



Furthest

Suzette Haden Elgin

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Coyote Jones, agent for the Tri-Galactic Intelligence Service, had been sent to a planet so unimaginably distant from the rest of the Federation that it bore the descriptive name Furthest. His mission: to find out why the total body of data about Furthest showed the world's inhabitants to be absolutely average down to the last decimal place. That data had to be false.

Jones was permitted to live on the planet, but the natives were so wary of him that he could uncover nothing - until he chanced into a personal crisis faced by his young Furthest assistant. The boy's sister had been sentenced to Erasure, and he wanted Coyote Jones to take the fugitive girl in and hide her.

Against his judgment, Jones agreed, and thereby became a criminal on a world he didn't understand. But suddenly the answers began to come, and he found that this planet named Furthest held more strangeness than he could ever have imagined...

Furthest Details

Date : Published 1971 by Ace

ISBN :

Author : Suzette Haden Elgin

Format : 191 pages

Genre : Fiction, Science Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Furthest for online ebook

Chak says

I saw the cover and had to take this from the sharing shelf at my gym. I really love little-known, pulpy little mass market sci-fi books with great covers from the 50s through the 70s (see *Time Tunnel*, *Forerunner Foray*, and *The Fury Out of Time*), and this one didn't let me down. I read it as a quick palate cleanser after a long and intense book.

At first, it was hard to believe this was written by a woman, since it felt like the author wrote the swingin' sexy, back-talkin', satisfy-four-women-in-one-night male protagonist Coyote Jones as a deluded self-portrait. Yes, his name is Coyote Jones and he's an agent for the Tri-Galactic Intelligence Service (a spy) posing as a folk musician. The set up belies the quality of the book. The plot is interesting and without giving too much away, deals non-gratuitously with the suppression of freedom and information, and women's roles in fundamentalist religions. The overall writing did not stand out to me, but some of the chapter introductions (attributed to fictional sources, which I've omitted here) were kind of brilliant. The writer proved her intelligence and wit in these small, almost ignorable pieces, and it was these that elevated the book to four stars for me. Without them, it would have been a 3-star book at most.

Chapter 1: "A secret is like a small child; the more you do for it, the more of a nuisance it becomes. Before you take upon yourself such a burden, consider well-- the chances are that unless you take elaborate pains to conceal something it will never be noticed."

Chapter 7: "Since the only real function of officials is to serve as repositories for mail -- a sort of 'X Marks The Spot' function -- we have no such creatures within our clusters. We have found that there is nothing at all that an official can do that cannot be done by a mailbox with equal skill."

Chapter 9: "Frustration is a wholesome part of education, and a necessary one, but it must be the frustration of not knowing what one is eager to know. The child for whom all the answers are always PROVIDED may well develop the ability to memorize, but unless he is very unusual he will never learn how to think. Education by spoon-feeding is less trouble for the adults involved, but useless and destructive for the learning child. Teaching must be a matter ALLOWING -- not of forcing -- a child to learn."

Chapter 10: "To have proved yourself able to defend your property is to have proved not that you are a man, but that you are a slave."

Chapter 12: "No matter how inconvenient or unpleasant an illusion may be, if a man has chosen it himself and held it long enough, if he has built it up in sufficient detail and become accustomed to taking it into account upon every occasion, it will become precious to him and he will fight to maintain it in preference to even a pleasant truth. This is because it will have become one of the anchoring points of his mind, like the points which anchor the web of a spider, and to displace it will cause a shift in equilibrium for which painful compensation must be made. This is only a form of self-defense; nonetheless it inhibits growth."

Chapter 13: "The vast majority of activities which take upon themselves the name 'revolution' are not revolution at all; they're just foreplay."

Chapter 15: "There is only one sort of love that has any value, and that is the love that leaves the beloved free. All the rest is sickness."

