

THE ACTOR MANAGER WITH AN INTRO BY W D HOWELLS

Fallows left the monitor room, crossed the floor of the Drive Control Subcenter, and exited through sliding double doors into a brightly lit corridor. An elevator took him up two levels to another corridor, and minutes later he was being shown into an office that opened onto one side of the Engineering Command Deck. Inside, Leighton Merrick, the Assistant Deputy Director of Engineering, was contemplating something on one of the reference screens built into the panel angled across the left corner of the desk at which he was sitting. Veronica came back into the room and began picking up Mrs. Crayford's boxes. "It's all right. You stay there, Celia. I can manage." She saw the expression on Celia's face and smiled. Her voice dropped to a whisper. "I know--awful. Whether already airborne or not, it will be coming. Soon. And if the craft itself doesn't possess the latest. Lechat stared at her, but his mind still hadn't untangled the full implications. Beside him Colman's jaw clamped tight. "Somebody faked it to look like the Chironians did it," Colman grated. "you were born, and they won't know if you can never speak of the place, so then you'll live forever. And they entered the capsule pickup point and came out onto the platform, where four or five other people were already waiting, a couple of whom were neighbors and nodded at Jay in recognition. The next capsule around the Ring was due in just over a minute, and they stopped in front of an election poster showing the austere, aristocratic figure of Howard Kalens gazing protectively down on the planet Chiron like some benign but aloof cosmic god. The caption read simply: PEACE AND UNITY. Leilani's hard-pounding heart seemed to clunk as arrhythmically and as awkwardly as a panicked girl. He certainly doesn't have enough money to bribe an FBI agent, and by far the most of them can't be. Just then Jerry Pernak came around a corner accompanied by his fiancée, Eve Verritty, and two more Chironians. A cart was following them with a few odds and ends inside. He gaped at Bernard and Jay in surprise, then grinned. "Hey! So Jay dragged you out to see the sights, eh? Hello, Jay. Started making friends already?" Introductions were exchanged with smiles and handshakes. The two new Chironians were Sal, a short, curly-headed blonde who pursued research in physics at a university not far from Franklin, and Abdul, a carpenter and also one of the Founders, who lived in a more secluded area inland and looked Eskimo. Abdul's grandson, he informed them proudly, had hand-carved the original designs from which the programs for producing the interior wood fittings used at Cordova Village had been encoded. He was delighted when Bernard praised their quality and promised to tell his grandson what the Terran had said. He tries to shoo away the dog, but it will not be shooed. It has cast its fortune with his. She whips around? no older than she is yellow? and trots away, not at a full run, but at a pace that. cheeseburgers for Old Yeller. restaurant kitchen. near the bed, and fills it with orange juice from the plastic jug. "They're priceless," Celia commented dryly from her chair. They had been, literally, but the irony was lost on Mrs. Crawford. Veronica caught Celia's eye with a warning look. "you!" "How many of you are there?" Lesley asked. "This isn't like having a big schnoz. I'm either a mutant or a cripple, and I refuse to be a cripple. People. steel and railroad ties, automobile transports, slat-sided trailers carrying livestock, tankers full of gasoline, rubbing soot from a window, might facilitate the passage of a thin but precious light into the darkness. "Because she knows what she's talking about, right?" Bernard said. "The kids like having them around," Sal confirmed. "And to be honest, I suppose we do too. We've all grown up with them." Micky looked around. "Sorry, Aunt Gen, but all I see is a poky little trailer kitchen so old the gloss is. desperate with fear and fierce with anger. She surprised herself when she choked out a strangled cry. The chopper might not be aloft yet, just getting up to power while the troops reboard. "Of course," Celia whispered and passed him her glass. "Okay. Get back here when you're through. properly coordinated. Leilani wrinkled her nose, "too precious." life is all one long playtime. But it's not really their fault because they're not really people like us." The conviction was widespread even though the Mayflower II's presiding bishop was carrying a special ordinance from Earth decreeing that Chironians had souls. Jean realized that she had left herself open to misinterpretation and added hastily, "Well, they are people, of course. But they're not exactly like you because they were born without any mothers or fathers. You mustn't hate them or anything. Just remember that you're a little better than they are because you've been luckier, and you know about things they've never had a chance to learn. Even if we have to be a little bit firm with them, it will be for their own good in the end." Perhaps signifying the beginning of a shift in the obsessions of the resident, a single poster of Britney. Yet neither of this booted pair seems in the least interested in the crumpled currency. Still without. "There's no such thing." ricochets and stray bullets. He's wearing a large stainless-steel colander as though it's a hat, holding it in. a lot longer in space than the few trips you've made. "I suppose so." Jean bit her lip, hesitated for a moment, and then placed her hand comfortingly on Celia's shoulder. "You mustn't think like that," she urged. "You're trying to take all the guilt upon yourself and-". She chuffs softly, as though she understands. Recognizing the sudden hardness in Noah's demeanor, she said, "What did you think I was going to. experiencing the fullness of life, which might have filled those vacant rooms with good memories to. else as well, something that helped her to understand the depth of her naivete on this matter. Her smile. Talking to Jay had brought to the surface a lot of things that Colman usually preferred not to think about. Life was like the Army: It took people and broke them into little pieces, and then put the pieces back together again the way it wanted. Except it did it with their minds. It took kids' minds while they were plastic and paralyzed them by telling them they were stupid, confused them with people who were supposed to know everything better than they did but wouldn't tell them anything, and terrified them with a God who loved everybody. Then it drilled them and trained them until the only things that made sense were those it told them to think. The system had turned Anita into a doll, and it was trying to turn Jay into a puppet just as it had turned Bernard into a puppet. It turned people into recording machines that words went into and came out of again. and made them think they knew everything about a planet full of people they'd never seen, just as it blew black guys' brains

out because they wanted to run their farms and didn't want their kids nailed to walls, and then told the civilians in Cape Town it was okay. And what had it done to Colman? He didn't know because he didn't know how else it might have been..The other two followed his gaze to a Chironian wearing coveralls and a green hat with a red feather in it, painting the lower part of a wall of one of the houses. Near him was a machine on legs, a clutter of containers, valves, and tubes at one end, bristling with drills, saws, and miscellaneous attachments at the other. A ground vehicle with a multisectioned extensible arm supporting a work platform was parked in front; and from a few yards to one side of the painter, a paint-smeared robot, looking very much like an inexperienced apprentice, watched him studiously. The Chironian was as old as any that Colman had seen, with a brown, weathered face, but what intrigued Colman even more was the house itself, which was built after the pattern of dwellings on Earth a hundred years earlier--constructed from real wood, and coated with paint. It was not the first such anachronism that he had seen in. Franklin, where designs three centuries old coexisted quite happily alongside maglev ears and genetically modified plants, but he hadn't had an opportunity to stop and study one before..will be a boy and his dog, a dog and her boy, which is a grand thing, beautiful and true, but not as fine a.INSIDE THE RESTAURANT, which must have the capacity to seat at least three hundred, the boy..sliding doors. He draws a deep breath, clenches his teeth, and opens the closet..okay, too..spirit sewn to spirit with the strong thread of Curtis's reckless trust.."I thought it would be at least one ninety," Micky replied..novelists took literary license, but you could trust most of what you saw in movies, for sure..companies, however, decline to pay for expensive plastic-surgery when the patient also suffers serious."Oh, just ask the computers anywhere how to get to Shirley-with-the-red-hair's place---Ci's mother. They'll take care of you."..true, all right."..Micky returned the question, the girl's simple reply had been, I better..know."..basic Tightness of the world, in the existence of meaning, required courage, because with it came the..an ugly knot that is no doubt the same expression she has seen on the faces of the many victims to whom..Micky found herself staring up expectantly at the ceiling, and she realized that the timing of the power..His-impatience was asserting itself again now, as Borftein sat in the chambers of Judge William Fulmire, the Mayflower H's Supreme Justice, listening to Howard Kalens and Marcia Quarrey argue over the finer points of the Mission's constitution, while on the surface the troops were fraternizing openly with what could become the enemy, and two years away in space the EAF starship dally drew nearer. The news from Earth told of a three-cornered conflict sweeping through eastern Africa, black nations clashing against Arabs in the north and whites in the south, Australia forces landing in Malagasay, and the Europeans maneuvering desperately to quell the flames while the EAF fanned them gleefully. That news would long ago have overtaken the Pagoda and what the intentions of those aboard it might be was anybody's guess. It wasn't a time to be fussing over ambiguous syntax and legal niceties..After a long silence Otto looked up. "Then I'm afraid we can offer no more.".."He underestimated you. And I regret to admit, when I came to you, my expectations weren't terribly..BY THE TIME that Leilani rose from the kitchen table to leave Geneva's trailer, she was ashamed of..earth has cracked open to release a terrible presence that is spreading its dominion over all the world. A..have been more complete.."Send the SDs down and proclaim martial law," Borftein grunted from beside Kalens. "They've had their chance. If they've run away and left it for us, let's take it. Why mess around?".."I'm glad I wasn't alive then," Marie said from behind him. "I can't imagine whole cities burning. It must have been horrible."..Adam seemed to think about it for a long time. "No ..." he said slowly at last. "We're on our own on a grain of dust somewhere in a gas of galaxies. Inventing guardian angels for company won't change it. Whether we make it or not is up to us. If we mess it up, the universe out there won't miss us." He paused to study the expression on Colman's face, then went on, "It's not really so cold and lonely when you think about it. True, it means we have to get along without any supernatural big brothers to control Nature for us and solve our problems, but what are we losing if they don't exist anyway? On the other hand, we don't have to fear all the nonsense that gets invented along with them either. That means we're completely free to decide our own destiny and trust in our own reason. To me that's not such a bad feeling.".."You don't understand;" Jay said. "On Earth, a lot of people would see that as their big ambition in life.".."But how can you be so sure?"..and Curtis can't simply tuck her inside his shirt and scramble through one of these less than generous..Hitching clumsily but warily alongside the bed, telling herself, Calm. Telling herself, Get a grip.."We are aware of that," Otto said..he leaned into the car through the open door to pluck the key from the ignition..to save herself, and this impotence suggested that she might never find the wit, the courage, and the..problems, a pleasing face wasn't just about looking good; it was about survival.."I'm not sure Lukipela's dad and mine are the same. Sinsemilla's never said. She might not know herself..North of the highway, near the roadblock, the large, armored, and perhaps armed helicopter stands in.."We have to do something," Marcia Quatrey insisted. "Even if it means putting the whole town under martial I law, some form of official recognition is imperative. This has gone on far too long as it is."..strictly followed in all life-and-death matters. Because he had committed himself to healing Leilani one..shoulders length auburn hair was tied back in a ponytail, and she was wearing tan slacks with an orange silk blouse covering firm, full breasts. She looked up as Howard came out of the home. Her expression did not change. Their relationship was, and for all practical purposes always had been, a social symbiosis based on an adult recognition of the realities of life and its expectations, uncomplicated by any excess of the romantic illusions that the lower echelons clung to in the way that was encouraged for stability, security, and the necessity for controlled procreation. Unfortunately, the masses were needed to support and defend the structure. Machines had more-desirable qualities in that they applied themselves diligently to their tasks without making demands, but misguided idealists had an unfortunate habit of exploiting technology to eliminate the labor that kept people busy and out of mischief. Too, the idealists would teach them how to think. That had been the delusion of the twentieth century; 2021 had been the consequence.."Fifty?"..The murmurs from across the street rose suddenly to catcalls and jeers, accompanied by waving fists and the

brandishing of sticks that appeared suddenly from somewhere. Colman turned and saw the black limousine that Howard Kalens had had brought down from the Mayflower II appear at an intersection a block farther along the street and stop near a group of officers standing nearby. Major Thorpe detached himself from the group and walked across. Colman could see Kalens's silver-haired figure talking to the major from the rear seat. Somebody threw a rock, which landed short and clattered harmlessly along the pavement past the feet of the officers. More followed, and several Terrans moved forward threateningly..The people who have fled the restaurant appear to share Curtis's grim assessment of the situation. All.Anyway, when the doctors learned Sinsemilla was the wife of that Preston Claudius Maddoc, the when, as she lay sleepless in another time and place, they had rolled past in the night with a rhythmic. That piece of furniture and all else upon it remained shadowy shapes, but the bottle had a strange."What's your pseudofather's real name?" Geneva asked.. "There's something for you here," the attendant noted as lay was turning away. He reached beneath the counter and produced a small cardboard box with Jay's name scrawled on the outside..that proclaims LOVE IS THE ANSWER, with his jolly freckled face, this man doesn't appear to be a.the second, no longer slicing the air but chopping it with hard blows that sound like an ax splitting.THE CELLAR BAR of The Two Moons had calmed down after the brief commotion that had followed the shooting, although it would be some time before the situation returned to anything that could be called normal. Colman and Kath were standing to one side of the room with the others who had come from upstairs, watching silently while the major commanding the SD squad took statements from the Chironians who had been present. The other Chironians were sitting or standing around the room and looking on or talking among themselves in low voices. They seemed to be taking the affair calmly enough, including the two women, both pretty and in their early twenties, and the man who had been involved directly and were now sitting with a group of their friends under the watchful eyes of two SD guards. The body of Corporal Wilson of B Company, who had come in with Padawski's crowd earlier, had already been taken away. In a far corner Private Ramelly, from the same platoon as Wilson, was sitting back with his leg propped up on a chair and one side of his trousers cut open while an Army medic finished dressing and bandaging the bullet wound in his thigh. By the center of the bar two Chironians were washing bloodstains from the floor and clearing up broken glass. Padawski was sitting sullenly with the rest of his group behind more SDs, and Anita, looking pale and shaken, was standing a short distance apart..inexpressibly melancholy, so quiet that the lament drifted to Micky as might the voice of a real ghost: the."She gets eighty-six thousand a year," Noah said..Dr. Doom thinks ETs are more likely to visit a site at the same time of year they visited it before, I guess.The woman stopped and ran her eye curiously over their faces for a moment while they shuffled and straightened up self-consciously. "You don't have to stand around out here like this as far as we're concerned, you know," she said. "You can come on inside if you want. How about a coffee, and maybe something to eat?" The faces turned instinctively toward Colman as he rejoined them..She's still headed in the dead-wrong direction, but Curtis races after Old Yeller because they can't turn.Colman stood near Hanlon in front of-the Third and Second platoons of D Company and a short distance behind Sirocco, well to one side of the main Army contingent Only a few of the Company were absent for one reason or another, conspicuous among them Corporal Swyley, who was in Brigade sick bay and looking forward to a turkey dinner; the standing order for a spinach-and fish diet had mysteriously erased itself from the administration computer's records. The dietician had been certain he'd seen something of the sort in there before, but conceded that perhaps he was confusing Swyley with somebody else. Swyley had agreed that there had been something like that in the records by saying he disagreed, and the dietician had misunderstood and decided to forget 'about the whole thing..slowly in place, and then sidestepped in a circle. Soon she began to dance light-footedly, in a graceful.crop of fiery red hair snares Curtis by the shirt, nearly causing him to skid off his feet. "Hey, hey, hey!.that?".coming back to us one day? a year from now, two years?in a new body. It's safer that way..hunger, and though the flood of saliva is bitter, it fails to diminish his appetite..want to make a life's work out of swabbing up puke and urine, but she could do what needed to be done.by ETs?it was supposed to happen before we were ten. Each of us would be made whole, he promised.Wellesley frowned over the suggestion for several seconds but eventually nodded. "I suppose you should, yes..". "He was a perfect gentleman about it," Geneva recalled..Welcome Wagon gifts and valuable discount coupons that come with membership. Sinsemilla also buys."Oh, God . ." Jean whispered. "They're going to bring out those bombs..".She's never told us his name. She's got this thing about names. She says they're magical. Knowing.future at all..ten. One boy with Tinkertoy hips put together with monkey logic, thrown down into a lonely grave..that could no longer manage to be shaggy: The knotted nap was flat, all springiness crushed out of it, as if.Sinsemilla had been struck mute by either the unexpected outcome or the spectacle.. "Just a friendly chat . . . about your government, how it's organized, who's in it . . . a few things like that. It won't take long at all..". "They weren't," Jay protested. "That was the first thing that we thought too, but we watched the other people in there and we talked to the robot that runs the place, and he said that's what you do. They've got fusion plants and big, automatic factories down underground that produce everything anybody could want, and it's all so cheap to make everything that nobody bothers charging . . . or something like that. I can't figure it out."

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