

ELEVEN

"Hello my friend. How are you today?"

"Fine, when are you going to get here?"

"I am here. Your nose seems to be taking a day off."

Paul looked up to see Owindamon standing beside his desk. "Oh, hi Owhindamon. I thought you were sending."

"That's a good sign; it means that you're getting used to receiving. I thought you might like to have a personal visit, however. I think we've found a buyer for the planet we sold to the Panterran. How is the machine coming along?"

"It should be ready in a few days. I'm worried about my friend Al, though. He's been asking quite a few questions about the thing; he might even be able to guess at what it's used for."

"I doubt that he'll be able to figure out it's exact use. He might be able to figure out that it duplicates documents. Maybe you could tell him that it copies software."

"That's not a bad idea; maybe I'll tell him that. Who's the buyer of the planet?"

"The Mantodeii. We think that they will be able to hold off the Panterran more effectively than the Ursinae. With a little help, they might even force the Panteraan into a stalemate."

"We've developed a plan to make the Panterran squirm a little. When the machine is ready, we will make the deed effective a few days before the deed of the Panterran. The Mantodeii can claim that they purchased the property before the Panterran, and that the Panterran jumped their claim. There will of course be armed conflict, but the Mantodeii will have public opinion on their side when the issue becomes known through-out the galaxies."

"As a matter of fact, a few millenia ago the Panterran invaded a Mantodeii planet on the pretext of a prior claim. There was no conflict at the time, since the Mantodeii could not hope to win a battle with the Panterran. The Mantodeii have been seeking revenge since then, and have steadily armed themselves in preparation for a rematch. So you see, we shall act as their matchmaker, so to speak."

"Sounds as if this is going to get serious in a short while."

"It will. You can change your mind before we begin, and we will of course understand."

"No, I'm in this with you. I just hope the Panterran are kept occupied by the Mantodeii. I don't think I'd like to see Fleshrender when he's angry."

"Well, why don't you give me a ring when the machine is ready. Until then, I'm off to Borneo."

Having said the word Borneo, Owhindamon winked off into a cloud of blue.

"How in the hell am I supposed to get in touch with him in Borneo," thought Paul.

"Just send to me" came the reply.