers will see you out.

Yoshi tries not to bolt from the room. They watch the door spiral closed after him.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Either innocent or a good liar. Maybe both. You got the school records?

MOLLOY

Yeah. Dov Chaing was taken out of public school at the recommendation of the staff. Hasn't seen Chaing in years. Scan comes up clean. Strike Two.

CHANDAR

Where's that leave us?

FULL SHOT -

She Programs rapidly - collating data.

MOLLOY

Looks like Councilman Costello is our next millionaire!

CHANDAR

Let's not give up on Chaing just yet. Let's find out exactly what he was doing in the dome just then. We need to get a statement anyway.

She pokes Chandar on the shoulder.

MOLLOY

You should've gotten one at the scene.

CHANDAR

He was pretty shaken up.

He turns, walks off, through an access door.

MOLLOY

And you bought it? Hey, where you going?

She can hardly catch up...when she does...

INT. MOON SKIM ADVENTURES - HANGAR MAINTENANCE

Suits are being cleaned, reprogrammed and hung. A tech looks up from reprogramming a helmet. He answers Chandar's unheard question.

TECH

...Not possible. Every suit is monitored on fifteen channels. They have to be. Do you know what insurance costs?

CHANDAR

A mini launcher...a few grams at most?

TECH

No way anyone mounts anything on these. Constantly monitored. Look.

INDICATES WALL DATA

MOLLOY

Could he CARRY a gun?

TECH

Only if it were weightless and transparent, mass is programmed ...down to the nanogram. Otherwise, how could you figure your Delta V?
(SLAPS THE HELMET)
No, these babies are clean, inside and out. That's how I run the business.

CHANDAR

Who sets the course?

TECH

We have different flight paths, depending on what the customer wants. Some like the mountains, some like the seas... We aim to please.

CHANDAR

Thanks, Here's my mail. Contact me if you think of anything else.

TECH

Anything else about what?

CHANDAR

Anything that might affect your license to operate. Anything you might think of before we find it out on our own.

TECH

Oh, sure, sure. I'll cut my own
throat. Happy to help. I love the
police.

INT. - POLICE CRUISER - OVER SAGAN CITY TERMINAL

Chandar checks the computer's readout.

MOLLOY

You're liking Yoshi...

CHANDAR

Nothing...Something he said...

MOLLOY

Chaing's released from Medical.
He's back at his apartment... in the
Bel Air Extension.

CHANDAR

Bel Air! Must be nice being a
celebrity.

He programs the cruiser GPS, the car swings onto a new heading
and accelerates.

EXT. CRUISER - AERIAL

They swing out through the lock and up over the surface of
the moon.... Heading for the rim of the crater.

MOLLOY

Think Tamil might be right about
Hammer? He'd know where Gorvachevski
would be at a given moment.

CHANDAR

Hammer couldn't know she'd be sitting
there just then. Not unless Dov
maneuvered her into place.

MOLLOY

Hammer conspired with Chaing?

CHANDAR

Doesn't make sense. They're natural
enemies.

MOLLOY

Moon politics makes strange
bedfellows.

CHANDAR

Run a game on it. The murder gives
Hammer publicity.

(MORE)

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

If he gets the votes to pass the legislation, it gives native-born Lunans a major rallying point against earth. Maybe Dov Chaing sees himself leader of a revolution.

He looks out at the most exclusive part of the city.

P.O.V. - AERIAL

UP ON THE RIM WITH A VIEW OF THE ENTIRE SEA, AND THE ALPS TO THE EARTH. Bel Air is an enclave of trophy homes set like diamonds in the rim boulders.

MOLLOY

Well, if this is the revolution, I'm all for it.

EXT. CHAING'S HOME

They glide into a carport get out, enter the home vestibule

INT. ENTRANCE

Adam sits in a stuffed chair in a large hemispherical living room. Exotic space plants, a still wall, soft lighting, artifacts and Berber carpet. Pictures of Chaing with various celebrities and politicians line the back walls. He gets up and greets them.

CHAING

Sergeant. Good to see you. Drinks? Please..

CHANDAR

No thanks. We're on duty.

CHAING

Still...I want to thank you...I..it was just such a shock..

CHANDAR

Could happen to anybody.

CHAING

Ever happen to you?

CHANDAR

No.

He's a little shaken.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Well? Why dont' you run through it.

CHAING

There's not much I can tell you. We were just talking. All of a sudden she stopped in midsentence and jumped in her seat. I thought she got a big jolt of static electricity or something. Then she fell forward, there was blood...

CHANDAR

What were you doing in the dome?

CHAING

Waiting for someone..

MOLLOY

Well?

Chaing takes a deep breath.

CHAING

Me-li Costello.

He makes a gesture. A holo picture of a young lunar beauty appears. Molloy does a take.

MOLLOY

Me-li Costello? The daughter of Representative Costello?

CHAING

Yes. She was going to meet me. Finally. We were gonna go out on a date.

MOLLOY

You're dating Ms. Costello.

CHAING

Trying to. She's uh...hesitant. This would have been the first.

MOLLOY

You were there for how long?

CHAING

More than an hour. She was unsure exactly when she could get away from her parents. I don't ...think they approve. She rented a seat there so I'd wait for her.

CHANDAR

Me-li rented the chair?

CHAING

Yes. Look, what difference does it make?

CHANDAR

Could be the drone was meant for you.

CHAING

Me? Why? I thought it was some kind of accident!

MOLLOY

Know anyone who'd want to kill you?

CHAING

Me? No. ... When you're famous, you're a target for a lot of things. But kill me? I don't think so. I'm not that important.

CHANDAR

You've had trouble in the past?

CHAING

When I was a kid some of the other kids would beat up on me. Jealous of the attention I got, I guess. It got so bad they had to take me out of school and hire private tutors.

CHANDAR

And lately.

CHAING

Oh, the usual cranks. Nothing out of the ordinary.

MOLLOY

What about Costello? Her father. Rumor has it you're running against him in the next election.

CHAING

That's another problem being famous. Everybody tells stories behind your back. I stopped paying attention to the rumors long ago.

CHANDAR

You running for office?

CHAING

No. And if I was, I wouldn't run against him. I'm interested in his daughter, not his politics.

MOLLOY

You call her, set up the date?

CHAING

No. She called me.

MOLLOY

What time?

CHAING

Early this morning.

CHANDAR

What exactly did she say?

CHAING

It wasn't her. It was automated.
Just the time and place...we were to
meet...and the ticket for the seat.

CHANDAR

Who knew...about you and Me-li?

CHAING

No one. There wasn't much to know.
She never showed much interest before.

MOLLOY

We need to check the call logs.

CHAING

You think I'm lying?

MOLLOY

No. We know you received the call.
We just aren't certain she sent it.

He gets up.

CHANDAR

Got her ID track handy?

CHAING

She'd never give it to me. I didn't
press. Is that all?

CHANDAR

We'll be in touch.

CHAING

You think that's was it? Someone
tried to kill me?

CHANDAR

We don't know. It's an open
investigation. Could just be an
accident. Act of God.

CHAING

What should I do?

CHANDAR

What you're supposed to do on the surface...stay alert.

EXT. / INT. LAVATUBE CITY - TRANQUILITY MALL

Crowd of people shop, stroll. They walk up to a food court, an exotic reproduction of a Hawaiian beach in Holo 3D. A beautiful young woman sits alone at the bar.

CHANDAR

Me-li Costello?

ME-LI

Yes?

CHANDAR

I'm Sergeant Kiri Chandar, Space Guard.

ME-LI

Yes?

CHANDAR

I'm conducting an investigation into the death of a tourist. I need to ask you some questions.

ME-LI

Me? Why?

CHANDAR

Were you planning to meet Dov Chaing in the Skim Observatory today?

ME-LI

Dov Chaing, No. Why?

CHANDAR

You didn't rent a chair for him to wait for you?

ME-LI

No.

CHANDAR

I'm a little confused...

ME-LI

You sure are. I want nothing to do with Dov Chaing.

MOLLOY

Seems like a nice guy. Rich and famous, too.

ME-LI

That's the problem. I've met him once or twice. He's nice enough. It's nothing personal. It never will be. I told him several times. You go out with him, suddenly you get every personal detail of your life in the tabloids back on earth. No way am I gonna open myself up to that kind of abuse.

MOLLOY

And your father?

ME-LI

My father, what? I'm sure he never even heard of Dov Chaing. Certainly not from me.

A beat. He watches her. Off to the side Molloy is intently scanning Me-Il's face for tells. Chandar slips a glance. Molloy shakes a subtle "No."

CHANDAR

Thanks for your time. If...we need you?

ME-LI

I'll be right here. I'm not going anywhere, with anyone.

She turns away.

INT. MALL - TRAVELING - CHANDAR, MOLLOY

MOLLOY

According to the telephone logs Chaing did receive the call just after eight this morning. It wasn't from Tranquility City. The call came from a stolen cell... It's been looped back and forth through cislunar space.

CHANDAR

What's your gut tell you?

MOLLOY

I have a gut? Fabulous. When did you buy me that?

CHANDAR

The data, then.

MOLLOY

It tastes metallic, technical. The
flavor's industrial.

CHANDAR

If you had to guess...

MOLLOY

To guess is human. To know, divine.

CHANDAR

Indulge me. The flavor.

MOLLOY

Adrenaline.

INT. SAGAN CITY MOON SKIM - MAINTENANCE HANGAR - LATER

The Tech is chomping lunch. He looks up to find Chandar.

TECH

You again.

CHANDAR

You're not surprised.

TECH

I'm a businessman. Trying to run a
business. I don't need more
authorities, or more regulations.

CHANDAR

Or questions?

A beat. A defeat.

TECH

...Aw sure. Ask away.

CHANDAR

You said your suits were clean.
Inside and out.

TECH

I said they start that way. Depends
on the tourist.

CHANDAR

Clean magnetically?

TECH

What?

CHANDAR

You put a charge on them.

TECH

Sure, to keep them from banging together...you know what they cost? And also, its a last failsafe from tying the Luna low altitude record... impacting the ground.

CHANDAR

The suits, they've got full com?

TECH

The best there is. Skimmers like sending pix of their skim to the folk back home, to the networks, the tabloids, a girl...And the insurers insist on it.

CHANDAR

And when they're blocked by the mass of the moon.

TECH

Relay sats 20 through 31. High band.

CHANDAR

Great! Thanks!

TECH

That's it?

CHANDAR

That's all I need for now. Thanks.

TECH

Stop by anytime. I get lonely.

INT. EXTREME SPORT BASE - TRAVELING

MOLLOY

You were right.

CHANDAR

Happens now and then. A call bouncing around the highband relay sats would pick up a flavor...industrial...as you say, metallic. And skimming's the other name for adrenaline.

MOLLOY

The call was bait to get Chaing to come to the dome and sit in a particular chair. Somebody who knew him. Someone who knew Me-Li would be the right bait?

QUAAL APPEARS IN HOLO

QUAAL

Her father would be in a position to know.

CHANDAR

Oh, hi, chief. That's why he's out.

QUAAL

I don't follow. He had motive.

CHANDAR

Yeah. It connects all the dots.

QUAAL

Yeah, nice and tidy. I love it.

CHANDAR

Yeah, you're meant to. Assume Chaing stayed seated. It eliminates Chaing. And connects her father. And his party. A political assassination. A big story. The bullet stayed intact. We were meant to find it. And start an investigation. But assuming it went off as planned... Gorbachevski was also in the dome. And through her suspicion would have fallen on Hammer's party...as it has. Another big story.

QUAAL

But how's that help anybody. Both parties are under suspicion. With the referendum coming up...

CHANDAR

Yeah... a big story. Murder on the Moon. Moon birth. Moon Independence.

Suddenly, Chandar, stops, turns takes off for his mooncraft at a lope.

QUAAL

Where you going, Inspector.

CHANDAR

Sergeant, boss. I like being a Sergeant. God doesn't play dice with the universe. We do. The thing about a murder is, no matter how complicated, you start planning it at some particular point in time. And you start covering up, planting your alibi, maybe planning to implicate others to throw us off.

He reaches his craft, hops in, powers up.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Before that you are leaving clues to your future actions, and those clues are in the records, those you can't manipulate... It comes down to motive. Hammer doesn't benefit. Chaing was coming down on his side of the issue. For him it's a loss, add the implication of his relative.

He starts programming the cruisers nav computer.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

For Costello, the elimination of Chaing would be a win, except for the implication of his daughter and the cloud on his candidacy... Not to mention the effect on tourism...

QUAAL

So, who would benefit from all this?

CHANDAR

Gimme an hour. I gotta work this through.

The Cruiser lifts, swings toward The Sea of Dreams...

EXT. MOON SURFACE - AERIAL AT ALTITUDE

The cruiser accelerates and lifts until we can see the great Mares, the seas of the moon. Giant impact craters filled with lava and moon dust. We kick it higher, over the Terminator, the line between day and night...and swings around the far side of the moon. Chandar starts flipping switches.

MOLLOY

Your heading?

CHANDAR

The Far Side Main Driver.

MOLLOY

Yoshi's job site?

CHANDAR

Yeah, Gimme a midair emergency. Don't want to spook him.

Kiri throws switches. The cruiser's number three engine flames out, it yaws, then, number four starts to stutter.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Ah, this is SpaceGuard Unit 703. We, um, we have a problem.

COM

This is Oriental Control, we have you. What is the nature of your emergency?

CHANDAR

Um, 703, lost one engine...losing a second.

COM

You're cleared straight in. Strip 36, Hangar 3. Here's the data.

CHANDAR

Thank you, Oriental. On approach.
(to molloy)
Go, short some wires, make it look good. But let them fix it in an hour. We have to be somewhere.

INT. MAIN DRIVER - HANGAR - SECURITY -- CONTINUOUS

Kiri steps out, walks up to an approaching officer.

CHANDAR

Where's your Guard HQ.

COM

Is there a problem?

CHANDAR

No, just checking in with an old friend.

He click. A path lights, indicates a corridor. Kiri walks off, turns a corner and takes an air draft up to the dome.

INT. MASS DRIVER SECURITY OFFICE

From the dome, you can see the surface, the lunar plane. The outpost habitats in the distance and the accelerator frame, spewing balls like jets off an aircraft carrier.

The officer of the deck is a veteran, a retread, from the look of his ambulatory exo-skeleton. His ID says Major Gill. He grins.

GILL

Sergeant Chandar. Have we met?

CHANDAR

Not actually. But it's nice to do so. We've got an interest in a kinda skittish fellow.

GILL

Pleased to help.

CHANDAR

What are you shooting?

GILL

Mainly mass to the space colony.
Now and then a sat launch or something
down to LEO.

CHANDAR

Anything to earthside?

GILL

Not this unit. We're strictly heavy
lifting. Compacted rego. Titanium,
iron, alloys.. Takes a lotta mass to
build a station. But you didn't
come here to talk about that.

CHANDAR

One of your techs. Evan Yoshi.

GILL

Good Man. Not in trouble I hope.

CHANDAR

No. Witness to an incident, an
accident over in Tranquility.

GILL

His record here is flawless.

CHARDAR

A top tech?

GILL

One of our best. But you already
know that. You've hacked the data.

CHANDAR

It's the human thing. Anything you'd
notice.

GILL

He's young, he's good. He makes a
lot of money. He spends it freely,
mostly extreme sports.

CHANDAR

Yeah, skimming.

GILL

That's one thing I don't understand.

CHANDAR

Yeah. Just how good is he?

GILL
Orbital Mechanics, he's one of the
best.

Chandar turns to look at the pallets streaming off the ramp.

CHANDAR
Do they have to be spherical?

GILL
No, but it helps with the ballistics,
center of mass and all that.

CHANDAR
Oh, um yeah...
(Turns away. A beat.
Turns back.)
Yoshi...he's one of the first natural
born lunans, did you know that?

GILL
Yeah, sure. Everybody knows that.
Makes him sort of famous, doesn't
it.

CHANDAR
Yeah, sort of... him and Dov Chaing.

GILL
Well, Dov's really famous.

CHANDAR
He ever mention that, Yoshi?

GILL
Doesn't much have to. Gets ridden
on that quite a lot.

CHANDAR
Really.

GILL
Yeah, like Buzz Aldrin. Forever the
second man on the moon.

Chandar's wrist alarm rings. He glances at it.

CHANDAR
Well, looks like it's fixed. Gotta
go. Thanks a lot.

GILL
Oh, stop by anytime Sergeant. Gets
kinda boring out here.

CHANDAR
Mind if I...

He indicates the quick chute.

GILL

No, by all means. Be my guest.

Kiri drops into the chute, it whisks him through the bowels of the building right to the open cockpit of his cruiser.

CHANDAR

Molloy, what cha been doing?

She appears in the copilot seat.

MOLLOY

I'm all over Yoshi. The mass of the drone and the telemetry on skim.

CHARDAR

And get me Quaal. I better bring him up on this.

They rocket off and away.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM

Chandar waits, looking at a holo of the view from police HQ. The door opens, the holo fades to bare walls. He turns.

Yoshi is escorted in by a uniformed guard who disappears. He, sees the carrier drone lying on the table. His expression is blank. He sits.

YOSHI

What's this all about? I thought we were done.

CHANDAR

Couple of things we need to clear up. Maybe you can help us, being an orbital tech and all. We're not quite up on all this.

Chandar picks up the drone and plays with it. Molloy appears.

MOLLOY

We eliminated the sats and the space station...the other things in the right orbital plane... you know Sherlock Holmes, you eliminate the impossible and you're left with the improbable....

CHANDAR

See, here's the theory... Shortly after a skimmer makes his orbital burn, he pulls a carrier drone like

(MORE)

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

this one from a suit pocket. He lets it go. The drones' engine maneuvers it onto a course that would pass through the head of whoever was sitting in the observation dome... the victim would have to be in that chair. Unfortunately the intended victim gave up his chair to a tourist.

Yoshi crosses his arms, indifferent.

YOSHI

An interesting theory, that. Any proof?

CHANDAR

The message sent to lure Chaing to the dome was fake.

YOSHI

Who sent it?

CHANDAR

It went on too many loops to know.

Yoshi just stares blankly.

MOLLOY

There's something else. The maneuvering pack keeps a precise record of the time and duration of each burn it makes, the burn that takes you into skim orbit, the one that takes you out of it. You'd expect the latter burn to be slightly less, since you expel some fuel mass during the first burn.

CHANDAR

And if a skimmer fired a drone, there'd have to be a gun, and the delta V involved in the firing. A reaction that would be picked up by the sensors. Even if the skimmer just released it, But in your case the numbers don't match. Your Mass when finished the skim was less only the amount of fuel you used. No additional lost mass.

He holds up the silver carrier drone.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

...Not even 200 grams..the mass of a carrier drone.

Yoshi uncrosses his arms and sits down.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

That's a problem for us. Cause we know you resented Dov Chaing. You are jealous of his celebrity. Of his fame...and easy fortune. Hard to believe someone would want to kill a man just because he got more toys and attention.

YOSHI

Attention?! Look, I don't like Chaing. He stole my birthright. I should be the first baby born on the moon. Chaing was supposed to be second. He would have been, except his mother induced labor for no medically justifiable reason. She gave birth five days ahead of schedule.

MOLLOY

Killing Chaing wouldn't change that.

YOSHI

(smiles.)

Who said I tried to kill him? As you say, I couldn't have done it.

CHANDAR

I said that?

They get up, walk around the room, talking to themselves, seeming to forget Yoshi's in the room.

YOSHI

You could look it up.

He waves a datachip.

CHANDAR

Yeah, we did.

He produces his own datachip, puts it in the projector. It shows Yoshi zooming toward the dome, hands out, empty...

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Here's your POV, zooming by the dome. And here's what you saw...Adam Chaing, in the chair, right where he's supposed to be.

YOSHI

Yeah, so where's the gun?

He grins, leans back, feet up on desk. Chandar turns to Molloy, shakes his head. They study the holo tape.

CHANDAR

He's right. He's got us there.
He's just too damn smart.

MOLLOY

Yeah, we have a gun that doesn't weigh anything. One you can't see.

YOSHI

You said it.

MOLLOY

I did? Let me run back the data?

CHANDAR

What's a gun do?

MOLLOY

Fires a bullet.

CHANDAR

Accelerates a missile.

MOLLOY

Okay.

CHANDAR

What else?

MOLLOY

By exploding a charge in a barrel.
You can aim it.

CHANDAR

Lots of ways to accelerates things.
Other ways to aim them.

MOLLOY

Can't find a trace of a gun. To fire a 200 gram bullet. Its all tracked. No record of any gun at all.

He sits on the table, staring down at Yoshi.

CHANDAR

Not on this side.

MOLLOY

On The Far Side? That'd be a helluva shot!

CHANDAR

Everything is tracked, down to a tiny percentage of error.

MOLLOY

Right.

CHANDAR

How could you get a 200 gram error?

MOLLOY

An extremely big bullet. Big as...

CHANDAR

A moon shot.

MOLLOY

What?

CHANDAR

They're shooting regolith, iron and basalt to orbit... to build the Polar Station. They're shooting an awful lot of it. You shoot several hundred tons, a 200 meg error is nothing at all. Way under the threshold.

MOLLOY

And change the orbit from CIS to Moonskimming... that'd...

CHANDAR

...take every gram of propellant in the carrier drone. But once you did it, at that speed, no atmo, no friction. It would pretty much stay there in that orbit for weeks or months.

MOLLOY

But there's the timing, the accuracy. There's no way.

CHANDAR

A skim suit is extremely accurate. It has to be. So you fire it last week. Put it into a parking orbit. A few degrees off, its going to miss the whole Dome by meters or miles, no one will know. Then you set up your target. You confirm your target and fly formation with your bullet. You don't even have to touch it...and change your Delta V. Just the magnetic influence, to alter it a few degrees over the next orbit. Newtons's Third.

(MORE)

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

For each action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The missile will also effect the suit. It's trajectory....It's delta V. Ordinarily unnoticeable...way down in the statistical weeds. Unless you know what to look for.

The holo shows the suit data... The line spikes as a streak flashes by the suit, headed for the dome.

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Get up.

YOSHI

What'd you prove? Nothing!

CHANDAR

You broke the law.

YOSHI

What law did I break?.

CHANDAR

Newton's third... You created the wrong action, I gotta react. I gotta hook you up.

YOSHI

I'm saying nothing until I see a lawyer.

He slaps plasticuffs on him. They bond to his hands.

CHANDAR

Yeah. You've the right to remain stupid. Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law. If you give up that right...

INT. POLICE HQ - OVERLOOKING THE DOME CITY

Walking through the police HQ, out onto the landing where they can see the whole Dome City arrayed below, the CIS traffic in landing pattern, and the earth a brilliant blue globe, glowing like a jewel in the star-sprinked sky.

QUAAL

Yoshi?

CHANDAR

Un huh....

QUAAL

But what's the motive?

CHANDAR

Chaing. Some kids used to beat him up. They were were jealous of all the attention. It was in the records.

QUAAL

Kindergarten records?

MOLLOY

Yes sir. Funny how they keep all those records. He didn't think of going back, having them expunged.

CHANDAR

But then, he hadn't planned, back then...on murder.

QUAAL

What?! Yoshi would murder Chaing for a childhood grudge? That's crazy.

CHANDAR

A crazy motive is still a motive. He would have been the first moon baby still alive. All the fuss and the mixed up politics would have made him famous. He would have finally gotten all the attention that Chaing stole from him. He would have been the living lunar celebrity.

QUAAL

Absolutely crazy.

CHANDAR

Yeah crazy. But, in a sense he has regained his birthright.

QUAAL

How so?

CHANDAR

History remembers the first. Yoshi may not be the first child born on the moon but he'll be famous forever ...as the first Lunan to commit murder.

THEY WALK OFF

CHANDAR (CONT'D)

Hey, you think I could get my Sergeant's stripes back....?

Hold on the Lunar Colony and Earth in the distance.

By Charles Proser.

Based on a short story by Edward Muller