

Chapter Twenty Two

The Stranger Unmasked

A legacy is not always the benefit it would at first appear; consider also the attendant responsibilities.

- the Deneb Matriarchs' Society.

Guffy potted about one side of the control deck peering into various screens, checking progress on the odd jobs and maintenance being done as a consequence of the recent action around the moon. Worrall sat back in the commander's position, totally inert, eyes following the old man through half closed lids. He thought how odd it was that one seemingly so old and frail could be as matter of fact, when so many lives had been snuffed out in merely a matter of minutes; Guffy must be made of sterner stuff than his appearance might suggest. Not for the first time Worrall speculated on the hidden qualities of the creaky little engineer.

"Ah, Frank. The pumping has just been completed." Guffy chuffed with satisfaction. All the water that had been filling the lower decks and outer compartments was finally transferred into the mass tanks, replacing that used during the spendthrift manoeuvres about the moon and planet. The ship was still dripping wet, but drying would be quick with the climate control.

"Guffy," Worrall stirred and sat up straighter, stretched and yawned, "it was still a hair-brained scheme, think of all the damage that's been done."

"What's a few sticks of furniture when there's a Galaxy at stake? And the ship could do with a wash after all it's been through the last month." Guffy chuckled, "Now we are fully loaded, full range in the tanks, perfectly balanced, ready for anything. What about the wreck? Is it visual yet?"

"No." Worrall didn't bother to look at his readout, he'd already seen enough during the last few hours.