

WE MORTALS A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

myself?" real-estate salesmen, one of them might have whupped his ass just as a matter of principle..pale blue smoke and appear to stutter on the pavement..than a breeze that has found an open door in the attic of the forest.."Was it respect they showed that boy who was killed last night?" Jean asked bitterly. "And our people say they're not even going to press charges against the man who did it. What kind of a way is that to live? Are we supposed to just let them dictate their standards to us by shooting anyone who steps over their lines? Are we supposed to do nothing until we get a call telling us that Jay's in the hospital-or worse-because he said the wrong thing?"..the slightly vacant look of a long-term Ecstasy user?..was behind the steering wheel, picking his nose.."Nonsense, Micky," Geneva said. "Tomorrow I can bake another apple pie all for you."..sister-becoming and her devoted brother racing north through the desert darkness, into darkness deeper.They stopped by a small open square, enclosed on three sides by buildings with striped canopies over their many balconies and flowery windows. A preacher from the Mayflower II, evidently anxious to make up for twenty years of lost time, was belaboring a mixed audience of Chironians from the corner of a raised wall surrounding a bank of shrubbery. He seemed especially incensed by the evidence of adolescent parenthood around him, existing and visibly imminent. The Chironians appeared curious but skeptical. Certainly there were no signs of any violent evangelical revivals about to take place, or of dramatic instant conversions among the listeners..POINT NORDAY WAS twenty-five miles or so north of Franklin, beyond the far headland of Mandel Bay, on a rocky stretch of coastline indented by a river estuary that widened about a large island and several smaller ones. In the early days of the colony, when the Founders first began to venture out of the original base to explore their surroundings on foot, they had found it to be approximately a day's travel north of Franklin. Hence its name..of the cowboys who might be ? surely are ? in the vicinity, or into another posse of FBI agents.home.."HE'S AMAZING, ISN'T he," Shirley said in an awed voice as she leaned forward to get a better view of the table over the shoulder of her daughter, Ci, who was sitting on the floor. "It must be a genetic mutation that makes sticky fingers or something."..the trembling creature on the rear lawn, where it dashed out of sight into a bed of red and coral-pink."Serial killers," Curtis gasps, pointing toward the motor home, which is more than twenty vehicles behind.fracturing it, and furrowed through her scalp."..He hummed softly to himself and sauntered along the hallway to look into the room that Jay had picked for himself. Jay's cases and boxes were still lying in an untidy pile that stretched along one wall beneath a litter of books, charts, tools, and a heap of mirrors and optical components scrounged from Jerry Pernak a month or so previously for a holographic microscope that Jay said he was going to make. The carcass of a stripped-down industrial process control computer was lying on the floor by the bed, along with more boxes, an Army battle helmet and ammunition belt--both souvenirs of Jay's mandatory cadet, training on the Mayflower II and assorted junk from a medium-duty fluid clutch assembly, the intended purpose of which was a complete mystery, Jay himself had disappeared early on to go off exploring. Bernard shrugged to himself. If Jay wanted to leave the work until the end of the day when he would be tired, that was his business..after the semi comes to a full stop, these doors slide open, and men in riot gear jump out of the rig, not.In their initial meeting, she acknowledged that she would have preferred a large detective agency or a.peculiar quality of confrontation had crept into their exchange..reborn, the frightened fugitive scampered directly to him, onto his palm, up his arm, finally to a stop on his.barbecue anytime soon?"..them to the silken gloom and the suety glow of the candle flames.."Are there any more objectors?" Sterm inquired. Behind him Wellesley, white faced and haggard, slumped into his chair..Brow dripping, face slick, body clammy: Leilani reeked of sour sweat, no heavenly flower now. On her.kitchen staff, realizing that these two cowboys have no law-enforcement credentials, object to their.ABOUT THE AUTHOR.precious retreat; though Sinsemilla might invade any room without warning, Leilani could at least pretend.his neck, looking for the source of the sound, as a slipstream of warm desert air cuffs his face and tosses.self-possession and faraway music. "How are you this evening, Mr. Farrel?"..Ignoring her, the girl plucked a roll of plastic wrap from a counter and began to cover the serving bowls,..refused to dwell on or even to lament adversities, and she remained determined instead to receive them.two-beer check..future at all.."Then you'd have all the justification you need to crack down hard, wouldn't you," Kalens answered..apprehended within the next few minutes would be just as great if he were a thousand miles from here..in fact, the reason that he lived at all.."Plights and pickles. Troubles. Some of us get 'em served one at a time on a little plate, and some of us.irony in that."..It was interesting, certainly. "Well.. maybe," Bernard replied guardedly. "Who do you know there?" -."He has a certain style. At least one isn't mortified to be seen in his company.".."As ever," Kath told him and smiled. "And yours, Lurch?"..Her kindness has a profound effect on the boy, and she blurs a little as he says, "Thank you, ma'am.".."T'm getting to know them."..He had only partly registered the tousle-headed figure coming out of the main entrance, when the figure recognized him and came to a dead halt in surprise. The action caught the corner of Colman's eye, and he turned his head reflexively to find himself looking at Jay Fallows. Before either of them could say anything, Bernard Fallows came out a few paces behind, saw Colman, and stopped in his tracks. It was too late for him to go back in, and impossible to walk on by. A few awkward seconds passed while Bernard showed all the signs of being in an agony of embarrassment~ and discomfort, and at the same time of an acute inability to do anything to overcome it. Colman didn't feel he had any prerogative to make a first move. Bernard's eyes shifted from Colman to Kath, and Colman read instantly that they had already met. Bernard looked as if he wanted to talk to her, but felt he couldn't with Colman present..Driscoll frowned, thought about it, and dismissed it with a shake of his head. "This is kinda funny," he said to.the floor. He stays low, hoping to get out of sight before the two cowboys arrive. He avoids collisions.She swallowed as she traced through her thoughts and, checked herself. She was rationalizing

or hiding something from herself, she knew. Howard had come home enough times angry and embittered after pressing for measures to halt the decay and being overruled. He was doing what he could~ but the influence of the planet was all pervasive. She was merely projecting into him and personifying something else--something that stemmed from deep inside her. Even as she felt the first stirring of something deep within her mind, the vision came of herself and Howard, alone and unbending, left isolated in their backwater while the river flowed on its way, unheeding and uncaring. After twenty years, nothing lay ahead but emptiness and oblivion. The cold truth behind her rage toward Howard was that her protector was as helpless as she.. "You do now." Merrick arched his fingers in front of his face. "Would you say that delinquency and criminal tendencies do, or do not, reflect the image we ought to be trying to maintain of the Service?". Usually, she avoided the shower and soaked in the tub? though with nothing more fragrant than Ivory. "Of course not," Rastus said. "But everyone values what they have. I said the mind was an infinite resource, but only if you don't squander it. Don't you think that makes an interesting paradox?". CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE. Farrel, you're the first basset hound I've ever known with such strong principles.". "Are you never serious?" Micky asked. "Are you always making with the wisecracks, the patter?". sagebrush or a gnarled spray of withered weeds, it cuts loose twisted shadows that leap into the night.. One Door Away From Heaven. asleep, because the snake is essentially sleepless. This wasn't a way Leilani could live, not a situation she. hideous screams still vivid in memory, the motherless boy relaxes behind the steering wheel of a new. smile, warm in even the most bitter wind, describing graceful arabesques upon her flashing blades, while. "The day of the test," Leilani said, "I had chocolate ice cream for breakfast. If I'd had oatmeal, I might've." "Oh, Jay," Jean groaned. "They were probably taking you for a ride to gets laugh out of it. At your age, you should know better.". He feels for the light switch and clicks it on and immediately off, just to get a glimpse of his surroundings.. Or, at least, the three that lived with him. Adam had two more who lived with an earlier "roommate" named Pam in an arctic scientific base of some kind in the far north of Selene. Adam's father lived there too; he'd separated from Kath several years earlier. Adam's present partner, Barbara, had flown to the arctic base for a two week visit and had taken a daughter--hers but not Adam's --who lived with them in Franklin. Barbara also intended to see Pam and Adam's other two children, as Pam and she were quite good friends. On Chiron, no institution comparable to marriage seemed to exist, and no social expectations of monogamous or permanent relationships between individuals---or for that matter any expectations for them to conform to any behavior pattern at all.. lunatic charm.". few feet, the boy can see this is debris with value: a five-dollar bill.. Colman smiled ruefully. "I don't have any fine family pedigree or big family trees full of famous ancestors to talk about," he warned.. "Payoff for what?". "How about putting some people outside in suits to blow the tail section of the Battle Module?" Carson suggested from the second row back.. little gravy. We'll put it in a takeout dish, and give it to you for nothing because we just love doggies.. With a sigh and a laugh, Micky said, "Why don't we save time and you just tell me what I believe?". "Sure they can. Even before Dr. Doom, Sinsemilla was footloose. She says we lived in Santa Fe, San. The Chironian reflected upon the explanation, evidently found it good enough, nodded, and passed over his pistol. The girl who had wounded Ramelly followed suit. Significantly, Colman thought, the major did not ask her companion if she too was armed. As the guards began.-an unfamiliar face by the side of Swyley, who was still standing. He had short-cropped hair, a hard-eyed, inscrutable, clean-shaven face, and was standing impassively with his arms folded across his chest. "Who's this?" Sirocco said "He's not from D Company, ". These are not rich people, and he feels guilty about taking their money. One day, if he lives long enough, "Fine." Bernard nodded but caught Jay's eye for a fraction of a second longer than he needed to, and with a trace more seriousness than his tone warranted.. "I love your nasty mouth.". No job. No prospects. No money in the bank. An '81 Camaro that still somewhat resembled a. to dart beneath the surface of their conversation, though it eluded her net.. "Sure. Who doesn't?". would be crumpled wrappers from weird and unknown brands of candy discarded by traveling trolls or. To Fallows, Merrick always seemed to have been designed along the lines of a medieval Gothic cathedral. His long, narrow frame gave the same feeling of austere perpendicularity as aloof columns of gaunt, gray stone, and his sloping shoulders, downturned facial lines, diagonal eyebrows, and receding hairline angling upward in the middle to accentuate his pointed head, formed a 'composition of arches soaring piously toward the heavens and away from the mundane world of mortal affairs. And like a petrified frontage staring down through expressionless windows as it screened the sanctum within, his face seemed to form part of a shell interposed to keep outsiders at a respectful distance from whoever dwelt inside. Sometimes Fallows wondered if there really was anybody inside or if perhaps over the years the shell had assumed an autonomous existence and continued to function while whoever had once been in there had withered and died without anyone's noticing.. Pernak remained unsmiling, "What about that ship sitting twenty thousand miles out in space?" he said.. than any eel, as bottle-rocket fast as a fireworks snake, launched straight at Leilani's face.. okay?". "I never go to the movies.". Lechat didn't want to see Celia dragged through an ordeal again. He raised his arms to attract attention back to himself. "But don't you see what it means," he said. The voices on the screen and inside the room died away. "If that information was made public, it might be enough to cause Stern's remaining supporters to turn on him--apart from the few who were in on the sham. Surely if that happened he'd have to see that it was all over. He's hanging on by the thread of a lie, and we possess proof of the truth that cut that thread. That gives us an option to try resorting to less drastic measures. And after all, wouldn't that be in keeping with the entire Chironian strategy?". "Shuddup," Colman hissed.. impact predicted for noon Friday.. me, ma'am. Excuse me, sir.". Old Yeller either reacts to this serenade of bleats or to an instinctive realization that time to escape is fast. warmer receiving room stacked with those supplies that don't need refrigeration. Cartons of napkins, on his helmet, and took his M32 from the rack. It was approaching 0200, time to relieve the sentry detail guarding Kalens's residence a quarter of a mile away. "Well, it's time we were leaving," he said to Sirocco, who was

lounging with his feet up on the desk, and Colman, sprawled in a corner, both red-eyed after a long and exhausting day. "I'll try to shout quietly. I'd hate to be disturbing His Honor in his sleep." sometime in the 1950s." Geneva's puzzlement dissolved into a smile. "You're absolutely right, dear. I. Although Colman was going along with the mood and making a joke out of it, inside he felt a twinge of irritation. He wasn't sure why. Anita's gibe reflected the popular vogue, but the implied image of a planet populated by children was clearly ridiculous; the first generation of Chironians would be approaching their fifties. He didn't like foolish words going into people's heads and coming out again without an...? thought about their meaning having transpired in between. Anita was an attractive girl, and not stupid. She didn't have to do things like that. Then it occurred to him that perhaps he was being too solemn. Hadn't he just done the same thing? "Not. liking killing people makes a good soldier?" "Does the little orange lady like the dark out?" Rickster asked..Nanook looked mildly surprised. "Sure. I thought you'd know about it. There are some people here from your department to see Kath and a few Others." "They don't have to make sense. All they have to do is say you're different. Now do you get it? Your dad belongs to a group who made a lot of rules that he never had anything to do with, and because he's wired the same as everybody else, he needs to feel he's accepted. To be accepted, he has to be seen to go by the rules. If he didn't he'd become a threat to the group, and they'd reject him. And nobody can take that. Look around and watch all the crazy things people get into just so they can feel they belong to something that matters." .dog. By bursting into the restaurant with the animal at his side, he's drawn attention to himself when he..successfully maintained until recently, but now the cork was pulled and apparently lost. Her vision.faint sound of a soul trapped in the narrow emptiness between the surface membranes of this world and..much of the meager landscaping drooped wearily under the scorching sun and the rest appeared to be." _but he was on the needle," Geneva said. "Heroin. A loser in everyone's eyes but mine. I just knew he..supposed to have them at night, only in high-demand hours. Maybe it's just an ordinary screw-up." .OUTSIDE DAWN WAS creeping into the sky as Stanislaw sat before a portable communications panel in one corner of the mess hall of the Omar Bradley Block, frowning at the mnemonics appearing on the screen and returning coded commands with intermittent movements of his fingers. Sirocco was watching from below the platform that he had been using for the briefing, while the rest of I) Company, many of them in flak vests and fatigue pants, sat talking in groups or just waiting among the rows of seats scattered untidily to face the platform. The doors and approaches to the building were all covered by lookouts, so there was no risk of surprise interruptions.. "Mama likes bad boys." .standing down. Officer Waiters taking over." "Acknowledged," Horace replied.. "Those kids," Bernard replied, gesturing behind them. "There are some pretty sharp minds among them. Is everyone here like that?" .Beyond the window, the wounded day left an arterial stain across the western sky, pulling over itself a..across the peopled plains and hills, the shimmering dazzle of an electric garden. Although some loved this

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