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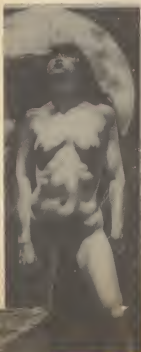


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To fulfill their incredible mission they chose the one most wise and holy in all the world

Thin, wiry and bronzed by strange suns . . .
here was clearly a superior being . . .

Thomas A. Easton

Return of the Native

Our town is generally a quiet, peaceful place. There is little crime and less controversy. Politics is marked mainly by its unanimity, and the great issues of the day rarely touch us deeply. But we do have a few creative citizens with a knack for disturbing the peace. We also have a history that every few years throws up an echo to relieve the quiet.

This time — well, Bonny and I were at home, in the old, white farmhouse I've owned for years. We were in the living room, having coffee by the woodstove I'd plugged into the fireplace back when oil first went dear. Neither one of us was wearing much, which prompts me to say that wood heat is vastly underrated. Sure, it's cheap and it's personal, but it is also luxurious. You just can't bask in front of a radiator or a hot air vent. And when you are married to a dark-haired lovely, your ex-secretary, of remarkable intelligence, sympathy, and competence, you like to bask.

But that is really neither here nor there. We were having coffee, playing at backgammon, being snug amidst January cold and snow. We were talking, too, trying to decide whether we wanted children in our lives. We were no closer to a decision than ever when we were interrupted by a distant scream of sirens.

I wondered what was up. Bonny said, "You could call, you know. They'd tell you."

I allowed as they probably would. We listened as the sirens faded. They hadn't gone on too long, so whatever it was couldn't be far from the station. Probably right in town. I got to my feet, belted my robe, and headed for the phone in the kitchen. I called the station and got the Chief. I told him what I wanted, and he said, "The Hutchison place, Mayor. Mrs. Morse across the street reported a scream."

I thanked him and hung up. It could have been a burglar, a wife-beating, or just a nightmare, but I didn't ask why they'd used the sirens. Jack Hutchison was a councilman and the head of the school board, after all.

The next morning I went to my town hall office. There were papers to tend to, calls to make, people to see, all the busywork of being Mayor. And none of it was welcome, really. The job was unpaid, and I barely knew why I kept running. Perhaps it was that I felt needed, by everyone except my secretary. Louise had

replaced Bonny after the wedding, and she was a poor trade. For one thing, she felt sure she could run the town just fine without me.

The head of the Chamber of Commerce had just left, having put his case for a traffic light at the new mall. One *was* needed, but was that enough reason to bring in the first of the things? The town was small, and so far we had avoided them, except for a yellow blinker at Main and High. Most folks seemed to like it that way.

The door opened again a minute after he had left. I glimpsed Louise's backside moving my way, heard her saying, "You can't just barge in!" and spotted an old friend trying to get past her. "Hey, Howie!" I called. "C'mon in."

Louise stopped, turned around, and sniffed. "But he doesn't have an appointment," she complained.

"He doesn't need one," I told her. "You should know that by now."

She sniffed again, but she moved aside. The other pushed past her none too gently. Howie Wyman. Overallled, felt-hatted, work-booted. As grubby as a laborer, not that he worked unless he had to. He was the town loafer, dedicated to fishing and hunting above all else. And a friend.

With Louise gone and the door closed once more, I waved Howie to a seat. He took it, removed his hat, scratched his grey head, and said, "Keith's back."

I didn't say a thing. I was busy, getting a pipe from my desk drawer, loading it, lighting it. But I was puzzled. I must have shown it, for he added, "Hutchison."

Ah. Now I remembered. The teen-ager who had caught a ride on an interstellar freight train. Lydia Seltzer and I had taken him and another kid up to Pork Hill to look for the wendigo. He and Lydia had found it, too, though Lydia had made it back a mite sooner. I blew smoke and said, "The commotion last night, eh?"

"Ayuh," he nodded. He looked around the floor. I toed my waste basket toward him. He spat a stream of brown tobacco juice. "Saw him at the Diner this mornin'. Said his Ma screamed when he came in. Thought sure he was a ghost."

"And Jack?"

"Happy enough, I guess. His Ma, too, now."

I snorted gently. Like I said at the beginning, history and echoes. I wondered what Keith had been up to all these years — five, was it? — and what he was like now. What had he done and learned? What had he returned for?

Howie spat again. "Did say he had the best night's sleep since he left. Seems they don't use mattresses out there. More like hammocks."

I chuckled, imagining Bonny and myself. "Like to try one, would you?"

He shook his head. "Spent enough summers in 'em." He paused, as if remembering. "Said he'd be in to see you later on."

"Think I'd better tell Louise?"

He laughed. So did I.

I spend the rest of the morning trying to empty my IN box. I didn't succeed, of course — the mail came before I was done, and then I had it all to do over again. I groaned and gave up. My concentration wasn't what it should have been. My mind kept coming back to Keith's return. I kept asking myself what and why, thought I knew the questions were pointless until he came by to tell me.

Finally, I checked my watch and decided it wasn't too early for lunch. It would be the Diner. Keith had been there that morning, and perhaps Barbara would have something more to tell me.

Barbara Johnson had run her diner for years, taking over when her father retired and adding organic dishes to the menu. That had attracted the sprouts crowd, though she had kept the standard fare as well. It all was good enough, but

her reputation was based firmly on her pies and coffee.

Barbara was taking orders behind the long counter when I walked in. I hung up my coat, took a stool, and stared at the chalkboard full of specials on the wall before me. Within a minute, she stood in front of me. She rattled a cup of coffee onto the counter by my hand and said, "You hear the news, Harry? Keith's back?"

"Howie told me," I said. I looked at her. Bleach-blond hair threatening to explode from a hairnet. A strong lined face, a thickening body. She was always smiling, always friendly, always far more attractive than a first glance suggested. And she had never learned to whisper. Everyone in the place must have heard her question. When I turned my head, they were watching, their voices quiet.

"Damn," she said conversationally. "Sometimes I wish I wasn't tied to this counter. Then I could dash across the street and be the first to tell you something for a change." I nodded when she paused to grimace. "Did he tell you how different the boy looks?"

Interested, I said, "No," and asked her what she meant.

She shrugged. "It's hard to say. But different. Like he should be the boss of some big operation. You know why he's here?"

I told her I hadn't seen him yet, though he'd told Howie he was going to drop in. Then I gave her my order and settled in to listen to the crowd. They were talking Keith, Keith, Keith. He had defected to Russia. He had been kidnapped. He had run away to join a circus and had been around the world. He had disappeared in mysterious circumstances and been brought back by a flying saucer. That last was closest to the truth, I knew, and I was surprised that more people didn't seem to recall Lydia Seltzer and Pork Hill.

Louise ushered Keith in early that afternoon. I had spoken to her, but the results astonished me. She acted as if the young man behind her were an ambassador or a millionaire. She was completely out of character, and I was sure it couldn't be due entirely — or at all — to what I'd said.

Then I saw Keith. And he was different, just as Barbara had said. He was only in his early twenties, of course, but he seemed older. He was thin, wiry, browned by strange suns, tall enough to look down on most folks, and he wore an air of maturity, confidence. My first impression was that here was a clearly superior being. I had never felt that way about anyone before. I wondered if the Indians had felt the same when one of their fellows returned from a stay among the whites.

I stared while he took a seat. I stared until he broke the silence with, "Good afternoon, Mayor Bowen." I stared — he was the Keith I remembered, but a new Keith, a not-Keith — and I finally managed, "It's been a long time."

"It has." He smiled reflectively and adjusted a pants leg. The fabric was a light green that matched his shirt and jacket. The cut was strange, and there was an unfamiliar sheen. "I'm sorry I disappeared that night. You must have worried, I know my parents did. But I got too close to the tachtrain's field and . . ."

I waved a hand. "Lydia made it back. She had pictures, so we knew you were all right." I fumbled for my pipe. "And now you've made it back, too. For good? Or just a visit?"

"A visit, I think. The first of many. I've been trained. . ."

"We heard a rumor. Saucer pilot?"

He shook his head, gently. "No. They tend to start new groups off at higher levels than that. A test of responsibility, of potential. A way to give a real sense of participation. I'm a monitor."

Again, I remembered. I'd never met a monitor, but I knew of them. Scanning

the cosmos for improbability waves generated by the aliens' contiguity manipulators, devices that let one switch components among the parallel universes, the monitors were the aliens' rescue squad and police. Though not police, exactly. They watched, detected irresponsible switchings, and set things right again.

"Then you have a manipulator?" I asked.

"Of course." It would be implanted in his brain. "Though I'm not really here as a monitor. Not even as a visitor."

"You have a job?" I set my pipe down, interested.

He nodded. "My first real assignment. You might say I'm a trader."

My look conveyed the question. What could we have to trade with an interstellar civilization, a people who had tachtrains and contiguity manipulators? He answered me with words. "The Gerder Tap," he said. "It's an elegant solution to the energy problem. They've got nothing like it. They want it."

"But how?" I asked. "How do you hope to get it? The government has it more tightly classified than the A-bomb was in 1945. They aren't about to give anyone the plans."

He tapped his head with one forefinger and grinned at me. "The manipulator," he said. "There is a certain African dictatorship negotiating with Washington now for nuclear power plants. By the time I'm done shuffling the documents around, it will have Taps instead. And that will open things up for me."

After Keith's disappearance five years ago, the Army had stepped in. It had confiscated Lydia's photos and taken over Pork Hill, and ever since it had been trying to catch another tachtrain. It knew about Keith, too, and it must have heard rumors of his return.

It was less than an hour after Keith had left my office that I had more visitors. A trio of black-suited stonefaces, from Army Intelligence, they said. They wanted to know what I knew of Keith's return.

I told them as little as I could. Yes, I had been visited by a man who claimed to be Keith. But he didn't look much like the Keith I remembered. He might have been an imposter.

"Never mind that," said the tallest of the three. His name, according to his papers, was Kippers, John L. "We want the guy. Where is he?"

When I only shrugged, the second — Fenton, Samuel — said, "We think he could help us with the Pork Hill project. Get us into space at last. What did he want?"

"He was saying hi to old friends. What else?"

"That's what we want to know," said Kippers. He pulled the front of his jacket apart. A pair of handcuffs hung from his belt. "If you won't tell us, we'll have to take you back to the base."

I studied them while the third — I didn't catch his name — told me they'd already seen Keith's parents. I didn't think they could have been much help. I wondered if I would help or hurt Keith's plans by talking. I told myself the government would have to know eventually, and finally I said, "He did say something about being a trader now."

They jumped on that. Kippers almost shouted his next words: "And what's he after here?"

I turned my hands palm up and held them over my desk. "He didn't say. What could we offer an interstellar civilization? The only thing I can think of is the Tap."

They stared at me in silence for a full minute. Then, as one, they turned and left. They didn't even say, "Thanks."

The Gerder Tap had been invented by Abby Gerder, an out-of-stater who had come to town to set up a small hydro-electric plant. The plant's capacity was too small to suit her, though. In order to boost the output, she had devised a four-dimensional Klein bottle. The water fell downhill through the fourth dimension from the plant's tailrace to the turbine inlet, a perfect example of recycling. The device had let her go from 150 kilowatts to 2500. It wasn't possible, but it worked, and Abby was dreaming of wealth until the feds stepped in. It seemed she was drawing her power from the Maine Yankee nuclear plant up to Wiscasset; perpetual motion *wasn't* possible. They shut her down, studied what she'd done, and soon found out that she'd been tapping nuclear reactions directly. Suddenly, they had a way to snuff an A-bomb, stifle a reactor, or draw power safely and efficiently from the sun. The Gerder Tap, they named it, and it was being integrated into the country's power net as quickly as possible. For security, units were booby-trapped against tampering and spying. And Abby — and her husband — were permanent consultants, quite rich enough to keep their mouths shut.

The government was possessive enough about the Tap that I didn't believe Keith had much of a chance. His manipulator could confuse the paperwork, but I didn't see how he could change official minds or blind the security watchdogs.

Of course, I underestimated the power of paperwork. That became more than clear over the next few months. The headlines told the story, and they told it in a way that made me wonder if Keith was even involved:

JAMBEZRI OIL FOR NUKES?

GUERRILLAS SEIZE JAMBEZRI OIL FIELDS

DEFENSE RELUCTANT ON JAMBEZRI NUKES

BOMBERS FREE OIL FIELDS

Gatin Asks Aid to Rebuild

AMNESTY INTERNAT'L REPORTS JAMBEZRI BLOODBATH

GATIN: ANOTHER AMIN?

EPA SUGGESTS SOLAR TAPS

NO REBELS, SAYS JAMBEZRI PRES

JAMBEZRI THREAT TO PROLIFERATION?

COMMERCE REFUSES NUKE EXPORT

DEFENSE SAYS TAPS COPYPROOF, NO WEAPON

JAMBEZRI TO GET TAPS

That wasn't all of it by a long shot, but it gives the flavor. A ruthless dictator with a resource we needed, less for fuel now than for feedstocks. A trade offered. Worry about giving Gatin a way to build A-bombs. An environmentally benign solution that could never be an offensive weapon. Assurances that the booby-traps made it impossible for anyone to copy a Tap. And the decision.

Since Jambezri was a small country, it didn't take long to get the Taps set up. Within a year, there were Tap-powered desalination plants, irrigation projects, and factories. Within two years, Jambezri was well on its way to industrialized prosperity. And Gatin was out. With the sudden prospect of plenty, his brand of government, with its graft and monopolization of wealth, was no longer tolerated. His soldiers and police became consumers.

That was when Keith came back to my office. Howie was with me at the time. We were talking about going partridge hunting sometime soon. The season was

open, and by all reports it was a good year for the birds, but I was busy. Maybe too busy. My oil business had sunk with all the rest years before, and though I had hoped to be able to sell Taps for home and car use, they'd been reserved for the utilities. Still, I did a good business in electrical heating systems and in firewood. And with the cold weather coming, I was hopping.

Louise interrupted us with that look of respect I had seen only once before. I recognized it as soon as her head poked through the opening door, and I said, "Is Keith here?"

She nodded at me. "Mr. Hutchison *would* like to see you."

"Then send him in." She did, and I took a long look at the young man who had — I guessed — been working miracles in Washington. He seemed no older, though a little browner, and his alien clothes had been exchanged for a well-cut blue suit. He wore a tie and carried a slim attache case. He smelled of cologne, too.

I had compared him once with an Indian who had been among whites. Now I did so again. He had an alien education, perhaps alien values as well. But he also knew his native world, its gestalt, and could move among his erstwhile fellows as no alien could. He was the perfect stalking horse, and I wondered if he was just that, just as his like had been again and again in human history. He hadn't done anything I felt shouldn't have been done, but wasn't a monitor supposed to be a paragon of ethical responsibility? Still, could I — could we — trust him not to rip us off?

Howie nodded at him as he found a seat. "Good to see you again," he said. "Still like mattresses?"

Keith grinned. "I've been back in hammocks since then," he said. "But yes, I do."

"A matter of upbringing," I offered.

"I suppose so," said Keith.

Then I added, "You want to watch out, though, or there'll be some downbringing." When Keith looked puzzled, I told him about the Army men. "They want to pump you if they can."

He thought it over. "I can't allow that," he finally said. "But it's just as well you said what you did. It will help if they're ready when the time comes."

"I s'pose it's best, then," said Howie, "you shouldn't hang around long. Though I was hopin' to hear more about the folks out there."

"There isn't much I can say," the other answered. "To you or the Army. There are rules, you know, and I . . ."

"I understand," I said. "A monitor, especially, must respect the rules."

He nodded. "Besides, there was work to do, and then I had to go back for a time."

"Harry told me somethin' about that work. Seems to have gone all right."

"So far," I said. "But tell me, you can't tell us what it's like out there, I suppose for fear of interfering with our development . . ."

"Something like that," said Keith.

". . . but you're here as a trader. Won't that interfere?"

Keith shifted in his chair. He lost a little of his look of confidence. "Of course it will," he said. "But we need the Tap, and that is more important. Though I am supposed to get it without interfering any more than absolutely necessary."

"Then you should be tryin' to steal it," said Howie. "That way you'd get it, and no one here'd know the difference."

He looked still more uncomfortable. He stared at the wall for a moment. Then he said, "True, but we can't do things that way. There must be mutual benefit."

We were silent while I thought over what he'd said. An ethical trader, he had to

be. That probably meant both sides had to know there was a trade, too. Finally, I said, "I don't suppose getting rid of one dictator is enough benefit on our side."

He said, "Oh, no. That is only tactics, to make it possible to trade at all." He shook his head. "It's not strictly necessary, perhaps, but this is my first assignment. I want to try the things I was taught."

"Must be more, then," said Howie. "The Tap's still secret."

"There is." Keith lifted his attache case onto his lap and opened it. He extracted a moderately thick stack of white paper and held it out to me. "More tactics," he said.

It was a manuscript. I took it and glanced at the cover sheet. It bore my name. I looked at Keith. "What is this?" I asked.

"You are a mayor, a government official, someone who might be listened to. I would like you to send this to some journal where it will be read. Perhaps the *Foreign Policy Review*. Its effect will be the next step in my plan."

I hefted the manuscript. I opened it and began to read. The argument was laid out in excruciating detail, far beyond what I was capable of, but in outline it said simply that since exporting the Tap had stabilized one local political situation, it should be made available on a wider scale. It would provide the world with ample, cheap power, lead to universal prosperity, and — the author hoped — foster world peace. As I turned the last page over, Keith said, "The Jambesri case has not been lost on the rest of the world. Despite the political effects, there is great demand for the Taps. Even from the Communist Bloc."

I laid the manuscript on my desk and flattened one hand atop it. "And if this works? If the Taps are spread all over the world? If they do bring peace?"

"Then there won't be much point in secrecy, will there?" Keith grinned.

I sent the manuscript off, of course, and it was published. I didn't doubt it would be, since Keith could influence the content of memos and letters and the like. I wondered that he even needed the manuscript, unless there was no suitable counterpart in some parallel world, though that seemed unlikely. Perhaps this way was just the simplest.

At any rate, it worked. *Foreign Policy Review* is a journal read by statesmen and politicians and State Department bureaucrats. They saw the article, thought about it, discussed it, and in the end decided to ship the Taps — still booby-trapped — wherever they were wanted. In the process, they stirred up the reporters, who wanted to know more about the man responsible for the decision. I let Louise handle them. She was good at that. All I had to worry about was the Army. Its men came back, more than once, though they didn't learn a thing.

The economists helped by pointing out how much the resulting increase in exports would help the nation's balance of payments. I wished they would point out that there was no reason why the Taps couldn't be scaled down to a size that would heat a house or run a car. No reason, that is, except the interests of the utilities and the problem of fitting booby-traps into the smaller units. Electricity was cheap now, so cheap it was heating most homes and powering most cars, but small Taps would improve my business no end. Not that that was the real benefit of the Taps. I'd never dreamed they might result in world peace. Neither had the inventor.

And it actually seemed that they might. As they made energy cheap and plentiful for all, they removed many reasons for war — food, water, resources, even *lebensraum*. There were left only the nastier reasons — nationalism, ideology, religion — and they had been fading for decades. I thought prosperity might make them even less potent.

But how to build a Tap remained a U.S. secret.

I was alone the next time Keith dropped in. Even Louise was away for the day, off visiting friends or family or perhaps getting a little sun at the shore. It was a good day for it, sunny and warm and sweet with the odors of early June. It was such a good day, in fact, that I was planning to knock off early. There was a stream I knew, and a pool that should hold a trout or two, and . . .

But there was Keith, displaying a new tan suit, still brown and confident and superior. He was smiling, too, and when I asked him what he was so pleased about, he said, "I'm almost done now. The Taps are all over the world, there's no more excuse for secrecy, and it's time to trade."

I agreed. "It should be, yes. But the secrecy is still on. They're still booby-trapping every unit. They want to keep a monopoly."

He waved one hand airily. "No problem," he said, with a wider smile. "I can trade with any of a hundred countries, now. I can take a whole Tap home, booby-traps and all, where they'll take it apart and copy it. The booby-traps won't bother our engineers."

"Then why are you here? The Army still wants you."

"They won't for long."

"Why?" His confidence was baffling. In his position, I would have been frustrated by the barriers still facing me, but he, he almost seemed to be ignoring them.

"I would rather have the plans. The Army wants space. If you will get the Pork Hill commander on the phone, we'll both be happy."

I stared at him. Did he think they would be content to talk with him? They would want a full-scale interrogation, with drugs and hypnosis and relays of questioners. Maybe even rubber hoses. I said as much, but Keith only grinned again. "Call," he said. "Tell him I'm offering a faster-than-light starship, together with plans and a list of nearby colonizable worlds. But don't mention the manipulator."

The reminder reassured me. The manipulator would hardly be part of the deal, and with that in his brain, they could hold him only so long as he wished to remain. Locks would fail, I thought. Gas would appear from nowhere. Walls would crumble. And Keith would walk away.

I set my pipe aside and made the call. At mention of my name and title, the corporal on the switchboard passed me immediately to a lieutenant, who gave me a captain, who connected me with Colonel Dickson. All I had to say was that I had information on the Hutchison case.

Colonel Dickson was more than receptive. He sent a car for us, met us at the door of the quonset hut among the trees at the base of the Hill, and took us to his office. There he sat down behind a broad metal desk, motioned us to chairs, and said, "We've been parked here ever since you disappeared, Mr. Hutchison. We wanted to get one of our men aboard that tachtrain, but yours seems to have been the last to come through."

The Colonel was older than I had expected. Passed-over, perhaps, and given an out-of-the-way assignment. His hair receded above his hornrims, and there were deep lines beside his nose and mouth, lines that told the world how rarely he smiled. At the same time, he was slim, muscular, and he wore his ribboned uniform as well as a store dummy. Keith saw all this as he settled into his seat and adjusted his trouser legs. He said, "I believe they did change the route after I hitched my ride."

The Colonel's laugh was forced. "Then we've wasted eight years. Or have we? After all, we're here when you return. And Mayor Bowen says you want to trade."

I told myself that Keith could as easily have gone directly to Washington. He hardly needed a local intermediary, and I didn't think he would have used one if he hadn't been born and raised here. I didn't say what I thought, though. I merely nodded.

So did Keith. Then he spelled out what he wanted and what he offered. The Colonel's look of greed was unfeigned when he answered, "If it was up to me, you'd have your deal."

"But it's not?"

"Of course not. This'll go all the way to the top. But first, the Pentagon." He pulled out a drawer in his desk and extracted a white telephone. He lifted the receiver and began to talk, without dialing. The line had been open, waiting. After a moment, he said, "They want to know where the starship is."

"On the far side of the moon." Keith gave him the coordinates. "It's been there for a month."

"Then it should be on satellite photos." He spoke into the phone again, hung up, and said, "They'll have to check. In the meantime, we have a suite for you."

"We'd rather get back to town," I said. "There's work waiting."

The Colonel didn't want to let us leave, but in the end he had to. We allowed him only one concession, a man to stay with Keith, to see that he didn't disappear again. Not that it mattered to Keith.

The deal went through. How could it fail to? A not-so-secret Tap for a monopoly on interstellar travel. Though the monopoly turned out to be no more than a head start. The U.S. got a working starship, but the very day Keith left with the plans for the Tap, plans for the ship showed up in the capitals of all other nations. Keith was taking no chances on spoiling our progress toward peace.

I don't know why I was surprised at the shape of the starship, but I was. I had expected a flying saucer, a chip from the technological peak of Keith's adopted civilization. But when the news broke, the pictures were of a silvery oblong, battered and dented and scratched with age and use. It was obviously second-hand, obsolete, though it did mean our world's entree into space, a chance to spread out into colonies, to meet our betters on their own ground. It was a seed of the future, but only a seed.

When I thought about it, I realized the truth. Here on Earth, no one hands underdeveloped nations, even those with a few hyperdeveloped brains, the latest in technology. We don't trust babies with loaded guns. Why should those who sent Keith home? ●

EPIGRAMMATIC FRAGMENT FOUND ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOON

"All is dust & darkness. . ."

— Peter Payack

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH SELF & COMMUNITY

Marvin Kaye

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE has re-evaluated many of the mythic figures of past literature. Once Prometheus, Don Juan, Dr. Faustus, Manfred, even Maturin's Melmoth were prime symbols of rebellion from the established order that religion and social custom dictated. Today, aspiring above Self and beyond Community has become an attractive quality, a necessary pattern that a vastly changing world has created.

One might say, paraphrasing Aldous Huxley's famous essay, *Accidie*, that we have earned our right to *hubris*.

Ever since Aeschylus, literate fabulists have written and rewritten the myth of the hero-villain who deliberately isolates himself from the prevailing institutions of his age. Generally, this stance was formerly frowned upon by author and auditors alike, though, to give Oedipus or Don Juan their due, mighty arguments could be mustered to back up their determination to run counter to tradition.

Today, however, an important shift may be noted in the treatment of the "stranger" of contemporary fiction and philosophy. . . he has become popular in the public imagination. To reject the age and its shibboleths is now fashionable — and it is hardly surprising that the Jesus of Webber-Rice's rock opera, "Jesus Christ, Superstar," was so engaging a symbol when that musical *tour de force* first appeared. Staged and filmed with deliberate anachronisms that wed the Twentieth Century to Biblical times, it made Jesus a crucial counter-culture hero who spurned values supported by the elders of the two periods. Indeed, one of the most telling lyrics in the libretto is Jesus at Gethsemane proclaiming he has "tried for three years. . . seems like ninety." To the adolescent seeking instant recognition and immediate remedy, three fruitless years must surely appear an enormous amount of time wasted when all the answers seem so obvious.

But there is another breed of *isolate* now

significant in our culture's myths. Religious martyrs are generally conspicuous and popular in their own times, as well as latter ages, but the saviours of such works as 2001, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Glass-Bead Game*, or my own novel (with Parke Godwin), *The Masters of Solitude*, are pariahs or at least nonentities in the communities they strive to save.

Thus, Kubrick's "star child" must disappear from his own time and world in order to be literally and metaphorically reborn so he may revitalize a spiritually bankrupt Earth. Hesse's Joseph Knecht cannot dedicate himself to bettering his society till he thrusts aside his identity within it, that of Magister Ludi. Singer, in *The Masters of Solitude*, seems to loll away in a corner for most of the book, whereas he really is pulling puppetstrings in every important encounter of the plot. Likewise, the theme of artist/shaper of society's self-image as *isolate* may be eloquently observed in Chaim Potok's tragic *My Name is Asher Lev*, or for that matter, in practically every page that Thomas Wolfe ever wrote.

Note, too, the moving (and telling) peroration of Frodo the Ringbearer in the final chapter of Tolkien's trilogy: "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them."

To preserve Community, Frodo must relinquish it altogether.

In Steven Spielberg's eloquent film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (CE3K), an unprepossessing hero, Roy Neary, a Muncie, Ind., power repairman (played by Richard Dreyfuss), realizes his dearest boyhood dreams once he accepts the loss of his traditional Community. . . wife, children, employment, home, planet.

What Neary gave up and why was not nearly so well defined in the original version of CE3K that Columbia Pictures issued a few years ago. Spielberg was so preoccupied with the awesome events of the final portion of the film — the arrival of, and confrontation with, a race of benevolent extra-terrestrials — that he did not convincingly characterize the protagonist or his domestic crises. They were set out as facts to be accepted without cavil in order to get on with the admittedly engrossing story.

But Spielberg had the good sense to listen to his critics and, in one of the few

"product recalls" ever to occur in the film business, recut and altered the original work. Last summer, it was released to American film theatres as *The Special Edition* of CE3K.

It is indeed special. Re-edited and fitted with several important new scenes, mostly dealing with Roy Neary's family problems (and with a few older sequences trimmed or deleted), the new CE3K is a masterful work of cinematic art that takes all that was good in the original and adds to the mix the internal cohesion and formerly-lacking character motivation.

The only minor cavil is that Spielberg elects to throw away that wonderfully poignant visual when Lacombe (Francois Truffaut) watches forlornly as Neary enters the spaceship and knows he has to remain behind. The visual is still there (though slightly trimmed, I believe), but it is used as a functional device for returning from within the Mother Ship to the landing field. Separated from its original referent, it loses its point and power. In the original, Lacombe's expression of wonder and loss was the perfect conduit for the audience's own sense of awe (and disappointment that soon the magic would end, leaving us no nearer the stars.)

Incidentally, much of the hoopla concerning the reworked CE3K concerned the expanded ending, the "inside" of the spaceship. This is unfortunate; it distorts Spielberg's real accomplishment: sharpening the focus of the complete movie. The ending is a lovely, understated moment, but not the space-hardware blowoff that a lot of juvenile sf-ers probably expected.

The new domestic scenes depict Neary's crumbling capacity to cope as a father, husband and employee. In the earlier print, the amorality of alien intervention was never adequately dealt with, and even now it seems a bit highhanded of the ETs to create so much familial disharmony for Neary, not to mention the frantic mother whose son, Barry, is wrested away.

But at least, the new scenes (most of which "work" because of the superb performance by Ms. Teri Garr as Neary's wife) make it plain that the Uncle, Ind., power worker was probably heading for a divorce sooner or later. (Or not, which may have been quite as tragic for both he and his mate.) Now we see Neary inefficiently and ineffectually trying to function as an adult

and role model in a junk-strewn world of trains, pap TV and bourgeois values, where his offspring cannot share his sense of wonder.

Neary is a nebbish who nevertheless has an instinctual awareness that the American dream has turned into a nightmare, that everything he loved as a child was not all kitsch.

Characteristically, at the beginning of the tale, he unsuccessfully attempts to convince his kids to see Disney's *Pinocchio* instead of playing Goofy Golf. One might speculate on ironies here; the Disney version of folklore is itself sanitized and prettified, though far less in *Pinocchio* than in some of the later films.

But Spielberg's referent is important and significant at a time when America ostensibly is returning to "traditional" values. Is Neary invited by the ETs to come aboard their ship because he represents the best of what we call "human?" Or is it because he has the gentle immaturity of a sweet child — like the actual child of the film, Barry? Is his lack of maturity the very clay from which the ETs will fashion a "star child" like Bowman in Kubrick's myth?

The penultimate scene in the ship is an extension of the birthday-cake lightshow that Spielberg achieved with the landing of the great Mother Ship itself. It continues, rather than explains, the mystery. To make the linkup unmistakable, John Williams' haunting score adds a direct quote from the quintessential *Pinocchio* song, "When You Wish Upon a Star."

CE3K is enormously successful in communicating that childlike spirit which dreamers of science and art indulge as they explore new worlds of imagination and reality. Yet Roy Neary pays a considerable price to achieve his heart's desire. . . he gives up everything traditionally "correct" in his lifestyle. True, at the end, he does it willingly, but it is important not to dismiss the great personal agonies he undergoes earlier.

Those who hope to bring our society into new and better paths ought to reflect on this recurrent message: it may be necessary to labor a lot longer than three or four years to bring our Brave New Worlds about. The road may be rift with pain — and the efforts of individuals who dare to sacrifice position and place to further the general good.

We need fewer martyrs and more Frodos. ●