

FICTION

He is a successful, conflicted, sexually ambiguous British film star known only as The Actor. He likes his weed, and his single malt whiskey strong, his women brown and his sex rough. "Injuries sustained while performing his own stunts," becomes a running joke in the Press, but when The Actor's live-in lover and PA, the man who has managed to tap the depths of The Actor's inner freak, a shady character named Philippe Noiret, goes missing under mysterious circumstances - the jokes stop. A missing person case quickly becomes a murder investigation, and all the evidence points to The Actor.

Into this meshugaas breezes The Actor's old buddy, the out and proud pride of Hot Coffee, Mississippi, the father of cyberpunk, Professor Raymond T. Pickles. In tow is the woman Pickles describes as "his sister from another mother," Felicia "Babe" Lake, aka "The Bronze Bombshell." A washed-up 80's soul singer, widow of Academy Award winning production designer Gordon Burdett, Babe has become a world class expert on film-noir, and sees life as one long movie. When she and The Actor meet all their crazy parts instinctively magnetize bonding them together in the kind of sexually obsessive relationship that only two high functioning narcissistic alcoholics' can have. The Actor introduces Babe to what he calls, "the informative nature of pain," and Babe proves an apt pupil.

As Babe and Pickles struggle to fill the emotional, and physical void that Philippe's disappearance has left in The Actor's life, The Actor wrestles with his demons, and his next film deal while his townhouse becomes a fortress against the media, and the Metropolitan Police, who have suddenly become much more interested in the missing Philippe because he matches the description of a dangerous criminal wanted by INTERPOL. The London summer of 2007 would prove stranger and more sinister than any movie.



MHARLYN MERRITT is a writer, Jazz vocalist and documentary film producer. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from Fairleigh-Dickinson University. *The Actor* is her first novel.

As a Jazz vocalist, Mharlyn has received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Jazz Performance and a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship. She received a PBS Independent Producer's award from WHYY in Philadelphia for the documentary short, "The Handwriting on the Wall."

Mharlyn has sat on the Broadcast in the Arts judging panel for the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and served as a Judge for the first Philadelphia World Film Festival. She has studied play writing with Bruce Graham (*Coyote on a Fence*, *Burkie*, *Minor Demons*) and screenwriting with Joseph C. Stinson (*City Heat*, *Sudden Impact*, *Heartbreak Ridge*).

She lives and writes in Philadelphia, PA., where she hard at work on her second novel, *The Rachel Montoya Story*.



THE ACTOR

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