

## They Give Us Love

"It's a bit warm to be working, isn't it, Mrs. Rhoades?"

The elderly woman, who had spent the early afternoon hours planting flowers in the front of her suburban home turned and smiled.

"Hello, Stephanie. Oh, there's always work to be done – heat or no heat. It's a beautiful sunny day so I figured I might as well tend to my outdoor duties. I'm finished now, though." She rose from the ground and motioned to the front porch. "Why don't we sit in the shade for a while?"

Mrs. Rhoades wiped the sweat from her forehead and let out a sigh of satisfaction as the two women seated themselves on lawn chairs. She was pleased to have company.

"Would you like something to drink?" she asked her younger neighbor.

"I'm fine, really. The kids won't be home from school for another hour yet, and I saw you working outside so I thought I'd visit."

"Come over anytime! Anytime, at all!"

"You really shouldn't be working in this heat, though, Mrs. Rhoades . . ."

"You have to go on living, dear. Besides, it's good for me to keep myself busy now that Charlie has passed away. It takes my mind off things . . ." Stephanie remained respectfully silent. "But, I'm telling you there's always something that has to be done – so much work. What am I going to do?" Mrs. Rhoades took a deep breath, smiled, and made herself comfortable in her chair. "So what have you been up to, dear?"

"I was just watching the news and . . . " Stephanie hesitated momentarily and then despondently continued, "They took another ten thousand with them . . ."

Mrs. Rhoades nodded before saying, "They said they can increase their load now. But if they got the room and the people are willing to go, who are we to stop them?"

"I don't like it!" Stephanie scowled. "I still think the Thorians are taking advantage of us."

Mrs. Rhoades shook her head in disappointment at her younger neighbor.

"I still don't know what all the fuss is about, dear. The people are EAGER to go. And the Thorians are making their lives livable."

"I know. But there's just something about it that bothers me. Those fifty-foot, pink-skinned giants with three legs and one arm . . . an arm that swings around their entire body. They use antennas to communicate with each other and . . . They're just so darn ugly! Why would people CHOOSE to go to a world with such creatures? I just don't understand it."

"Perhaps, it's because you aren't starving to death, Stephanie. They may be giants and they may be ugly but they are taking the poorest people in the world and giving them a home . . . " "I know but . . . "

"People are starving all over Africa and Asia – and even most of Europe now. The famine is terrible! You saw on the news what those people look like – they're like skeletons covered in a thin layer of skin. It reminds me of the Holocaust! They're dying each day by the thousands. They have no hope for survival. It's tragic, dear, tragic."

"I don't want to see ANYBODY suffer," Stephanie replied. "I just wish there could be another way."

"The Thorians are willing to take them to their world and give them good food, clean water, and shelter. They clothe them and give them fine medical care. Thorian families adopt our people and treat them as one of their own. You've seen the news reports. Our people are happy there and they're treated very well. They love the Thorians and the Thorians are really taking excellent care of them. Their own laws forbid them to abuse us. And they're willing to take more! Just think how that's helping our world's overpopulation problem. Without those aliens, millions of people would be dying horrible deaths. I TRUST them not to harm us. You've heard they have I.Q.'s over 2000! Those pink-skinned giants know what they're doing."

"But what about the freedom our people are giving up? Don't they want to live their own life?"

"What freedom? They're dying of starvation – of disease. They have no clothing or shelter. They love their adopted families and the Thorians love them. I can't think of a better arrangement."

There was a scratching sound at the screen door. "That's Ginger," Mrs. Rhoades declared with a grin. "Stephanie, could you please leave her out."

Stephanie opened the screen door and a small, black French Poodle scurried across the porch and onto Mrs. Rhoades' lap. The tiny dog was

a puppy the elderly lady had purchased a week earlier from an animal shelter.

"Ginger, now behave!" she heartily laughed as the dog excitedly licked her face. "Stop it! Behave yourself, we have a guest!"

"She sure does love you," Stephanie remarked with a smile.

"Oh, she's my baby, now! Isn't she, Ginger?" The dog continued to lick her, jumping energetically all over her lap.

"Whatever happened to your cat, Mrs. Rhoades?"

"Oh, I got rid of that lazy good-for-nothing creature. All the stupid thing ever did was lie there. I never liked cats. I don't know why my son ever gave me him."

"You like Ginger a lot better, huh?"

"Oh, yes. Look how affectionate she is to me. She loves her mommy, doesn't she?" She rubbed noses with the dog. "Dogs are such wonderful animals. I've always loved them. In the entire world, there's no animal that loves or appreciates their master more than a dog."

Stephanie's smile quickly dissipated. She gazed up into the blue summer sky, directed her thoughts to that planet far, far away, and muttered to herself, "I wonder . . ."