

Expansion of Mankind Chapter Four

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Transition to civilian rule

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The Council sat there for a few moments, stunned by Troyal's announcement that they may be at war. But then he continued, "I'm sorry if I have led you to a hasty conclusion that war is imminent, I don't think it is or even if it means war. Who knows how far this ship has traveled or how long ago it left its starting point. When I said soon I meant within some hundreds of years, not next week. Who knows how long it will take for their message to get to their home. The possibility exists that the society that sent it may be extinct by now, but, of course, you cannot rely on that." Nevertheless, an audible sigh of relief could be heard as everyone relaxed a bit in their chairs, then Captain Minetta stood, "We still have their mother ship and their presence on the rocky planet. Dr. Keith, now that we know how they communicate is their some way to talk to them, I mean it?" "I don't see how, Captain, we don't know how it does it, we haven't detected anything on any band wave we have, and believe me, we've looked." "Ah," Troyal said, " We Rovers have just found it ourselves. It's not on any spectrum that you humans use and one that we were aware of but don't use either. I will be glad to allow you the use of some equipment to use if you wish." "That's very kind of you, Troyal, and possibly some assistance with trying to translate?" asked Dr. Keith. "Certainly Doctor, I don't think you'd be able to use it otherwise. I'll have it available in a few hours." Kari leaned to Sam and putting a hand on his arm questioned, "How does he do that? It took us more than a day to travel to Nirvana but he gets something from there in hours." "I tried to find out how he waved goodbye to us when we left and then greeted us when we arrived there but our Rover friend has a way of politely avoiding an answer. Your guess is as good as mine." After deciding to wait for the equipment from Troyal and deciding a few other details the Council convened. As Sam and Kari were leaving the chamber Troyal caught up with them, "Kari, is your mother close by? I would very much like to meet her. Would you introduce us, please?" "Certainly, Troyal. I think she's probably outside being mobbed by her fans and loving it. Don't let that demure facade she has sometimes fool you, she can be a holy terror." Troyal gave a broad smile, "I saw how she handled that heckler. I shall have my guard up." They walked outside to find Ida among a group of people who were listening intently to what she had to say. Her diminutive figure was almost hidden by some burly men with rapt expressions as they paid close attention to her. As she saw them approaching she left the group and walked to them and looked up at Troyal. "Mom, I'd like to introduce you to our friend Troyal. Troyal, this is my mother, Ida Benton." "I

am so happy to meet you, Mrs. Benton and would like to talk to you if you have a moment." "Please call me Ida, Troyal. I'm sure we're going to be great friends and I'm already on a first name basis with you, I believe." "Thank you, Ida. If you have time would you care to join me in some refreshments while we talk?" "I'd be delighted, Troyal. Kari, I know you have some shopping to do and another meeting so I'll see you later." She and Troyal sauntered away, chatting like old friends. "I do have a meeting with some colonist's reps and some shopping so I'll see you later, Sam." and they went their separate ways. Some hours later, after Kari was finished with her obligations she called Sam, "Have you seen my mother? I've looked all over and can't find her or Troyal either. No one has seen them for hours." "No, I haven't, but don't worry, if she's with Troyal I'm sure she's safe." "Yes, but is he? You don't know what she's capable of. I have things I have to get home and I don't want to leave the town defenseless with her running loose." "Calm down, Kari. You go home, I'll find her and make sure she gets home safe, don't worry." "Alright, Sam, I guess I don't have a choice." It was after midnight when Sam called to tell Kari that her mother was safe and was being driven home by a couple of Marines. Kari sat at the kitchen table finishing the pot of coffee she'd been sipping all evening while waiting. The longer she sat the more angered she became. When Ida walked in Kari screamed, "Where have you been, mother? I've been imagining all kinds of things." "I'm a big girl, Kari, Troyal and I just went to Nirvana for a while." "Well, you just can't go gallivanting around and not let anyone.....wait a minute. You went where?" "We went to Nirvana, and you're right, its an absolutely beautiful city. I met some very nice folks and we had a nice long talk. It was very instructive too." "But how... when.. uh... why?" "You're starting to sound like a flock of chickens, clucking away. Why aren't you in bed where you belong, young lady. Now shoo, go to bed, I'm tired and want to get some sleep too." "Alright, but this isn't over. I'll want some answers tomorrow." Ida looked up through lowered lashes and a sweet smile, "Why, of course, Kari, have I ever kept secrets from you?" Although exhausted Kari tossed and turned, thinking about what she wanted to ask her mother, before finally falling into a fitful sleep. She awoke in the morning to the sounds of laughter in the kitchen. Her sons, Matt and John, were giggling and chuckling at something their grandmother was relating. She poured herself a large cup of coffee and sat at the table. The boys were done eating and rose, kissed the two ladies on their cheeks and left to work. "Alright, mom, it's time for you to do some explaining about yesterday." Ida rose and carried her dishes to the washer, "I'm sorry, honey, I don't have time now, I'm meeting someone on my property in just a few minutes. You should have gotten up earlier." "Mom! You're the reason I overslept. What do you mean you're meeting someone? When did all this happen?" "Yesterday, while I was on Nirvana. Some of Troyal's friends are going to help me plan my house, except, of course, they're my friends now too. I think you met one, a lovely lady by the name of Trivel. I have to run now, I'll be back later, but don't wait up." "Mom, wait, I...." But Ida was gone. Kari lowered her head onto her folded arms on the table. A low growl could be heard from her. The Council was reconvened early that afternoon. Captain Minetta, Dr Keith, and Col. Ross had returned to the ship to make sure they were as ready as possible just in case they did receive visitors, but holograms of them filled their chairs in the meeting room. The illusion was perfect unless you noticed that they hovered a bit above the seats. Capt. Minetta said, "We were interrupted in our last

meeting when we were discussing turning over the governance of the colony to civilian control. In light of the reason for that interruption how does the Council feel on that proposal. Col. Ross turned from someone invisible that he had been listening to and answered, "I think we can and must, Sir. There is too much for the Marines to handle with guarding and police work. I'm sure the colonists can take over the police duties, while we continue with the duties we are trained for. Sgt. Buckles, you have been responsible for the day to day police duties, what do you think?" "I think it's past time for the transition. I have had to deputize civilians already for just the simple patrols that we don't have the manpower for. That has put a strain on the budget that was allotted for police work. If the vast majority of these colonists weren't good law abiding people we would have been overcome already." Major Anders asked, "Sir, why does it have to be all or nothing? Kari and I have been discussing this. And have a suggestion. Why not gradually change over? She has been polling the colonists on taxes and most have studied the figure you provided and while no one likes taxes they realize that now that we have a thriving economy we need some to keep it going. It's going to take a while for Sgt. Buckles and myself to train a police force and for your accountants to set up a taxing body, in fact they could be released from their duties from you and become the taxing body for now." Kari spoke up, "We have among the colonists people who were civilian administrators on Earth. I have approached them and some would like to put their skills to use, part time for now, and after elections, maybe full time if they were chosen." Capt. Minetta thought for a moment, "You're asking for someone to take on a lot of work and responsibility to run a transition team, where are we going to find that someone?" From out of the crowd of onlookers came a firm voice, "I wouldn't mind taking a crack at it." "Who said that," The Captain looked around, but because he was a hologram couldn't see outside of his field of vision, but soon this little gray haired lady walked into his sight. "I did Captain, Ida Benton is my name. I have plenty of time and I'm sure I could handle it, ask anyone." "You realize, Mrs. Benton, that this job may not pay much, if anything. There's been no decision on that yet." "Oh shucks, I have my land that my grandsons are taking care of, I have some friends who are building my house, how much does an old lady need? By the way, your momma didn't name you Captain, did she? I've never heard your given name." "Uh, it's Roger, Mrs. Benton." "Well, Roger, you just call me Ida. I'm sure we'll get along just fine. Now, is that a yes on the Council's part? If it is I'll get started right away." "Uh, I think Mrs. Bent....uh, Ida, that we should have a vote by all the colonists." "That's fine, Roger, I'll wait." "It will take at least a few hours, madam, for the vote to be tallied. We will notify you as soon as possible." During this Kari tried to sink deeper into her chair, hoping to become invisible. Fortunately for her the Council was convened, waiting for the vote to be counted. Because of the Budeez system and Ida's notoriety over the treatment of criminals it didn't take very long for the vote to return and put her in charge of the transition team. It also gave her a prominent seat on the Council. As they were driving home Ida turned to Kari, "Isn't that nice, Honey, mother and daughter both on the Council together. Stop rolling your eyes like that, Kari, what if they get stuck like that." "Mom, don't you know how you appear? Don't you know that people think you're an old busybody sticking your nose in? I love you, but you're an embarrassment to me." After a few seconds of Ida looking intently at Kari she quietly said, "As soon as we get home I'm going to make a nice pot of tea and we'll talk, Honey." After Ida

had set out the tea things and a plate of her cookies she had Kari sit across from her and poured the tea. “Kari, I know that you love me and are worried that people will think I'm a crazy old lady, is that right?” “Well.... yea, mom. I don't want to see you get hurt when all those people turn on you.” “Let me ask you some things. Do you think your dad was a successful businessman?” “Sure he was. He built that business from the ground up, and was very successful.” “And he looked the part too, didn't he?” “Absolutely, that was a big part of his success I think. He looked successful with his good looks and great personality. People just trusted him.” “I loved your father with all my heart, and still do, but as far as having any business sense he was a complete dunce. I was the one that made the decisions and he was the one that carried them out. No one would have taken me serious in those times and place, but he had everything to be the front man. We were a great partnership.” Kari sat there, stunned, for quite some time, then said, “That would explain some things I wondered about, like why he always said he had to sleep on it before giving an answer to anything.” “That's right, we always talked it over that night and I told him what to do or say, he realized I was the one with the business savvy and it didn't bother him. I did my part and he did his.” “Mom, I always wondered but didn't want to bring it up. Why did you get so flighty after dad died, that wasn't like you? I thought his death had....unhinged you a little.” Ida chuckled, “That was strategy too, I knew that I couldn't continue without him so I acted the birdbrain while the sharpies tried to steal the business. They were sure they could cheat me, but I put so many innocent sounding paragraphs in the contract when I sold that we came out very well. I'm sure they still don't know all of them, but they'll be contributing to charities for years.” “Okay, I can see that, but why do you keep up that facade here?” “First, I don't. It's not the same, I don't act like a dimwit, just eccentric. This is a different society than on Earth. These people are almost all entrepreneurs at heart and to stand out you have to let your light shine a little brighter than most. You have it too, or you wouldn't have ended up on the Council. Haven't you gone against the wind when you felt it was right instead of going with the flow?” “Yea, I guess I have. I've made some good friends and some bad enemies when I did too.” “That's my daughter, now come here and give your batty old mother a hug. Then we have to figure out how to cook this meat from some creature that Matt killed. I don't know where he gets it all from but so far it's been delicious.” In the morning Ida had John drive her to town and drop her at the town hall. As she was entering she saw some boys playing. “Would you boys like to make some money? “Sure, doing what?” I'm going to need some messengers and someone to run errands. I'll pay you a credit an hour, but you have to stay where I can call you.” “A whole credit, just for doing errands? You bet.” “Alright, you, yes you, find Sgt Buckles and ask him if he has time to come and see me, and you come with me and bring that box with you.” They entered the town hall and walked down the hall until Ida saw a good sized office that looked untenanted. It had a desk with two chairs in front of it, a file cabinet and a small side table. From the box she took a potted plant that she put on the window ledge. A picture of her late husband and another picture of Kari and her boys she placed on the desk and sat in the comfortable chair behind it. She put some office supplies in the drawer and put her Budeez on the desk, called up the keyboard and started entering notes. Just then a man appeared in the doorway with a large box in his arms. He looked puzzled and said. “I thought this was the office I was to use, but I see you're already in it.” “Yes, there

must have been a mistake, but there are other vacant offices down the hall, why don't you try one of them. Who are you?" "Oh, sorry, I'm Frank Olsen. I'm the chief accountant and just came down from the ship." "Good to meet you, I'm Ida Benton, the head of the transition team and I'd like to talk to you later. I'm sure one of my runners will be able to find you." "Er, sure, at your service Mrs. Benton, any time. Uh, I'd better find my office, nice meeting you." Calling the boy over she asked, "What's your name, boy?" "I'm Tom, boss, the other boy is Jeff." "Okay, Tom, plug in that coffee maker and get some water." The coffee had been made and Ida was having the first cup when Kurt rushed in, "What's the matter, Ida, I came as fast as I could, but I couldn't find you. I didn't know you had an office." "Nobody else did either, but there was no rush, why did you hurry?" "That boy you sent made it sound like an emergency, he was yelling that I had to get here right now." "No, no emergency, I just want to go over some things with you. Have you started training the police yet?" "Ida, it's only been one day, give me a chance. I have put out a call for applicants and a few have shown up already. I'll have a training team set up by tonight, but it'll be a week before any training starts." That's too long, Kurt. As soon as you have enough qualified people for a class I want it started. I'd like some men training as soon as possible and start a women's class too. I'm sure Cpl. Sanchez would like to do that." "Where's the funds going to come from? I'm already over budget." "You let me worry about that, that's what I'm here for. I'm going to need a vehicle, Kurt, and I see a whole bunch of those small antigravs in your parking area." Handing him a sheet of paper she said, "Here's a requisition for one of the covered ones, I'm going to need it to cover the territory." "Uh, Ida, do you know how to drive one? It's not like a jeep, you know. And I don't remember seeing a requisition form like this before either." "Well of course you haven't, I just printed it. It's to cover your butt. If anyone asks why you gave me one, just show them that. Of course you'll send a driver with the antigrav for a few days until I learn how to drive it." "Aren't you rushing things a bit? You can get in a world of trouble." "If I didn't, it would take weeks to get permission. I've found it's easier to say you're sorry later than to wait for permission. By the time they get all upset I'll have things going that they won't be able to stop and they'll claim it was their idea. I've done this before." "Okay, Ida, I'll go along for now. I hope you know what you're doing." As soon as Kurt left she called Tom, "Do you know where that man that was here with the box went?" "Yes, boss, he went into a door down the hall." "Well, go down there and ask him to step up here, but ask him nice, don't make it sound like there's a fire in here." A few minutes later the man looked in the door, "You wanted to see me Mrs. Benton?" "Yes, Frank, but call me Ida, we'll be working together quite a bit. Pour yourself some coffee and have a seat." "Why thank you, I think I will." After seating himself he asked, "What can I do for you, Ida?" "Do you have that report on your discretionary funds ready for me yet? I'm going to need it soon." "Uh, report? I didn't know I was supposed to have one for you." "You mean someone screwed up there too? Of course I need it. You were sent down to assist in the transition weren't you?" "Well yes, but nobody mentioned about you having access to those funds." "Frank, I'm in charge of the transition, who else would have access. They wouldn't do any good just sitting locked up somewhere. As soon as you finish your coffee take one of my runners with you and have him bring it to me. I'll make up an adisbursementschedule, I want you to start the tax tables, we're going to have to start that soon. If you don't have enough help get

some from the town office. Tell them I said so. Is that clear?" He put his unfinished cup of coffee on the table and rose, "Uh, I think so, If I have any questions I'll call you on my Budeez. Thanks for the coffee." "Any time you want some call for one of my runners, He'll bring it. Jeff...Jeff.. where is that boy? Oh, there you are. Go find the head clerk in the hall and ask him to come see me, but don't scare him, say please." By the end of the day she had the town hall humming. The head clerk had his staff making up the tax rolls, the accountants figuring out how much was going to be needed, the two runners winded but with boyish crushes on their benevolent boss and a happy smile on Ida's face. She was in her element. The next morning at breakfast Kari asked, "Mom, are you sure you know what you're doing? Kurt called me last night and told me what you've been up to. The Council never said you could do all that." "Ah, but did you ever hear them say I couldn't? What do you think they expected from me?" "I think we expected that you would present us with a plan at the next meeting and we would decide what to go forward with." "And how long before anything was decided on and allowed to proceed, two weeks, a month, two months by the time they quit arguing? I'll have most of it done or well on the way by the next meeting. Do you think they will call a halt to what's already underway?" "Well, I hope you have your ducks in a row, the full Council meets next weekend. They'll want to know what's going on. Do you need one of the boys to take you to town today?" "No, Kari, my ride should be here any moment." Just a few seconds later a small, four seat antigrav set down outside. It was not a military model but was fully enclosed with cushioned seats, obviously meant for more prestigious people. Ida got in and spent a few minutes talking to the operator, then very slowly, with her at the controls, took off. The next period of days saw Ida rising early and taking her antigrav to town. The evenings saw her arriving home quite late, sometimes with a self satisfied smirk on her face, other time with a fearsome scowl. The full Town Council met early on a Friday evening. It consisted not of only the directors but the sub councils, consisting of the farmers, retailers, factories, and guilds. Captain Minetta stood and led off, "I would like to start with a report on our endeavors to communicate with the alien presence in the system. Dr Keith, will you tell us what has been going on?" Dr. Keith stood and glanced around the room. He was a tall man, middle aged, and looked the part of a person that spent most of his time at a desk. He was slightly stoop shouldered, and although slim, had a rather large belly under his belt. He cleared his throat, and in his usual pedantic manner, said, "We have made progress in communicating with the alien artificial intelligence with the use of the equipment provided by the Rovers. We've been able to stop their activities on the planet Rock by putting laser fire in front of their vehicles. Our communication has been limited with their ship, however we expect to be able to do much better soon as the computers learn their language." From the room a voice questioned, "Do you think they're aggressive, Doctor?" "We have been working on the hypothesis that they are until they meet opposition, then they try a different tack. That has been our experience so far. We have learned that they have sent word back to their home about their experiences here, but so far have no knowledge of how far that is. Our biggest obstacle is trying to find what they use to measure time. Until we do we'll have no idea how far that is." "Thank you, Doctor. As you can see, we have been very busy trying to find out about the aliens. I'm afraid we haven't been paying much attention on what's been happening down here. Let's see, oh, yes, Ida, I'm

sure you have a proposal for the Council, don't you?" Ida rose with a handful of memory chips which she dealt out to the members. "You'll find all the reports with figures in full for you to go over at your leisure but I'd like a few summary reports given now so we can proceed. First I'd like for Sgt. Buckles to give a report on police activity. Sergeant?" Kurt stood with a notebook, "The first class of police trainees have finished and are now doing the town patrols. Fortunately we had a lot of applicants that were police officers on Earth and that hastened the first class quite a bit. The women's first class is almost finished and that will allow most of the Marines that have been doing police duty to return to their normal duties. We have qualified applicants for detective and forensics positions and just have to have them go through familiarization classes and that will be covered too. That's all I have so far, but I expect I'll have much more by the next meeting. " "Thank you, Kurt, You will also find in the report that I have some judges that volunteered on a part time basis to relieve Major Anders of his duties in the court room. You'll also find a list of judges that served all the way up to superior court and the court of appeals that just need appointments to take over those duties when needed." "That's very commendable, Ida. I see that we picked the right person to handle the transition, but tell me, where are you getting the funds for all this?" "I'm glad you asked that, you'll find a complete financial report on the chip I gave you all but for now I think your head accountant can give you a summary. Mr. Olsen, if you please." "First, I would like to say how pleased I am to have worked with Ida, er, Mrs. Benton. The preliminary budget that we had estimated for the transition was far in excess of what she has been able to accomplish with much less. Some of her cost savings methods I had never seen used before but were very efficient." "Well, that's fine, but where did the money come from, Mr Olsen?" "Why, from the funds you sent with me when I was posted here." "I thought you understood that was an emergency fund." "Of course, Sir, and when Mrs. Benton impressed on me how dire things were and needed to be fixed quickly I examined her figures and saw an emergency. Those funds were at my discretion, Sir, and I used them wisely. I think you'll find after going over the figures that Mrs. Benton has saved the community vast resources that would have been, I don't want to say wasted, but overspent." "Yes, well, um, alright, we will examine those thoroughly, I'm sure. Is there anything else you'd like to bring up, Ida?" "Just that in the report you'll find the voting rolls we've assembled, also the tax rolls so that we know who's taxable and a suggested amount, which is lower than had been projected. We have also put in a synopsis of the type of government that the majority would like based on their responses to a poll I put on the Budeez." "Oh? What type do they want?" "Most would like elected officials to run the day to day operations, but these would be term limited positions. Any larger issues, such as taxes, would be voted on by all qualified voters." "You say qualified, what does that mean? Aren't all registered voters qualified?" "I confess I made a suggestion and it seems to have caught on. To be qualified to vote on an issue one must pass a test to make sure the voter knows the ramifications of their vote." "That's interesting, but wouldn't that disqualify many?" "I don't see why, they can easily find out about the issue on the Budeez. If they're so disinterested on the issue that they can't do that why would they be voting on it anyway?" "I see your point. Is there anything else?" "Just one thing, You'll find pictures and maps of the town and outlying areas. Building has been pretty haphazard so far, some business establishments are in residential

area and vice versa. I have talked to city planners and have suggested zoning laid out on the maps. I think this is one of the first things to be considered by the officials when they're voted in before the town looks like a ragtag place." "You certainly have been a busy lady. We sure picked the right person to handle it. Well done, Ida." After the meeting was adjourned, Ida, Sam, Kari and Kurt were walking together from the hall. Ida said, "I told you they would take credit. I guess they forgot that I was the only one that would do it." Sam said, "Well, you did do a hell of a job, Ida. I'm just glad you had all your ducks in a row when it came time for the push and shove."