

The Golden Man

by
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FADE IN:

INT: DRAPER FARMHOUSE - EVENING

A clear summer night in rural Michigan at a lonely old farmhouse.

JAKE DRAPER (30s, lean) is standing at the screen door, looking out across the porch into the evening sky.

It's a warm night, but he has the fire going for the old hound asleep on the rug in front of the fireplace.

In the glowing light from the hearth, the place looks quaint and honmey, when in fact, it's as tired and worn out as it's owner.

The Draper family has lived and worked this land for four generations, and four generations of plain, tired faces stare down at Jake from the mantle.

Jake steps back into the house, easing the screen door closed so as not to startle his dog, PETE.

He stops and studies his last and best friend.

JAKE

Say, boy, wanna go for a walk?

The dog doesn't budge. Only the heaving of his flanks shows any sign of life.

JAKE

How 'bout a ride? Who wants to go for a ride?

This time, the tail thumps twice on the rug and lays still.

Jake looks down, sadly remembering a time when Pete would have knocked him down for the chance to stick his head out the window of Jake's pickup.

JAKE

Okay, then. Don't say I didn't ask.

Jake then goes over to the dining table and shuffles some letters in search of his keys.

There's a stack of overdo notices and unopened bills on the table, which he pushes aside to reveal his keychain.

Jake pockets the keys and reaches for the rusty coffee can further along the table.

He tips it over and a few crumpled dollars fall out.

Along with the paper money, there are a few coins that clatter and roll along the table top.

He rounds up the coins and notices that one of them is, in fact, a woman's wedding band.

He turns it a little as he inspects it in the dim light, then with a snort, he tosses the ring back into the can.

It makes an appropriately hollow sound.

Jake sticks the money in the other pocket of his faded jeans, and goes over to Pete for one last try.

He kneels down to get face to face to his buddy.

JAKE

Last chance. I'll keep all the beer
and women for myself.

He ruffles the furry ear closest to him and the creaky old dog lifts his head and gives him a slurp on the cheek.

The tail thumps twice and then he lays back down.

JAKE

Okay, then. I'll bring you back a
nice poodle for dessert, how's
that?

Jake gets up and with a last look filled with sadness, he heads out, not bothering shut or lock the door.

EXT: DRAPER FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jake steps off the porch and ambles slowly to his truck.

The ancient Ford had belonged to his grandfather, and had been busted up and fixed so many times that Jake had forgotten what color it used to be.

On his way, he stretches and looks up at the stars.

This far out from town, the night sky is deep and vast and filled with lights that are lifetimes away.

Taking a lungful of the clean air, he opens the door to the truck and slides across the bench seat.

Beat up though it was, like everything in Jake's life was, the old pickup starts right up.

The AM radio hisses to life as Jake points the truck toward town.

EXT: SLIM'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Jake pulls up to a bar that could have found it's picture in the dictionary next to the phrase "watering hole".

The truck comes to rest on the dirt lot right under the rickety sign that looks to be one good gust from toppling.

The flickering neon sign with missing letters currently spells out "S im Ba Gr", which strikes Jake as amusing.

JAKE

Heh, Simba... Grrrrr.

He makes his way past the few other dusty trucks in the lot to the side door, next to a sign that promises "Lousy Food, Warm Beer".

INT: SLIM'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Jake walks into the dimly lit bar and pauses to check for familiar faces.

The bar is small and has a run down pool table at which two men are busy arguing over whether or not that last shot should count.

Jake leaves them to their fun and heads to the bar.

Behind the bar is SLIM (40s, surly), who looks about as bored as a human could look.

His nickname is a joke, since Slim hasn't seen the light side of 400 pounds in years.

A few scattered customers at the bar don't even bother to look up as Jake makes his way to the end of the row of stools.

At the very end, he finds an empty stool and gets comfortable.

He tries to get the attention of the barkeep, who is adjusting an ancient black and white TV, trying to get the football game to come in more clearly.

Just when he's about to give up, he hears the toilet flush from the bathroom behind him.

Out from the shadows of the hallway, an old man, ABE (60s, grandfatherly) shambles out, wiping his hands on a paper towel.

ABE

Well, hell. Look what the cat done drug in.

He sits next to Jake and offers his freshly washed hand. Jake shakes it and smiles warmly at the old fellow.

JAKE

Howdy, Abe. How the hell are you?

ABE

Can't complain. Wouldn't do no good, even if I did.

Abe settles in and looks up the bar at Slim.

ABE

Speaking of complaining, where's that beer I ordered?

JAKE

Service with a smile, as usual.

ABE

Yeah. You'd think with a face like that, Ol' Slim would have a sense of humor.

Abe waves Slim over and reorders. Slim looks at Jake without bothering to comment.

JAKE

Bud. Thanks, Slim.

Slim grunts and waddles off to get the beers.

ABE

Haven't seen you in a coon's age, Jake. How're things?

JAKE

Could be better. Wish it would rain, so I could stop watering my fields.

ABE

Hasn't been this dry since the summer of '67. Glad I'm retired.

JAKE

How's that working out for you?

ABE

Beats the shit out of scratching dirt for a living. Maggie keeps finding things around the house for me to do. As if I haven't done enough my whole damn life.

Slim sets the bottles in front of the men and Jake reaches for his money.

Abe waves him off and pays Slim.

ABE

This one's on me. I'm just glad to have someone to talk to.

Jake raises the bottle in a salute to his friend.

JAKE

Thanks, I appreciate it.

They drink a few swallows in silence, enjoying the beer.

JAKE

How is Maggie, anyway?

ABE

Stubborn as a mule and twice as mean. You should come around sometime. She'll bake you cookies like when you were a kid.

JAKE

There's an idea. I always liked those oatmeal cookies with the raisins.

ABE

It'd give her something to do, besides crabbing at me. How's the Missus?

Jake pauses, gulps some beer and then starts explaining.

JAKE

She left last week. Couldn't deal with being a farmer's wife anymore.

ABE

Shit, kid, I'm sorry. I didn't know.

JAKE

It's alright. Can't say as I blame her. I'm pretty tired of this life myself.

ABE

She take everything?

JAKE

No, actually, she left most of her stuff and went off to the city.

ABE

That's something then. My boy's wife took him for half of everything and still wanted alimony.

JAKE

I got the farm, the truck and the dog.

ABE

That old hound? I remember he liked Maggie's cookies pretty good, too. Nothing like a good dog.

Jake finishes his beer and signals for another.

JAKE

He's dying. I can't bring myself to have him put down, either. Just trying to make him comfortable when his time comes.

ABE

That's why I spend so much time with Mr. Personality here. I want to be three sheets to the wind when I check out.

Slim sets a new round in front of them and has to rush to the pool table, where a fight has broken out.

Abe and Jake watch the commotion for a moment, as Slim bashes the two combatants and escorts them to the door.

JAKE

He can move when he needs to.

ABE

I'd hate to get between him and a box of donuts, that's for sure.

Excitement over, they turn back to the bar, and their drinks.

JAKE

So, your boy's divorced, eh? How's that grandson of yours doing with that?

ABE

He's staying with us.

Jake nods, and has a drink.

ABE (CONT'D)

Good boy, but dumber than shit.

JAKE

Really? I thought he was going to college.

ABE

He is. Agricultural Engineering.

JAKE

No kidding.

ABE

Yep, twenty thousand a year tuition, just to learn how to be a farmer.

JAKE

Damn.

ABE

Yep.

There's a moment of silence as they both ponder this.

JAKE

You're right, that's pretty fuckin' stupid.

ABE
He won't listen, either. I told him
"Forget about farming".

JAKE
I hear that.

ABE
I was his age... Hell, if I was
your age, know what I'd do?

JAKE
Huh-uh.

ABE
I'd get on the first plane south of
the border. Lay around the beach
all day like a goddamned hippie.

JAKE
Really?

ABE
Hell, yeah! Find me one of them big
tittied Messican women to chase
around and drink beer all day long.

Jake looks at Abe for a moment, then breaks into laughter.

JAKE
Let me see if I got this straight.

He holds up his hands and counts the points on his fingers.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Beach. Beer. And big, big titties.

Abe holds up his bottle in a toast to the ultimate lifestyle.

ABE
Fuckin' A right.

Jake chuckles at the thought.

JAKE
You old dog. I thought you were
happily married.

ABE
I am. Don't get me wrong, Maggie's
a good woman, but a man can dream,
can't he?

JAKE

Yeah, I suppose it doesn't hurt to have dreams.

ABE

And Hell, even if I could still raise the flag up the ol' flagpole, Maggie sure as shit wouldn't salute it.

JAKE

That's a little more than I needed to know, but I can see what you mean.

Jake stands up and fishes the crumpled bills out of his pocket to put on the bar.

ABE

Leaving so soon?

JAKE

Gotta get back and check on Pete.

ABE

Give that old hound a scratch behind the ears for me. Women come and go, boy, but a good dog, now that's something be thankful for.

JAKE

I am. Good seeing you again, Abe.

ABE

You too, ol' Hoss. Don't be such a stranger.

They shake hands and Jake starts to leave.

JAKE

'Night, Slim.

Slim just looks back and says nothing as Jake exits the bar.

EXT: DRAPER FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake pulls up at the homestead as the truck sputters and dies.

The twin beams of the headlights fade and flicker in the cloud of dust and smoke.

The truck rolls to a stop, and Jake shuts off the lights and gets out.

He stands there for a second, looking at the hood of the truck, trying to decide what to do next.

He turns and heads for the house, shaking his head.

JAKE

Fuck.

INT: DRAPER FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jake opens the screen and goes inside.

He looks at the hearth for Pete, but the old dog isn't in his usual spot.

Worried, Jake starts to look around with a little more urgency.

JAKE

Pete! Here, boy! Hey Petey!

Jake heads into the kitchen, where he sees Pete looking out the back door, whining.

Pete doesn't turn when Jake comes up to him, but continues to look up at the night sky.

JAKE

What is it boy? Raccoons?

Pete is still ignoring him, intent on whatever's out in the fields.

JAKE

C'mon now, buddy, you need to settle down. Can't have you getting so riled up at your age.

He grabs Pete's collar, but the dog resists him.

JAKE

Dammit, Pete! It's just an old raccoon. There are hundreds of 'em all over-

He stops in midsentence as he sees what the dog has been whining about.

Hovering low above his back forty is a large cluster of lights that glow and flicker.

As Jake releases Pete's collar, he hunkers down next to him to get a better look and to reassure the poor dog.

JAKE

It's okay, boy, just a news chopper
or something.

He sounds like he isn't even convincing himself.

Pete certainly doesn't believe him and continues his low whine of fright.

Deciding that it bears further investigation, Jake rummages through a kitchen drawer and comes up with a flashlight.

He snaps it on and off to test the batteries, and shuts the drawer.

Jake then steps out onto the back porch, carefully latching the door so that Pete stays inside.

EXT: DRAPER FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake is a few hundred yards from the safety of the house when he takes a moment to glance back.

The old farmhouse looks small in the distance and it's weak porch light does nothing to fend off the deep country night.

He continues on his way to investigate the lights, which have now started to slowly ascend into the black sky.

Hurrying now to keep from losing sight, Jake is almost running toward the spot where the lights hovered moments before.

The lights have outpaced him and are now almost out of his view, when Jake notices a smaller yellow light break off from the main cluster.

The little light streaks back toward his fields like a shooting star.

Several hundred yards ahead, the light crashes to the ground, it's sound a hollow boom, muffled by corn stalks and distance.

The lights in the sky have now completely disappeared.

Jake moves cautiously through the corn until he steps into the small clearing made a moment ago.

He plays the light from the flashlight across a scene of devastation.

The yellow light has crashed into the ground and left a ragged crater twelve feet across and several feet deep.

Corn stalks have been flattened in arcs away from the spot of the crater, not the elegant, precise circles of hoaxers, but smashed down with brute force in all directions.

Jake steps to the edge of the torn earth and for the first time sees the yellow light for what it really is.

Laying at the bottom of the crater is a highly polished and slightly glowing golden man.

Carefully Jake moves down into the crater and before he gets too close, he looks about him for something to use.

Picking up a loose corn stalk, he pokes the golden man a few times, ready to run away if necessary.

Getting no reaction, Jake moves in closer.

JAKE
Hello? Hello?

He pokes again.

JAKE
Anybody in there?

Still no reaction, so Jake relaxes a bit and pauses to scan the sky.

The lights have not returned, so he turns his attention back to the man in the hole.

Even in the dim light of the flashlight, he can see the amazing workmanship that crafted such a marvelous work of art.

Jake cautiously reaches out a hand, as if testing a stove top for heat.

The glinting gold metal is cold, despite it's plummet through the atmosphere, and remarkably, dent free.

Feeling a bit more at ease, Jake lifts an arm and has to struggle a bit with the weight.

Letting the arm drop with a thud, he looks a little more closely at the head of the figure.

An elaborate set of valves and switches run along the side, giving the metal man an old time mechanical look, much like the brass machines of the Victorian era.

He taps on the curved visor and it sounds hollow, so he tries to lift it.

A few hearty tugs produce no results, so he stops and looks at the man for a moment.

He then decides to try one of the levers on the side of the helmet and gives that a push.

With a hiss of escaping gas, the visor swings up to reveal the bloody face of a man.

As Jake steps back in shock, he is bathed in an intense white light and fades into unconsciousness.

INT: WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake wakes up, groggy, and looks about his new surroundings.

He is in a vast room, dimly lit, the walls not visible in the distance.

Next to him, on the floor is the golden man, stretched out on his back.

The visor is still open and the dead man is staring up, sightless.

Jake stands up and looks around, visibly shaken.

JAKE

Hello?

His voice echoes slightly back to him, greatly delayed.

JAKE

Hello? Anybody?

He turns around as he speaks, unable to make anything out in the shadows.

JAKE

Look, I'm a vet, okay? I served in the Gulf.

He looks around for his flashlight, finds it and tries to get it going.

The flashlight doesn't work, so he drops it with a clatter.

JAKE

This is an exercise, right? New spacesuit tests or something? I had clearance and a good record. You can debrief me and send me home.

Still no answer.

JAKE

I won't say a word to the press. I know all about-

The floor shakes, and Jake drops to his knees, startled.

There is a hiss and a hum, and the lights flicker a bit.

Jake begins to have difficulty breathing and starts to panic.

JAKE

Hey! I can't breathe! I-

He starts to gasp and cough, looking about wildly.

He settles on the man in the suit and desperately looks for a way to open the rest of it.

He pulls and pushes on the various levers along the side, having more and more trouble breathing.

The suit suddenly pops open, the torso splitting down the side and swinging upward.

The upper arms and thighs have also popped open and Jake hurries to remove the body.

He gets his hands under the arms of the dead man, and pulls him free.

There's some blood pooled and drying in the back of the suit, but Jake wastes no time scrambling into it.

He pops the legs and arms closed and then secures the torso.

He reaches up with a golden hand, and lowers the visor, which latches shut with a wheeze.

Suddenly, his vision has improved, and he is able to breathe quite easily.

He gets to his feet, amazed at the ease of mobility inside the heavy suit.

The metallic visor has become semi transparent and Jake's face is now visible, frightened and sweating.

The visor has illuminated the scene, and he can see that the warehouse is much larger than he thought.

He looks down now that his panic has subsided, and he sees the dead man on the floor clearly for the first time.

The man is dressed in a t-shirt and jeans, and looks to be about Jake's age.

He is unshaven and has a look of terror frozen on his face, not quite the military specialist one would imagine.

Jake can hear voices in his ears, but can't quite make out the words.

JAKE

Hello? Hey, there's a dead guy out here.

He taps the side of the helmet, trying to improve the radio connection.

JAKE

Hello, Command? Anyone? This is Jake Draper. I'm a civilian. I mean, I'm a vet. I was in the Army, but I'm a civilian now.

Still no response, so he starts to test the walking ability of the suit.

JAKE

This whole thing is a huge misunderstanding.

He stops walking, intent on hearing a reply.

JAKE

I just want to go home.

There is a burst of static and some garbled speech, then lights begin to appear on the surface of the visor.

Jake can see that this is a map of some kind, the little blip in the center re-oriens as he turns.

He walks a bit and the wall on the display comes a little closer to the blinking image that shows his location.

There is a red light flashing on the nearest wall, so Jake heads for that.

JAKE

Look, I'll sign a statement, and forget everything I saw.

He gets to the light and can see that it's on a panel next to a large set of steel doors.

There are a number of buttons and lights, each of which are labeled with symbols rather than words.

Jake clanks the hand of the suit against the door.

The knock on the door sounds dull and heavy, but there is no further noise from within.

He studies the panel for a moment.

At the bottom is a symbol that shows two arrows pointing away from a center vertical line, just like the open door symbol on an elevator.

Jake pushes that button, expecting the doors to swing open.

Instead, a number of red lights and alarms sound around the warehouse floor.

He steps back, startled and tries to undo his selection.

A frantic burst of garbled speech hurts his ears.

Jake staggers in pain away from the doors, which have remained closed.

The floor however, has split open and a strong blast of air has started to pull Jake toward the opening.

JAKE

Hey! ...Hey!

He struggles against the air current, but soon the wind is far too strong for him and he loses balance.

Jake tumbles over and over toward the widening hole in the floor.

The dead man, closer to the center, has already been pulled through.

Jake teeters on the edge, and in his panic can see the lights of a city many thousands of feet below him.

He struggles to find a grip, but falls into the void.

As he clears the opening, he can see that cluster of lights from earlier is actually a ship of some kind.

His view of the vast craft improves as Jake plummets swiftly away toward Earth.

INT: HANSON FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Abe is staring out the screen door at the lights in the night sky.

He notices a smaller golden light break away from the main body of lights and fall toward the Draper farm.

His wife, MAGGIE (60s, matronly) is bustling in the kitchen.

MAGGIE

Abe, come away from that door. Your cookies are getting cold.

ABE

Goddamn aliens over to the Draper place again.

Maggie walks into the living room and sets a tray of cookies and milk on the coffee table.

MAGGIE

You shouldn't worry about that so much, the Rodriguezes are perfectly nice people-

ABE

Not Messicans. Aliens. Little green men from outer space. Sometimes, woman, I think you just don't want to listen.

MAGGIE

Abraham Jeremiah Hanson, I will not
be spoken to in that tone of voice.
You've been spending far too much
time in that beer hall. Now come
and eat your cookies before your
milk sours.

He grumbles, but leaves the doorway and picks up a cookie.

He looks at it a second and asks hopefully.

ABE

Chocolate Chip?

MAGGIE

Oatmeal Raisin, you need the
roughage.

He shoots her a disgusted look and takes a bite.

ABE

Perfect.

FADE TO BLACK.