

Chapter Nine

Groundwork

"Sometimes it seems that you slip two steps back for every one forward."

- Hannibal's Elephant.

With a final grunt of effort, Harry pushed away the last bits of rubble blocking the tunnel. He clambered through the narrow opening, and stood for a moment on the moon's surface, staring at the planet low on his horizon. When his breathing had returned to normal, he reached inside to the waiting servitor and drew out a bundle of cables. With great care, he measured out the locations required, and laid the cables in neat little trenches. During his occasional rests, he looked up at the damaged crater wall that had slumped in away from him. He could still hardly believe his good fortune. The fading glow from the rapidly cooling surface still warmed him, even at this distance. It was going to be several weeks before the cold searched out all the pockets of molten rock. He hoped his defences below were going to hold out long enough!

While he did this, Brunel was fashioning a set of reflectors and wave-guides. Eventually the servitor brought the components to the tunnel mouth, and Harry deployed them in the calculated pattern. He hoped the underlying deposits of rare earths would not interfere with the array.

After nearly a day of steady work he was ready. The cables were buried, the reflectors resembled scraps of junk littered on the surface by the chance explosion of some storage container caught on the edge of the attack.

He took a last look around, and came back down to the control room where he asked Galileo to send up the 'sniffer.' This tool was normally used in his prospecting but now, having been manhandled through the narrow passage to the surface, it was parked in orbit in line of sight with the planet. Then it was a simple matter for Shakespear to set up the antenna array to beam at the planet. The sniffer was recalled and