

FUTURE

NOV. SCIENCE FICTION

25¢



ULTIMATUM!

by ROBERT SHECKLEY

ALL STORIES NEW



FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION

Volume 4
Number 4
November
1953

Robert W. Lowndes

Editor

Feature Story

- ULTIMATUM** Robert Sheckley 10
Suddenly, they realized that they didn't hate the invaders...

Novelet

- COUNTERCHECK** Charles De Vet 64
How can you check up on a man who has no background at all?

Short Stories

- NEW WEAPON** Richard Wilson 26
Kathy wanted to be a newspaperwoman—and make news!
- COUNTER-IRRITANT** Gordon R. Dickson 42
The only hope for peace was through incessant, small-scale war.
- COMEBACK** Philip Latham 55
Parkhurst had written science fiction too long; he didn't believe it!

Departments

- DOWN TO EARTH** (Editorial comment and readers' letters) 6
- READIN' AND WRITHIN'** 37
Book Reviews by Ken Crossen and Damon Knight
- REMEMBERED WORDS** (Originals Winners) 51
- INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION** Robert A. Madle 52
- THE RECKONING** (Your Report on the July Issue) 98
- READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON** (Vote here, if you don't write) 98

Cover by Alex Schomberg, illustrating "Ultimatum"
Interior Illustrations by Beecham, Luros, Murphy, and Orban

Next Issue on Sale November 1st

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION, November, 1953, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 17, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass. under the act of March 3, 1879. Entire contents copyrighted 1953 by Columbia Publications, Inc. 25¢ per copy; yearly subscription \$1.50. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return, if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Printed in the U. S. A.



Machine-guns opened up on the Nam robot, and mines set in the capitol steps exploded, as the mob burst through the barricades, ready to attack.



Grimsche was a dedicated man, incorruptible, unswerving, implacable. And what they forgot, when they decided that a human machine was needed for this job, was that you can't turn a Grimsche off, or re-set him for a different kind of job.

ULTIMATUM!

by Robert Sheckley

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

TO: ARA ILDEK
NAM IV
SOLONES CLUSTER
GALAXY X32-A

SUBJECT: CIVILIZING EXPEDITION TO SOL III

FROM: MORDESH KDAK
ORGANIZER
EXPEDITION 87C6

GREETINGS:
Expedition 87C6 has contacted the



planet locally designated as Sol III. We landed our ships near the various capitols of the various countries of this planet. As was expected, there was widespread panic and rioting.

During our descent, we were greeted with attacks of a chemical, molecular and atomic nature. This was expected and, of course, nullified without loss of life. We discovered at once, empirically, that Sol III has command of no energies past the atomic level; therefore we are in no apparent danger.

The people of Sol III are stage one barbarians, queer, outlandish creatures. They are humans, like ourselves, and have sufficient brain-capacity to learn civilized ways.

Psychologically, they are a mainstream deviant.

Their attacks upon us were apparently for the purpose of *taking lives*, instead of any of the recognized objectives of war. This situation is not unheard-of; nevertheless, it is shocking to behold at first hand.

Superficial investigation shows us that the Earthmen consider the *taking of life* as the final answer to all problems. This psychosis is deeply rooted in the history of the planet.

Our instruction units are trying to explain to them the true nature of what they call war, in a simplified fashion.

1. That war is essentially a symbolic affair.

2. That the objectives of war are, (a) capture of symbolic documents, (b) destruction of mechanicals, (c) superimposition of values, from the greater to the lesser.

To implement this, we are teaching them the principle of *Conformity*. So far, the Earthmen have shown no comprehension of this law of nature.

I am pleased to report that we have caused no direct loss of life. Any deaths have been the fault of the Earthmen, rioting among themselves.

This is being brought under control as rapidly as possible.

Already the Ultimatum has been delivered to all the capitols on this planet: —*That by twelve o'clock noon, local time, all documents of symbolic governing value must be surrendered to the Nam war mechanicals. All armies must be disbanded at once. All governments must, for the time, be turned over to Nam officials.*

Once this is accomplished, we will be able to go ahead with the subtler means of civilizing this savage race.

Just between us, Ara—not for the record—this planet depresses me. It has such a history of murder, rape, pillage. The oceans are blood, the rivers blood, the very soil is saturated with blood. I wish I were anywhere else. The Earthmen are plotting against us, I know. Even though they are harmless, their armies disbanded, the hatred in the air is almost palpable.

But the work of civilization must go on.

In Peace,
Mordesh Kdak, Organizer



FROM THE window they could hear the mob, gathered around the steps of the Capitol. A single deep murmur filled the air, as though the mob were growling with one voice. There were occasional bursts of gunfire.

"Is it twelve o'clock yet?" Kyoto asked.

Colonel Culver glanced at his handsome Swiss watch. "No. Fourteen minutes to."

"Ah," Kyoto said, as though the time were a very significant factor in his calculations. He turned away from the window and looked up at Culver. "Where is your man, Grimsche?"

"He'll be here any moment," Culver said. He walked to a table and began to leaf through a pamphlet the Nam Invaders had distributed.

"He ought to be here now," Kyoto

said softly, a little embarrassed at having to say it. The colonel nodded. Kyoto began to feel very self-conscious. He didn't understand Americans, any more than he understood the Nam. How could the colonel be so calm, when a Nam robot was about to march into the Capitol and take the American Constitution? Kyoto began to wish he had stayed in Japan, with his own people. But quickly he reminded himself that the important thing was to stop the Nam, wherever they could be stopped. Only America had a weapon that surpassed atomic power; therefore America had to have the cooperation of everyone, against the common enemy. If his scientific knowledge could help, as the colonel had said it could...

The mob was growing noisier. Colonel Culver was still reading the pamphlet, swinging one foot against the leg of his chair. Kyoto began to pace up and down, running his fingers nervously through his hair. He hoped his wife had obeyed his telegram without delay, and gone to Honshu. Tokyo would be dangerous, with the Nam invading the Imperial Palace; she and the children would be safe in Honshu, with his father.

"Very interesting," Culver murmured.

"What?" Kyoto asked quickly.

"Their theory of Conformity." Culver's face was animated now. "Listen to this. *When two forces meet, the lesser will transform itself to resemble the greater. Force, in this instance, refers to fundamental truth, or conformity to the real world, both physical and ideal.*' What do you make of that?"

"Metaphysics," Kyoto said. "What do we care for their rationalizations?"

"Stop pacing, man!" Culver cried humorously. "Of course we care. A knowledge of one's enemy is a fundamental rule of war. Consider this: A fundamental taboo of the Nam is the

taking of any human life whatsoever. What do you make of that?"

Kyoto shrugged his shoulders. Under different circumstances, he would have been very interested. But now the armies of the world were disbanded, their equipment smashed; now everything depended on one incomplete weapon, one man.

"This Grimsche, is he trustworthy?" Kyoto asked.

"Absolutely." Culver opened a drawer and began to take out tins of imported tobacco. Beside them he put a blackened clay pipe. "Grimsche served under me; I'd trust that big, gloomy man with my life."

"An army man?" Kyoto asked doubtfully.

"A master sergeant."

"I see," Kyoto said. He began to pace again. Somehow, he had thought that the war against the Nam would be carried on by the scientists, now that the military had proved ineffectual. He understood scientists. But to put so much responsibility on a sergeant...

Culver must have felt his thought. "Don't worry about Grimsche. He's unswervable, unswayable, incorruptible; he's a machine. Give Grimsche a job and he'll do it—though the world were dust around his feet, and the human race only a memory." He smiled apologetically for his rhetoric.

"Very poetic," Kyoto said. But still he didn't trust soldiers.

Colonel Culver stood up and looked regretfully at his uniform. "I'd better change," he said. "Presumably, there is no longer an army."

"I'll get the equipment for the Weapon," Kyoto said. He walked to the door, then stopped. "What time is it now?"

"Three minutes to twelve," Culver said, unknotting his khaki tie.

Outside, the noise of the mob was increasing ominously.

MASTER-SERGEANT Edwin Grimsche knew he shouldn't be standing in the mob. The colonel had wanted him at once. But he couldn't leave yet.

Grimsche hadn't had much contact with civilians in almost twelve years. The actions of a mob fascinated and repelled him. For the moment, fascination had won out.

A man shoved past Grimsche, hefting a three-foot length of lead pipe. "That robot'll never get into the Capitol," he said. "We'll tear it to pieces first."

Grimsche looked at the man curiously. Did he expect to attack a robot weighing perhaps a ton with that piece of pipe? These civilians had spirit—but it never lasted long. Mobs were the same the world over; their courage faded at the first serious setback.

He glanced at his watch. Two minutes to twelve. The Nam ultimatum had set twelve o'clock for handing over the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, now under guard in the Capitol. Otherwise, the Nam robot would take them. So far, the great golden robot on the steps of the Capitol was motionless.

Stolidly Grimsche held his ground as the mob shoved forward. They were gathered in a wide half-circle around the silent Nam robot, thousands of them. The last remaining units of the army had been trying to hold them back for three hours now, in order to bring the machine-guns and grenades into play. But the angry mob wanted to take vengeance into its own incapable hands.

Grimsche knew how they felt. He would have enjoyed ripping some of the invaders apart himself, but he wasn't moved by the mob's quick, easy passion. Emotions like that passed too easily, after the first flush of hatred. He was willing to wait his chance—forever, if necessary.

The mob surged restlessly; tenta-

cles of people beat against the barricades, and fell back. The mob shouted with a single voice, advanced and retreated with one body, clenched a single gigantic fist.

Twelve o'clock. The Nam robot lurched forward, up the steps of the Capitol. Army machine-guns began to chatter, the slugs ricocheting off the robot's gleaming hide and scattering into the crowd. Somewhere a man screamed in agony, but his voice was lost in the single voice of the mob.

Grimsche watched, frowning with disapproval as the mob burst through the barricades and ran after the robot. As they reached him, U. S. Army mines, set in the Capitol steps, went off. The explosions dug a great red hole in the mob. The hole closed quickly, and the robot moved on, undamaged.

Now the soldiers had to stop firing, for the mob was all around the robot. They flung themselves upon him, smashing at him with wrenches, tire irons, gun butts. One man had an acetylene torch; he clung to the robot's back, trying to melt down a shoulder.

Serenely the robot moved on, ignoring them, delicately avoiding their bodies.

Then the mob's collective mood changed. Anger gave way to awe, apprehension, fear.

"It's coming after me!" someone screamed, although the robot was moving directly toward the doors of the Capitol.

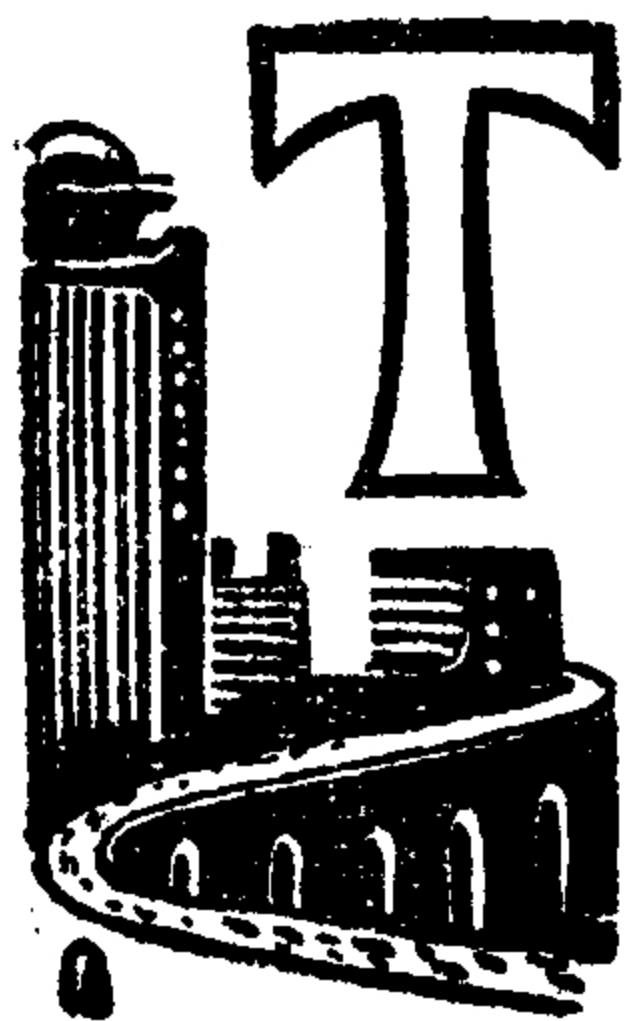
"It's coming!"

The mob turned and started to run. Grimsche had a few seconds head-start. He sprinted away with a heavy man's jarring stride, pushing people aside. He wasn't afraid of the robot; but the mob was likely to trample him to death if they overtook him. Over his shoulder he caught a last glimpse of the robot, entering the Capitol unhindered.

Civilians were just as stupid as ever,

Grimsche thought. He had wasted enough time sightseeing.

2



THE ADDRESS Colonel Culver had given him was a narrow brownstone building not far from the Capitol. Grimsche knocked, and heard Culver call, "Come on in." He entered, and found Culver in the

living room.

Colonel Culver was out of uniform, dressed in a plain gray business-suit. Still he was military. His suit was creased precisely, and the flower in his buttonhole looked like a decoration. In front of him, on a low table, were a dozen tins of imported tobacco and an old clay pipe. Culver was mixing tobacco in a brandy glass, and sniffing the result.

"At ease, sergeant, sit down," Culver said. "We're really not in the army any more."

Grimsche didn't answer. He knew they *were* still in the army, for uniforms didn't make the difference.

Culver added a few strands of black tobacco to his mixture, shook it gently, and began to fill his clay pipe. "How is it outside?"

"A mob tried to stop the Nam robot," Grimsche reported, sitting on the edge of a straight wooden chair. "They failed."

"Of course," Culver said. He lighted his pipe with a complicated gadget and leaned back. "Quite as I expected. Atomic artillery didn't stop them. But mobs are prone to believe that their righteous anger is a solvent to dissolve any armor." He smiled an apologetic little smile.

Grimsche smiled too, forgiving the colonel his fancy language.

"Now down to cases," Culver said, blowing clouds of smoke across the room. "When the Nam first landed, the President and the Chiefs of Staff held a conference. They realized that any race capable of crossing space would have a tremendous technological advantage over us. Even our atomic weapons proved ineffectual, as it turned out. The President had to make some provision for the prosecution of the war, even with the disbanding of the government and the armed forces."

Culver lighted his pipe again. "We *did* have a secret weapon. It had been in the project-stage for over five years, and still wasn't completed. But what a lovely weapon it was! It utilized an entirely new energy-principle, a cancellation of mass instead of a disruption of it. The President felt that, at all costs, this weapon and the scientists working on it had to be protected. You follow me?"

"Yes sir," Grimsche said, frowning with concentration.

"Therefore the entire project went underground. Since we had no idea what security-methods the Nam invaders might be capable of, the underground was kept as small and tight as possible. I was appointed head of that organization."

Grimsche nodded approvingly. The President couldn't have used any of the top brass to head the job; they'd be watched. A scientist was out of the question; they were too impractical. Culver was a hell of a good officer. Even with his love of junk like that imported tobacco, even with his fancy language, he was the best officer Grimsche had ever served under.

"Now for your part in this," Culver said. "Grimsche, I need a man I can count on for liason. The underground is necessarily broken into two parts. We're here, in Washington. But the scientists and the weapon are hidden—"

THE DOOR opened and a small black-haired man rushed in, carrying a suitcase. "I have most of it," he said, out of breath. "Couldn't locate any germanium, and half of the Formula X524 components are missing. But they can work around that."

Culver said, "Grimsche, I'd like you to meet Kyoto; he's our Washington scientific head, scavenger division."

Grimsche stood up slowly. "Japanese?"

Kyoto nodded, grinning uncertainly. Grimsche looked at him a moment, his heavy face impassive; then he turned and walked to the window. Kyoto's grin began to fade.

"What's wrong, Grimsche?" Culver asked.

Grimsche turned. "May I speak my mind, Colonel?"

"Go ahead."

"I never considered that war over," Grimsche said, his face expressionless.

"A treaty was signed," Culver said.

"A scrap of paper doesn't change anything. You really want me to speak my mind, Colonel?"

"Yes, yes," Culver said. "Let's have everything in the open."

"OK. I fought that war; I remember it. I remember the guys who were killed. Enemies don't become friends just because of a piece of paper."

Kyoto began to smile, nervously again, involuntarily running his fingers through his hair.

"The way I see it," Grimsche said, "we shouldn't have stopped the war; we should have killed them all."

"You're no military theorist, I fear," Culver sighed. "Wars aren't fought between *men*, Grimsche. Wars are products of economic conditions, resurgent nationalism, a dozen other factors."

"I don't know anything about that, sir," Grimsche said. "I just think an enemy is an enemy. Always."

"Perhaps," Kyoto said, "if the sergeant feels that way, I should leave—"

"Nonsense!" Culver said sharply.

"Grimsche, you know what we're up against; we need any help we can find."

"I know that, sir," Grimsche said. "It's OK with me, his working on our side. I just wanted you to know how I felt."

"Your privilege," Culver said. "Best to get these things aired. Now back to the matter at hand. Sit, both of you."

Kyoto and Grimsche sat down, not looking at each other.

"We are here in Washington for two reasons," Culver said. "First, the weapon will be used here. Second, here we can find the necessary material. But the actual weapon, and the men producing it, are hidden in Virginia. You, Grimsche, will be our courier. This equipment must reach Virginia; the scientists there will know what to do with it."

Kyoto glanced out the window. "I would suggest haste," he said apologetically. "The Nam may close the city."

"I don't think so," Culver said. "You shouldn't have any trouble getting through this time, Grimsche. You'll stay in Virginia until the scientists need more components. Then come back; we should have the rest of it by then."

"Yes sir," Grimsche said.

Culver found a slip of paper in his breast pocket and handed it to Grimsche. "This is the location. Memorize it."

Grimsche glanced at it, and handed the paper back to Culver. The colonel lighted it with his cigarette lighter, held it until the flame almost touched his fingertips, and dropped it on the floor.

"While you're in Virginia," Culver said, "learn how to operate the weapon. Kyoto and I are relatively immobile, therefore detectable. *You* will probably use the completed weapon. In any case, it must be used."

"Yes sir," Grimsche said. "It'll be used." Without looking at Kyoto he

said, "I never forget my enemies.

"I know," Culver said. "Now get moving."

GRIMSCHE saluted, picked up the suitcase and hurried out. As soon as he was gone, Kyoto stood up and faced the colonel angrily. "Colonel Culver, I demand an explanation!"

Culver leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes, smiling faintly. "Consider Grimsche objectively, Kyoto. As a human being he has his deficiencies. But isn't he a perfect machine of war?"

"But his attitude—"

"His attitude toward you, personally, is unfortunate. Otherwise it's commendable, for it certainly complements his function." Culver opened his eyes and sat up abruptly. "Kyoto, I pride myself on one thing. *I know men.* Grimsche is the perfect, the ideal man for the job."

The colonel began to clean the bowl of his clay pipe with a matchstick. "Have to be careful with this," he said. "Souvenir of Connaught. Hate to go all the way back for another."

Kyoto walked to the window. Washington was strangely quiet now. Wearily, he tried to think. How could Grimsche be the right man? Would implacable, stupid hatred free them? Very unscientific... But then, this was soldier's business, and they had their own ways. Perhaps Culver was right.

He didn't know, or care any longer. He only wished he were home, and at peace.



TO: ARA ILDEK
NAM IV
SOLONES CLUSTER
GALAXY X32-A
SUBJECT: CIVILIZING EXPEDITION TO SOL III
FROM: MORDESH KDAK
ORGANIZER
EXPEDITION 87C6
GREETINGS:

The first two steps of our campaign have been completed. All symbolic documents of government have been seized, and will be sent to the Museum of Deviations on Illik II. All mechanical means of waging war have been destroyed, except for the isolated units undetected as yet. The armies of Sol III are dissolved by order of the governments; and *we* are the governments.

Still, individual Earthmen attempt to kill us, and to put our mechanicals out of order. So far, no Nam lives have been lost; nor have we been forced to the ultimate expedient of killing any Earthmen.

Since these people are city-builders, we have centralized ourselves. Our culture, after it has taken firm hold in the large population centers, will diffuse outward, to the rural areas. As far as I can tell, there is no danger inherent in our centralization. As I said before, the Earthmen command no energies past atomic.

We are now in full swing, employing Morgish's *Subliminal Training Techniques for Savage Peoples, Humanoid Type*. The Earthmen are able to see only the outward, obvious aspects of this campaign; the books, pamphlets, films, broadcasts, etc. These direct techniques meet with resistance and are supposed to; because of them, the Earthmen won't examine too closely the important internal changes which are being wrought in them.

The Earthmen feel that our indoctrination will not succeed. This belief is based upon their own clumsy attempts to indoctrinate each other, over several thousand years of recorded history. What they fail to grasp is the Conformity principle: Truth is irresistible. Their very skepticism aids us.

It is always interesting to observe the effects of subliminal indoctrination; the slow growth of doubt, the examination of ancient, fixed ideas;

uncertainty, fits of reverie, etc.

Soon the nodal point will be reached. Then, these ideas which have been slowly budding—and a thousand more—will suddenly blossom forth. The Earthmen won't even recognize their new selves. They will be civilized!

I have just now received a puzzling report. My population-trend calculator has detected a disturbing semi-isolated potential in or near this key city of Washington. The calculator gives a seventy-three percent probability that the potential is caused by a single individual, and assigns him a value of *plus twenty-three!*

Plus twenty-three is impossible, of course. Even I, as Organizer, don't have that high a probability-effects value. I'm having the machine overhauled; but to play safe, I'm assigning Gragsch to make a search for this hypothetical individual, and, if he finds him, indoctrinate him directly.

I hope to have this planet civilized by the time my next message reaches you.

In Peace,
Mordek Kdak, Organizer

Grimsche had no trouble delivering the equipment to the hidden scientific group in Virginia. But then he was jobless; the quiet, dedicated specialists had nothing for him to do. During all their waking hours they worked on the weapon. Grimsche tried to help out, but only got in the way.

So he spent his time in the mountains, walking, hunting, waiting until he could be of use again.

Once he walked to the outskirts of a nearby town, and saw that the Nam had moved in. The sight filled him with wild, futile rage. Here was the enemy, and he could do nothing but wait. The townspeople seemed to be taking it calmly enough. As far as Grimsche could tell, from a distance, they seemed quite content.

It didn't disturb him. Civilians were weak; there were turncoats everywhere.

The scientists taught him on a model how the completed weapon would work. The controls were simple enough. He didn't care how complex it was inside, just as long as it worked.

In about a month the weapon was assembled, except for the germanium insets and the formula X524 components. Grimsche put on a quiet gray suit, took a .45 automatic, and left for Washington.

3



HE REACHED Washington just before sunset, and knew at once that the city had changed. But changed how? In what way? He couldn't tell.

Then he noticed the absence of noise. Washington had always been a loud, boisterous city; it was silent now. The few remaining cars drove slowly down the streets, almost hesitantly. People gathered in small groups on street corners, talking in hushed tones.

Grimsche slowed his pace to match the people around him. No one seemed in much of a rush to get anywhere, he thought. No one even seemed to be going to any particular place.

At that moment he noticed the man behind him.

He didn't know how long he had been followed. Sternly he kept his hand away from the .45, kept his pace slow. When he reached a cross-street, he turned.

The man turned with him.

Grimsche turned down three more blocks, the man still following. Then abruptly he entered a building and slid behind the big front door. The

man came inside and looked around, saw the door marked *Exit* in the back of the building, and hurried through it.

Grimsche went out the front door again. He cut through side streets, watching carefully, but wasn't followed again. Slightly out of wind, he entered the brownstone.



Kyoto was sprawled on the couch, asleep. Culver was sitting in an armchair, reading. The colonel was barefooted, dressed only in slacks and T-shirt. He looked extremely unmilitary.

"I was wondering when you'd get back," Culver said lazily, putting down his book. Kyoto awoke abruptly and sat up, blinking. "How's the weapon going?"

"Finished, except for the X524 stuff, and the germanium," Grimsche said.

Culver nodded. "They're working fast," he said to Kyoto. "Aren't they?"

"Very fast indeed," Kyoto said.

Outside the building, a loudspeaker blared:—"There are many human races in this galaxy. Remember that when you think of yourselves."

"What's that?" Grimsche asked.

"Oh, they're always broadcasting that stuff," Culver said. "About other races, and insularity, and cooperation. Quite a campaign."

"Why don't you cut the wires on that thing?" Grimsche asked.

"No use; they'd just fix it again."

"And now," the loudspeaker shouted, "we will bring you music from a planet named Ing. This music is based on a different tonal system than yours, an entirely different concept of music. But listen—it is no less beautiful for being different."

Music came over the loudspeaker.

"Pretty, isn't it?" Culver said.

"I'm tone-deaf," Grimsche said.

Colonel Culver found his clay pipe

and began to fill it. "So the weapon's almost done? Amazing speed."

"Amazing," Kyoto echoed.

Grimsche looked at them, puzzled. Something was different about them. He didn't care about Kyoto, but what happened to Colonel Culver?

There was a long silence, which didn't seem to bother Culver or Kyoto. Then Culver said, "Hungry, sergeant?"

"Yeah, I guess I am," Grimsche admitted. "Haven't eaten all day."

"Come on." Culver stood up and led Grimsche to the kitchen. "Got something here you'll like." He opened the refrigerator and took out a dish filled with a brownish-gray substance. "Go ahead, try it."

"What is it?"

"Something the Nam have been passing out. Comes from a planet called Mehvis. Damndest stuff you ever tasted."

"No thank you," Grimsche said. He found a loaf of bread in the refrigerator, lettuce and cold steak, and a bottle of beer. Culver hummed abstractedly as he ate.

"Sir," Grimsche said finally, "is there anything wrong?"

"Wrong?"

"I don't know," Grimsche said; there's something funny here. Has that Japanese been trying anything?"

"Kyoto? Lord, no! What put that idea in your head?"

"You don't seem the same any more," Grimsche said.

Culver thought about it for a few moments, puffing on his pipe. "You may be right, Grimsche; but the change is natural. We had always assumed that we were the only beings in creation. Now, all of a sudden we meet an extraterrestrial race. We find that there are hundreds of thousands of inhabited planets—well, it makes you think."

"It doesn't make me think," Grimsche said.

"It makes you wonder about a lot

of things," Culver went on. "Things like destiny, peace, war, life, meaning. A lot of things."

Silently they walked back into the living room.

The music on the loudspeaker stopped, and a voice said, "Remember, for the full explanation of the Nam truth doctrines, be sure to read textbook 23, the one titled *Empirical Techniques to Truth*."

Grimsche said, "have you got that formula X524 stuff for the weapon?"

Both Culver and Kyoto looked startled. Then Kyoto went to a closet and took out a small satchel. "Everything's here," he said.

"Do you have a plan of battle, sir?" Grimsche asked Culver, taking the satchel.

"Yes, certainly," Culver said, speaking very rapidly now. "You will bring these components to Virginia. When the weapon is fully assembled, you'll bring it back. It's portable, isn't it? Good. You've learned how to operate it? Good. The Nam are centralized in one building. Ridiculous, isn't it? And more of them are arriving every day. Sitting ducks; we'll go up there, aim the weapon, and blooey!"

The colonel stopped, his face flushed. He appeared bewildered. "What was I saying? Oh yes, of course. You have your orders, sergeant. By the way, did you know that the Nam have a one-hour cure for schizophrenia?"

"A wonderful process," Kyoto murmured. "But their approach to economic stability—"

"Free enterprise," Culver said, "but they solved the boom-bust cycle. You really should read some of their books, Grimsche. Amazing documents. Even after we've driven them off, we'll be indebted to them for some time."

Grimsche looked at the book Culver had been reading. It was titled *Empirical Techniques to Truth*. He opened it at random, and read, *'It has long been considered that truth is*

vague, relative, a matter of shadings from black (false) into white (truth). The unreality of this point of view can be perceived by taking...'

Grimsche closed the book with a snap. "Goodbye," he said, and left.

AFTER HE was gone, Culver turned to Kyoto. "Did you sense something strange about the sergeant?"

"Yes, now that you mention it," Kyoto said. "I don't know what it could be."

"I don't either."

They thought in silence for long minutes. Then Kyoto said, "I know. It was when he left. He didn't call you 'sir'."

"That's right," Culver said thoughtfully. "He didn't." Culver picked up his book again. The loudspeaker began to play Dellian drum-music.

Outside, it was twilight. Grimsche hesitated a moment, looking up and down the quiet, deserted street. He gripped the satchel firmly and started walking.

Something was going wrong already. He could sense it. Had Colonel Culver given up?

It didn't seem possible. He *knew* Colonel Culver. There had never been a better officer, and good officers didn't just change like that. Did they?

Grimsche tried to examine his own attitudes. He decided that there was nothing wrong in Culver learning things from the Nam. Perhaps they did have some wonderful things. That didn't alter the important fact; the Nam were invaders, enemies. You don't make friends with your enemies, they have to be destroyed. *Destroyed*, to the last man.

The Colonel would be all right, Grimsche decided, once he was away from the Japanese.

As he crossed the street, he noticed a man following him. Grimsche slipped the .45 into his hand, released the safe-

ties and cocked it. This was as good a place as any.



Gragash smiled to himself when he saw the Earthman stop, turn and face him. Excellent; that meant that the man wanted to talk. Gragash walked up to him slowly, so as not to startle him.

The Earthman was big, self-contained, gloomy. He stood perfectly erect, motionless. But there was something unnatural about his posture. It was as though the man were standing outside himself, saying, 'this is how I should stand.'

Gragash topped, ten feet from the Earthman. There was no sense in startling him; this man would have to be handled with great delicacy, great care. "Pardon me," Gragash said. "Could I have a word with you?"

"Sure," the Earthman said. Gragash could detect no involuntary tensing of muscles. Was this man really relaxed? Or was his self-control almost superhuman.

"I am a Nam," Gragash said directly.

The Earthman nodded.

"You seem to have a fixed, almost maniacal idea about us," Gragash went on. "I'd like to tell you a few facts." He hesitated. The Earthman's stony face was unreadable, as though his features were carved of stone. It was growing darker. Gragash considered turning on a defensive screen, but decided against it; he wanted this man to realize that he was a friend. Besides, he would have time, as soon as he detected the muscle-tension that forwarns an attack.

"You are unhappy," Gragash said, "and I can offer you a functional insight into that unhappiness. You—"

Gragash never saw the blow that hit him. He staggered back, trying to turn on his defensive screen, realizing how seriously he had underestimat-

ed his man. The Earthman's conscious control was miraculous, and insane. The action had been planned, but concealed. Schizophrenic personalities were able to...

The Earthman lunged forward, metal gleaming in his hand. "Wait!" Gragash screamed. But the blow fell, and Gragash stopped thinking.



TO: ARA ILDEK
NAM IV
SOLONES CLUSTER
GALAXY X32-A

SUBJECT: CIVILIZING EXPEDITION TO SOL III

FROM: MORDESH KDAK
ORGANIZER
EXPEDITION 87C6

GREETINGS:

The great day has come! The emergent point has been reached, and successfully passed! Another planet enters the fold of civilization!

Not every individual, of course. We weren't able to reach every isolated little group on the planet. But the huge population centers, the vast bulk of the planet is now civilized. The culture will diffuse outward, irrevocably. For this planet is now sane.

You can imagine the shock to the Earthmen when the nodal point was finally reached. There is no experience like it. For an analogue, I could only take the butterfly, breaking out of its chrysalis, or perhaps the birth-process itself. Up to that point, the Earthmen had been suspicious. Their early panic had given way to hatred. Then, slowly, a growing awareness. And finally—insight!

Since they can handle it sanely, we have given the Earthmen the rest of the necessary information.

1. That we, the Nam, intervened only because Earth was on the verge

of self-destruction. *Not* through self-interest.

2. That Earth is now entitled to join (or not join, although it isn't usual) the free planets of the Confederacy; to share equally in prosperity, trade and invention.

3. That the entire Nam expedition is leaving at once, as soon as we can assemble our equipment. Another planet, where a genecidal atomic war is underway, needs our attention.

The Earthmen will have no trouble reforming their governments; or government, I should say, since there is now no bar to their ancient dream of a world state. We are leaving them, as usual, spaceship prototypes, and anything else they might find useful.

In a separate report I have listed the reactions of the Earthmen. Summarizing them, I can say: As usual, they originally considered ours a punitive expedition, and were shocked at its real purpose. They felt that altruism is a difficult ideal, instead of a workable actuality. Also, during the indoctrination many of them felt that they were being 'hypnotized,' or 'brain-washed.' Nothing could be farther from the truth. Gambits were introduced solely for the purpose of allowing them to evaluate on all levels the truth we brought them.

There is tragedy in this victory, too. Gragash has been killed by the Earthman he was to indoctrinate; the Earthman has vanished from sight again.

His probability-effects value has gone up to *plus twenty-five*. Therefore he must be in possession of a weapon utilizing trans-atomic power.

I must admit that I am filled with panic. Gragash was our only competent tracker. Influencing population trends isn't difficult; but picking one man out of a population of millions—nearly impossible. We do have one advantage, though. We have a workable construct of him, assembled from his personality as expressed through action. I have broadcast this construct

to the war-mechanicals. If they find him, they are to request him to surrender, once; if he doesn't, they are empowered to kill him.

This step is, perhaps, a measure of my own inadequacy; but I must guard my expedition.

What bothers me, is, *why* is he doing it? He must know our motives by now. Why does he persist?

We are assembling in Washington now, preparing our departure.

In Peace,
Mordek Kdak, Organizer

4



GRIMSCHE had to wait another week before the technicians had the weapon assembled, and were certain that it would work. Then they built it into Grimsche's suitcase, with the firing controls on the outside, near the handle. Grimsche left as soon as it was completed. He drove to the outskirts of Washington; then, noticing that there were very few cars around, he proceeded on foot, toward Culver's brownstone.

A man walked up to him. "Happy day, friend."

"Sure," Grimsche said cautiously, his fingers near the firing control.

"Here," the man said, handing him a sheaf of bills. "Take them."

Grimsche hesitated, then took the bills. "Why?" he asked.

"Doublefold," the man said. "First of all, I can't use all I have. Over-compensation. Second, you look like you need something. I don't know if this is it, but here's hoping it makes you happy."

The man walked quickly away from Grimsche, whistling. Grimsche looked at the pile of bills, then stuffed them

in his pocket. He decided that the man must have been crazy.

But the whole city seemed strange. Grimsche tried to analyze it. The buildings were the same, the streets, the stores. The people were—different.

How? Suddenly Grimsche knew. They were happy, every damned one. He had never seen so many happy people in his life. It made him slightly ill.

On a street corner a group of men were talking. Grimsche heard one man say, "...just as though I was turned inside out. Brother, I really *saw* myself. Not very pretty."

"We're not perfect yet," another man said.

"No, thank God," the first man put in quickly. "Perfection is a ridiculous ideal. The thing is—now we are at least capable of function, without tripping each other up out of sheer ignorant perversity."

Grimsche walked on, thinking that he was probably the only sane man in the city. Civilians, he thought contemptuously. Licking the hand of their conquerors.

But walking made him nervous, for he realized that he was the only person around with a set, grim face. He couldn't disguise that. He hailed a passing cab.

The driver looked him over, then shook his head slowly. "Climb out, friend."

"Why?"

"There's something wrong with you. I don't know just what, but five minutes with you and my day'll be ruined."

"You can't put me out like that," Grimsche said angrily; "I'll report you to the company."

"Go ahead. If they fire me, I'll take up gold-mining. But I don't even think the boss'll talk to you."

Grimsche's first urge was to push the driver's face in. But he couldn't take the chance. To hell with the mad-

man, he decided, and climbed out.

The walk to the brownstone was a nightmare for Grimsche. He didn't know these people any more. They weren't Earthmen; they weren't normal. He quickened his pace, holding the suitcase tightly. Twice he saw the great Nam war-mechanicals walking the street, but he cut out of their way each time.

COLONEL Culver and Kyoto were in the kitchen of the brownstone, drinking beer.

"Hello, brother," Kyoto called gaily as he walked in. "Have a beer."

Grimsche ignored him and looked at Culver. The Colonel waved him to a chair.

"The weapon's ready," Grimsche said. "Let's start."

"Sit down," Culver said. "The plans are changed."

Grimsche sat down, putting the suitcase between his knees. He slid his hands into his pockets, gripping the butt of the .45.

"This is going to be hard to explain, if you don't feel it," Culver said.

"I'm listening."

"We've been very wrong about the Nam," Kyoto said, anxious to help. "They came here only to help us; you can understand that, can't you, sergeant?"

"Go on," Grimsche said.

"You're not listening," Culver said.

"Sure I am."

"All right. Look at it this way," Culver said, taking out his clay pipe and placing it on the kitchen table. "We on Earth have been fighting, killing, murdering, cheating, lying since the dawn of time. But not because we wanted to! That's been our constant tragedy. Few of us are evil. We want to do good. We reach for the truth, but it always turns out to be illusion."

"That is over now," Kyoto broke in eagerly. "The truth is really very simple, very constant. Once you see it, there's no more confusion."

"Right. You're all saints," Grimsche said; "I can see that."

"No!" Culver shouted suddenly. "We're men, with all the problems of men. But we are now sufficiently enlightened to work rationally on those problems. And we have a peaceful, cooperative galaxy to help us. And, in time, to receive our help."

"So?"

"So naturally the attack is off. I'm going to destroy that weapon now." Culver reached for the suitcase, but Grimsche had the .45 out.

"The attack isn't off," Grimsche said.

"You don't understand—" Kyoto began. Then he saw Grimsche's face and retreated to the far corner of the kitchen.

"I understand enough," Grimsche said. "They came here without our asking them. They defeated us. *They invaded us.* This war isn't over yet, not for me. Not until I've had my inning."

"Grimsche, Grimsche," Culver said sadly. "You're insane. Don't you understand what I'm saying? There never was any war! What you're considering is murder."

"I don't forget my enemies," Grimsche said, standing up and lifting the suitcase.

Culver was silent for a few moments. Then he said, "It's my fault, Grimsche. I picked you—and I picked too well. You're my own personal monster, my golem; I feel like Frankenstein. And now you're turning on your creator." He stepped forward. "Give me the suitcase; that's an order."

Grimsche shot him in the chest. The colonel was knocked back by the force of the .45. He stumbled against the kitchen table, and his clay pipe fell to the floor, shattered. Culver dropped to his knees and began to grope for the fragments. Grimsche shot him again.

"And now you," Grimsche said to

Kyoto, standing in the corner. He shot him through the head. "That settles that score." He shoved the .45 back in his pocket, and, holding the suitcase carefully, hurried out the door. As he ran, he felt an enormous exhilaration grip him. The dice were thrown! The moment of action had come at last, when he, he alone, would avenge Earth.

Waiting for him in the street were two Nam robots. A small crowd of people had gathered.

"Better give yourself up," a man advised.

"You're sick."

"You're insane."

The robots moved forward. Grimsche aimed the suitcase, adjusted quickly for range, and fired. The robots, the crowd, and a nearby building vanished.

Grimsche began to trot toward the building that housed the Nam. He hoped he wouldn't be picked off before he got there. It wouldn't be fair, he thought. But everyone was a traitor now, perhaps everyone on Earth. He was the last loyal soldier. What in hell did it matter if the Nam brought gifts? They had landed on the soil of Earth. Reason enough to kill them.

They'd get him, sooner or later, even with the marvelous weapon. But he'd get them first!

He cut down a mob of traitors, blocking his way to the Nam building.

●
TO: ARA ILDEK
NAM IV
SOLONES CLUSTER
GALAXY X32-A

SUBJECT: CIVILIZING EXPEDITION TO SOL III

FROM: MORDESH KDAK
ORGANIZER
EXPEDITION 87C6

GREETINGS:

This will be my last message from Sol III, as we are about to leave. My force is centralized here, awaiting the ships. It has been a tiring mission, but a satisfactory one.

It is a thrill, to land on a planet full of howling savages, and leave peace and cooperation behind. This planet is now ready to take its rightful place in galactic affairs. Soon, perhaps, they will send out expeditions like this one, and aid us in the great work of civilization.

A report has just come in. The Earthman has been detected in the city. He has killed a number of his own people, and destroyed two Nam war-mechanicals. According to the report, he is moving toward our building. I have given orders to have him killed at once. Too many lives have been lost because of him.

It's strange—but this is the archetype of the Earthman who has always delayed his people's progress. He is dedicated, incorruptible. More intelligent men find him useful—to their

sorrow, because intelligent men often change their minds; this kind of man is unchangeable, implacable. And this is the height of insanity; to so close your mind that nothing outside can be perceived.

Minutes have passed. The Earthman still is not dead. We are not used to killing; our minds shrink from the necessity. And this man is cunning, feral. Perhaps we are too civilized.

Ara, it seems to me that this planet has been bathed in blood so long... perhaps it will require ours to purge it. This is a ridiculous fancy. Please strike it from the report.

Another report. The Earthman has been seen outside our building. Be sure to tell the Council not to judge the planet by the man. Earth is ready; she is civilized. Only unforeseen factors have produced this.

They are converging on him now. They have shot him! But I fear it is too late. Even dying, he is aiming the weapon—

