

The Candle Maker

Frederik Pohl

The Candle Lighter

THE TRUSTEESHIP DIRECTOR fished out a pack of cigarettes and offered them to Jaffa Doane. "I heard your speech last night," he said. "Cigarette?"

"I don't smoke," said Jaffa Doane.

"It was a good speech." The Director lit his cigarette thoughtfully, flicked the match away. Doane waited with patience in his eyes an expression that seemed very much out of place on the face of Jaffa Doane. But Doane had practiced patience before the Director's "invitation" had reached him that morning. He knew it was coming; you can't tell blunt truths on a world hookup and not expect to make a stir.

The Director said, "I've checked your record, Doane.

It's a good one. You have consistently fought for a lot of things that I happen to believe in myself. Naturally, I think you're off base this time, but I was with you on the Kaffirs; I was with you on the Ainus; I'll be with you again. I'm sure. In fact, if you look it up in the books of your Equality League, you'll find that I sent in my two dollars dues long ago." He peered at Doane under his eyebrows and chuckled. "Don't look so surprised."

"I can't help it," Doane said severely. "After what your administration has done to the Martians"

"The Martians! Why, those Never mind." He clamped the words down in his throat. "Just what," he demanded, "have we done to them?"

Doane leaned forward. "Turned them into savages! Exploited them, degraded them, reduced them to barbarism.

Do you want the entire catalogue, sir? / know how the Mars Trusteeship has been run! The Administrators have made themselves gods, sir, gods Their every whim is a commandment. That's what you've done!"

The Director managed a smile, though his nostrils were flaring. "I said I heard your speech," he reminded Doane.

"You had some suggestions to make, didn't you?"

"I did," said Doane proudly.

"And among them, you suggested that we remove Administrator Kellem and replace him with someone acceptable to the Equality League."

"It was. Kellem's handling of the General Mercantile incident was"

"I know," the Director interrupted, and for the first time his smile relaxed. "I have here a radiogram from the Administration Comzone on Mars. Read it, Mr. Doane."

Doane took it suspiciously, but as he read, he began to beam.

MEDICAL CHECKUP SHOWS LOW-PRESSURE ASTHMA
APPROACHING TERTIARY STAGE, INCURABLE AND DAN-
GEROUS WITHOUT IMMEDIATE PERMANENT RETURN
TO EARTH. REQUEST IMMEDIATE CLEARANCE FOR
REPLACEMENT AND RETIREMENT.

KELLEM, MARS

Doane gloated, "He's retiring! Low-pressure asthma, my foot! I thought the stink from General Mercantile would drive him out!"

The Director said in a level tone, "Kellem almost died last week, Doane."

"All right." Doane shrugged. "It makes no difference.

In any case, I demand to be consulted in choosing his successor."

The Director eyed him. "You do, do you?" He pressed a button on his desk and said, "Ask Ne Mieek to come in." A sexy contralto replied, "Yes, sir."

The Director looked at Doane. "Ever seen a Martian?"

he asked. "You take such an interest in them, I wonder if you've ever met one. Face-to-face, I mean; the pictures don't quite do them justice. No? Well, it's about time you did."

He stood up and gestured toward the door.

"Jaffa Doane," he said, "meet Ne Mieek."

Doane rose and turned to see who was coming in. He swallowed. "How do you do," he managed to say.

A suppressed sighing sound came from the thing that dragged itself through the doorway. Doane thought it formed words in a sort of airless whisper, the sound that might be made by a man with a slashed throat.

It went: "GI'd f n'w y" The vowels were almost inaudible, the consonants as though they were being forced out against a gag. It was English, all right; you could make it out if you tried.

But if the thing's words were understandable, its expression was not. As the Director had said, you had to meet a Martian in the flesh; photos did not give more than a hint. On the squashed, whitely translucent face was what Doane thought a grin of savage glee, while the huge dull eyes held inexpressible sorrow. Neither interpretation, Doane told himself, meant much; that was anthropomorphic thinking, and dangerous. But those looks took a little getting used to, all the same.

"Don't try to shake hands with him, Mr. Doane," said

the Director. "He hasn't any."

It was true. Four supple, articulated tentacles waved around the Martian's midsection, but there were no hands or arms. The pear-shaped body was supported on stubby little legs which had neither knee nor ankle, as far as Jaffa Doane could see.

The Director was saying, "Ne Mieek is the Martian legate here in Washington and, like Kellem, the strain of an alien environment has hurt his health. He'll be going back to Mars on your ship, Doane, and you'll be working with him."

"Working with him?" Doane gasped.

The Director allowed himself a look of surprise.

"Haven't you figured it out yet, Doane? Since we must replace Kellem anyhow, we have decided to grant the Equality League's request. We are picking a man for the post that the League is certain to approve because he is the president of it I mean you, Mr. Doane."

"Me? Me? But I've never been on Mars!"

"In eighteen days," said the Director, "you will no longer be able to make that statement. That is, unless you refuse the appointment."

Jaffa Doane stood up and there was corrosive anger in his voice. "You'd like that, wouldn't you? You want me to turn it down, so you can tell the news services what a

lot of hot air the president of the Equality League really is. Well, I can recognize a shoddy little political trick when I see one. You hand me a political hot potato, throw me in on a job that your fat-cats have finally messed up to the point where there are riots and investigations. If things go wrong. I'm the goat that shuts up the Equality League. If things go right, your administration gets the credit."

"I take it you refuse," said the Director.

"No, sir! I don't refuse! It's a cheap trick and I'll make you wish you'd never thought of it. I accept!"

He looked over his shoulder at the Martian who had become, in the space of a heartbeat, one of his charges.

Jaffa Doane couldn't help wincing a little they did look so much like ragged corpses!

But he said, "Come along, Ne Mieek. We're going to your home."

For more than a million members of the Equality League, Jaffa Doane was a severe and shining leader; his words were trumpet calls and his surging drive for justice was a bright flame. One or two of the members, however, took a more personal view of their president, among them a young lady whose name was Ruth-Ann Wharton. On the books, she was listed as Mr. Doane's personal secretary, but it had been several months now since she had first begun to contemplate a promotion for herself.

It had occurred to her that the eighteen-day flight to

Mars on the shuttle rocket might provide the time and leisure for Jaffa Doane to notice just what a pearl he had as a secretary. But it had been a disappointing voyage; Doane had kept to his stateroom most of the way.

A hatful of hours out of Marsport, Ruth-Ann was banging on her boss's stateroom door. "Jaffa," she called plaintively, and not for the first time, "Ne Mieek and another Martian are waiting for you. Please hurry."

Doane's low, controlled voice said, "I'll be there in a moment, Miss Wharton."

She scowled at the door. "Ill give you exactly one minute." But she didn't give him that much. She hammered again. "Jaffa, they're waiting."

Pause. Then the calm, relaxed voice. "Yes, of course. One moment."

Ruth-Ann stamped her foot. "Oh, darn you!" she said and did what she had wanted to do in the first place. She turned the knob and walked in. "They've been waiting half an hour and Ne Mieek says it's very important."

The room was in semi-darkness, lit only by the light from the corridor outside. From the rumpled heap of bed clothing, Jaffa Doane's voice said placidly, "I'm aware of that, Miss Wharton."

Her hands found the light switch. The bed clothing erupted and Jaffa Doane sat up, leaning on an elbow,

blinking at her.

"What?" he croaked blearily. "Say, haven't I asked you to call me only from the outside?"

"You have," she said hotly, flinging back the ray-screen on the port. The tempered glass was treated to filter out most of the glare, but the direct sunlight lit up the little room like a movie set.

"Get up," she ordered. "If you're not outside and fully dressed in five minutes, I'm coming back and I'll dress you myself. Anyway, Jaffa, it looks as if it really is important. Ne Mieek is sighing and talking about your duty to your job. And the other Martian well, it's hard to tell, everything considered, but he looks sick."

"Sick?" Jaffa Doane yawned and scratched. "Sick how?"

Ruth-Ann shook her head. "Come on out and see for yourself."

Looking hazily at his face in the mirror of the tiny washroom as he shaved, Jaffa Doane decided that Ruth-Ann, after all, was right. He did have a tendency to be not difficult, exactly, not grumpy or nasty, but a little hard to wake up in the mornings. And besides, this was an important day. He was about to meet his charges. He wiped off the depilatory and stubble and stood erect, eyes burning into his own reflection in the mirror.

The sound of his stateroom door made him jump. "I'm coming right out!" he yelled.

In the room that had been fitted out as his office for the duration of the trip and which he had hardly set foot in Ne Mieek and Ruth-Ann were waiting. With them was another Martian and, looking at him, Jaffa Doane knew what the girl had meant when she said there was something wrong. A strapping young adult Martian, with a life expectancy of hundreds of years, somewhat resembles a wilting fungus; but this one looked rotten.

"Good morning, Ne Mieek," Jaffa Doane said courteously. "What can I do for you?"

The Martian's wheezy voice was somewhat easier to understand in the spaceship's half-and-half atmosphere pressure an even eight pounds to the square inch, composition largely helium than it had been when he was laboring to force his voice into the dense Earth air. "Indeed you can, honored sir. Gadian Pluur has the sickness and wishes Your Honor to cure him in the way that is known."

Jaffa Doane's eyebrows went up. "Cure him? You mean you want me to call a doctor?"

"Ah, no," whispered the Martian. "Your Honor will cure him yourself, surely."

Ruth-Ann was signaling. "You don't know what he wants, do you?" she said in a low tone.

"Good heavens, no."

She nodded smugly. "He wants you to touch this other one. That's all, just touch him."

"Touch him?" Doane stared at the Martian. "Ne Mieek, are you out of your mind?"

"Not so," the Martian whispered indignantly, the mad face working. "It is our custom, as is known. The Administrator Kellem and the Admiral Rosenman who was his assistant have always healed those ill of the sickness."

"Barbarous," marveled Jaffa Doane, forgetting to be angry. "And you, an intelligent man an intelligent Martian like you, you believe in this?"

"There is nothing to believe or disbelieve," sighed Ne Mieek, his tentacles agitated, the pale eyes desolate. "It is our custom since the first of your honored administrators came."

Doane shook his head wonderingly.

"Touch him," Ruth-Ann advised.

"But"

"Go ahead, touch him!"

Doane frowned. "Miss Wharton, this is a matter of principle. I am responsible not only to the Trusteeship Director, but to the League, and I certainly couldn't Justify"

"Touch him!" The girl's face was set.

Doane was about to reply, but the ship gave a gentle course-correcting lurch and everyone in the little room

staggered slightly everyone but the sick Martian, Gadian Pluur, who staggered halfway across the room and brushed against Doane's fingers.

Jaffa Doane jerked back his hand. It had been a curious sensation, almost like an electric shock, but not localized he could feel a tiny tingle up his backbone and at the base of his skull.

"Thanks to Your Honor," whispered Ne Mieek.

And the two Martians slipped slowly out, leaving Jaffa Doane staring frustratedly after them.

"But I have a speech all ready," Doane objected reasonably. "It's not just a lot of glowing promises and empty words, but facts. It tells how I am going to put a stop to" he hesitated over the word "the indiscretions of the previous Administrators."

Admiral Rosenman said cheerfully, "Fine." He was a chunky man with a big head of curly white hair. And he wore the severe uniform as though he had been born with it on. "But you can't get out of the Conjunction Offering."

"That's nothing short of murder! And my speech"

"It's merely an execution, Mr. Doane. The Martian has had his trial and he has been convicted. It's up to you."

"But I'm not a hangman!"

"You're the Earth Administrator on Mars and one of your duties is carrying out the decisions of the Martian

courts."

Doane glowered. "What's he convicted of?" he demanded suspiciously.

"What's the difference? Under the Martian laws, it's a crime punishable by death. They call it bad thinking."

"Bad thinking." Doane shook his head and walked over to the window of the Ad-Building office that was now his. The orange sandscape, dotted with smoke-trees, hurt his eyes; it was the Martian idea of a formal park, in the heart of the little city of Marsport, and it was a great honor to have one's office looking out over it. Or so the Martians thought.

They also thought it was an honor to be the executioner in what seemed to have some of the aspects of a ritual murder.

"I can't even see the conjunction of the moons," Doane said peevishly.

"The Martians can. Both moons are perfectly visible to them."

"And this Conjunction Offering is traditional? What did they do back forty or fifty years ago, before the first Earthmen got here?"

Admiral Rosenman shrugged and glanced at the clock.

"You ought to be getting ready," he said. "Am I dismissed?"

"You're dismissed," Doane said ungraciously and

frowned at the Admiral's back as he left, using the weaving, flat-footed Mars walk that Doane had not yet mastered.

He sat down at his desk, carefully allowing for the light Gravitation and misjudged it, as he had six times before, and bumped his shin against the desk, as he had six times before.

Ruth-Ann Wharton said sympathetically, "It takes a little getting used to. Do you want me to come to the Conjunction Offering with you?"

"No!"

"There's no need to take my skin off."

He said stiffly, "I am sorry, Miss Wharton. Perhaps I'm a little upset."

"I understand, Jaffa."

"It didn't seem like this back on Earth," he said morosely, staring out at the smoke-trees. "You haven't heard the worst of it. Miss Wharton. Not only do I have to slit some poor devil's throat this evening not only am I expected to perform the laying on of hands like somebody from the Dark Ages but look at this!" He turned to his desk and picked up a thick sheaf of papers. "Duties for the Earth Administration! The most ridiculous mass of superstitious nonsense I ever saw. If this is the way Kellem kept the Martians down, I can understand why

there were riots at the General Mercantile base."

"At Niobe? But those were Earthmen involved in the brawl, Jaffa, not Martians."

"How do you know?" he asked pugnaciously. "Because Kellem's publicity men said so? All we know for sure is that there was trouble. There's bound to be trouble when you try to keep an intelligent, civilized race like Ne Mieek's down with barbarous tricks like these."

He glanced at the list and flinched. "Well, there's an end to it," he said grimly. "Kellem's gone and I'm here now. I'll be at the Conjunction Ceremony tonight, all right, and I'll start things rolling right then and there.

You'll see! I'm telling you, Miss Wharton, Mars is going To what's the matter?" he demanded irritably. "You look like you've got a question."

The girl nodded emphatically. "I have. Why do you call me Miss Wharton instead of Ruth-Ann?"

The Conjunction Offering was to take place in what the Martians had named the Park of Sparse Beauty.

"It's sparse enough," Jaffa Doane said from the rostrum, watching the Martians gather before him. "But is it beautiful enough?"

Admiral Rosenman asked sourly, "Are you ready for the ceremony?"

"Oh, quite ready," said Jaffa Doane. He started to hum to himself with a satisfied air, but you do not hum with

oxygen plugs in your nostrils. He coughed and choked, and looked at the Admiral suspiciously. But the Admiral wasn't laughing.

The Admiral didn't think he had very much to laugh about. He had been on duty on Mars for seven years, surviving five Administrators, only one of whom had completed his three-year term. He had formed certain conclusions about the Martians and one of them was that they weren't too likely to get along well with the likes of Jaffa Doane. ...

It was dark and the Martians carried torches not flaming brands, for flames do not thrive in Mars' thin atmosphere, but glowing balls of punk from the little bushes that grew wild in the wide reaches between settlements. The scene was hardly brightly illuminated. Martian eyes were not human eyes, though, and to them, Doane realized, it might have been bright as day.

He looked fruitlessly at the spot in the sky where the two moons were supposed to be in conjunction with a particular star. One moon was visible, the other not. The star might or might not be visible with all the stars in the Martian sky, one more or less made very little difference. But to the Martians, of course, with their very much more acute vision, both moons were as visible as Luna from Earth and each star of the tens of thousands

was an individual in its own right.

Jaffa Doane sighed. It was hard remembering all the differences between Martians and Earthmen and trying to remember, at the same time, the diamond-clear principles of the Equality League, which said that the differences were as nothing. . . .

There was no sound of trumpets, no burst of prompted applause from the idly drifting audience, but all of a sudden the ceremony seemed to have begun. Ne Mieek appeared on the high platform where the Earth party was standing.

"In three of your minutes and eleven seconds, as is known to Your Honor," he said, "the conjunction will occur. This is he who is to die." He stepped aside to reveal another Martian, who gestured courteously with his tentacles.

"This is Fnihi Bel."

The condemned Martian said politely, "It is an honor to meet Your Honor. I am most sorry for the circumstances."

Doane looked embarrassedly at Ruth-Ann and the Admiral. He had had no lessons in how Jack Ketch greeted his clients; there was no precedent in his experience with the Equality League to guide him in the proper conduct of the maul-man meeting the steer at the top of the slippery chute.

But the Martian was tactful. He said, "Since I shall not have the power afterward, let me now thank Your Honor for the greatest of favors."

"For killing you?" Doane blurted, scandalized. He made a face expressing his mood about the enforced subjection of the Martians; it was wasted on the Martians who expressed their feelings with formalized gestures of the tentacles, but not on Admiral Rosenman, who licked his lips and started to speak.

But not soon enough. "Fnihi Bel," Doane said compassionately, "under the authority vested in me as Administrator, I grant a stay of execution pending review of your case. You shall not die tonight."

Admiral Rosenman swore and looked helplessly at Ruth-Ann. "If the crazy idiot had only talked it over first! No, not him! He made up his mind ten years before he ever saw a Martian and nothing's going to change it, especially facts!"

"What facts?" asked Ruth-Ann hotly. "You never told him anything."

"It's all in the files."

"Which he hasn't had a chance to look at. Honestly, Admiral, you're unreasonable." Ruth-Ann looked fretfully out the window. It was nearly daybreak; the sharp Martian dawn had popped into light over the horizon

minutes before. "Do you suppose he's all right?"

The Admiral growled and flipped the switch on the intercom. "Any word?"

The uniformed man whose face appeared in the screen said, "Not yet, sir. The Administrator was seen about an hour ago near the Shacks. A detail has gone to search the area, but they haven't reported in yet."

"All right," the Admiral grumbled, clicking off.

"What are the Shacks?" Ruth-Ann wanted to know.

"Abandoned part of town. The Martians gave it up years ago. Nobody lives there now. Unpleasant place. Serves him right, the"

"Watch yourself!" Ruth-Ann warned. "He's your boss!"

The Admiral glowered at her, but stopped. He yawned and stretched. "Not used to staying up all night any more," he said. "Kind of takes it out of me, but Go ahead!" he snapped as the intercom called his name.

"Administrator Doane has been located by the search party, sir," said the officer. "Any orders?"

"Hold him there," roared the Admiral. "And get a car in front of the door in thirty seconds I'm going to meet him!"

He clicked off the switch as Ruth-Ann corrected, "We're going to meet him, Admiral! If that big stuffed-shirt thinks he can scare me out of my wits and stir up every Martian from here to"

"Hey, wait a minute!" the Admiral protested. "I thought you wouldn't let me call him names!"

"That's you," Ruth-Ann said shortly. "The rules are different for me. Come on. Admiral. What are you waiting for?"

They found Earth Administrator Jaffa Doane sitting on the ramp before an abandoned and decrepit Martian dwelling, staring into space. Admiral Rosenman dismissed the detail and helped the Administrator into the pressurized car. Doane's attention was elsewhere. Rosenman had to remind him even to take the oxygen plugs out of his nostrils.

"Thanks," said Doane absently.

And, after a pause, "I messed it up, didn't I?"

"You did," the Admiral told him. "You messed it up enough to put forty-eight Martians in the hospital the Earth hospital."

Doane blinked.

"For physical injuries," the Admiral explained. "The Martians don't ordinarily hospitalize for that; a couple of hours of what they call good thinking and they can patch almost anything that's wrong with themselves. But these were pretty well beat up, mostly from running into moving vehicles, and I don't think there's a Martian within fifty miles that's capable of good thinking right now."

Jaffa Doane shook his head. "I don't get it," he complained. "All I did was try to save a man's life. Maybe I was wrong¹ don't know. But how could it make so much trouble? Rioting like crazy people. Getting themselves run over and all because of a thing like that. I could understand it if they were ignorant natives, only they're not ignorant; they have a civilization of their own. How can these silly customs mean so much to them?"

The Admiral exploded, "Don't you understand yet? It is not just a silly custom! They were crazy, all right, but not because you violated a silly tabu because you did the thing that was bound to drive them insane. You pushed them across the brink. They were sick. Infected by you."

"But"

"Don't argue with me! Sickness is not only of the body; even an Earthman can have mental illnesses, too. And Martians have no other kind. Shock them and they get sick. When they're sick, they need to be healed. If you break a leg, you splint it; if a Martian's mind is injured, it needs to be splinted with a stronger, stabler mind.

"Think back to the ship, Doane! When Ne Mieek begged you to touch the other Martian, did you think it was only a primitive custom? It was not. It was splinting and healing. When you made contact with him, his mind was braced against yours and you were the one who helped him grow well."

Doane swallowed. "All right," he said reasonably.

"Granted. But that's one thing and murder is another.

What about the one I was supposed to kill?"

"The same principle, Doane. Even a Martian doesn't live forever and when he is too sick to be cured, he has to die. The only way a Martian can die is by being physically destroyed. He can't kill himself. No Martian can. He can't be killed by another Martian the shock would destroy him. So you're elected, Doane the strongest, stablest being on Mars the Earth Administrator."

Doane protested, "But what about the time before the Earthmen were here? How did they manage?"

Rosenman shrugged. "They didn't have Earthmen to do the dirty work, so they used Martians, of course."

"But you said"

"I know what I said. Take a look around you, Doane."

He gestured out the window at the rickety, abandoned buildings called the Shacks.

Compared with the clean, functional lines of the rest of the Martian architecture, the Shacks were a hideous blot. They leaned and they staggered. They were put together at random distances out of random materials. They looked unfit for even human habitation, much less Martian.

"This is where they lived, the Outcasts," Rosenman

said. "The strongest and healthiest of every generation, selected by rigorous tests and segregated into a caste of Healers. It was an honor to be a Healer, Doane the greatest, most tragic honor that a Martian could attain. Read the Martian literature. It has noble stories in it, the Healers who sacrificed themselves for others. They were untouchables. There were a couple of hundred of them all the time, right here in the Shacks, injured mentally every time they had to put an incurable out of his misery, until they were beyond repair and had to be destroyed after a few years of agonizing service."

"And when we came, we became the untouchables?"

Rosenman hesitated. "Well, not exactly," he said, a little less roughly. "We took over the functions of the Healers to some extent, yes. After all, we Earthmen aren't as sensitive; and just for that reason, we're more stable. But, of course, even we crack up when the pressure is too great. Suppose the picture was different, Doane; suppose it was the Martians who were stronger and stabler, and suppose they came to Earth and showed us a way of emptying our asylums.

"We use psychiatrists because they're all we have all the Martians had were the Healers. But the Healers weren't altogether satisfactory, as you can see, because it's an expensive cure that merely passes the disease on to someone else. Our psychiatrists aren't as effective as they

should be, either they're human, too; they have their own problems, which seriously interfere with and become intermingled with those of their patients.

"If the Martians had come to us with a real cure, not the half-cure that psychiatrists are capable of, we'd be stupid to go on using inadequate therapy. And the Martians aren't stupid. In fact, that's the mistake you and your Equality League made."

The Administrator flared, "That's enough, Resenman!

The Equality League never"

"Wait a minute! Admit it, Doane you came here all full of red-hot ideas- about how the Earth masters should be kind to their Martian slaves. No, don't argue; that's how it looked to you. Think it over. But the Martians aren't slaves, you see. In many ways, they're more cultured and smarter and a lot more sensitive than you and I. In some ways, in fact, they remind me of my grandfather."

"Your what?" Doane gasped, baffled.

"My grandfather. He was a very religious man," the Admiral explained reminiscently. "Every Friday night, we'd have the candles for the Sabbath, and well, I don't know how familiar you are with the ritual, but on the Sabbath, the truly orthodox aren't allowed to work from sundown to sundown'. Not even lighting the candles. So my grand-

father used to hire an Irish kid from the neighborhood to be our candle light era shabbas goy, he called him.

"Marty Madden, the boy's name was. Marty wasn't any better than we were or any worse I don't think my grandfather ever thought that. But he was, in that one way, different; he could do something for us that we weren't allowed to do for ourselves. So, naturally, he did it. Just as you and I, Doane, do things for the Martians that they can't do for themselves."

The Admiral started the car for the trip back.

"I used to know Marty pretty well," he said. "We went to the same school during the week. In a way, I was sorry for him he missed all the fun of the feasts and so on. In another way, I envied him, because he could do things I couldn't. But I never thought that so many years later, forty million miles from Mosholu Parkway, I'd be taking his job away from him . . ."

They rode back to the Administration Building in silence for most of the way, while Jaffa Doane digested some of the most ill-tasting realizations of his career.

As the building came into sight, he shook himself and sat up.

"All right," he said humbly, "I'll start all over. Make believe I landed this morning. Where do I start?"

Rosenman smiled and leaned over to pat his shoulder.

"You'll do," he promised. "Where you start is in the

clinic. You'll find about fifty Martians with some degree of shock, needing the healing touch of a sound mind like yours. It won't be too bad. You'll have a headache afterward, but you can take a minor discomfort like that, can't you?"

"Gladly!" Doane said. "That's the least I can do. I want to apologize to both of you. You, too, Ruth-Ann. I've been about as big a self-centered, wrong-headed" She cut him off. "Oh, don't get all wound up. You're a bit of a phony, heaven knows" she ignored the strangled noise he made "but there are worse. Deep down inside, you're quite a guy. You wouldn't be as much of a man as you are if you didn't have a little ham in you, and a touch of pig-headedness, too. I've given the matter a lot of thought, you see."

Rosenman grinned at Doane's expression. "She's right," he agreed. "Between us, we'll get you straightened out, so don't worry about it. Two more years here ought to do it. Basically, your ideas are right the Martians ought to learn to get by on their own feet. You can start finding out how they can do it. It'll be good for you. When the two years of your term are up, you'll go home with a better, more human understanding of what's what, ready to settle down to a normal, productive existence on Earth with your wife and family."

Doane yelled, "Hold on there! I haven't got a. wife,
much less a family!"

Ruth-Ann patted his arm reassuringly. "You're not
home yet," she said.