

Acting up

Never work with children or animals.

Elizabeth Counihan

To: lukas@dreamlightfilms.org
From: william@londonthesps.co.uk
4/1/2015 — 21:15 GMT

Hi Luke,
How's it going down there in sunny LA? Now you know me, Luke, I never moan, but I have some problems up here that I hope you can fix.

I'm not complaining about the shuttle sickness. My fault — should have taken a pill, but it was my first trip and we're not all old hands at weightless travel like you! And I wasn't the only one either.

Don't get me wrong. I love animals. I own two beautiful cats back in London. But that poor dog did throw up all over me just as I was getting used to the eating arrangements on the spacecraft. I noticed that Donita had two whole passenger bays to herself. I realize she's the star of the movie but Toto is her pet, so why did I have to share a back seat with him? I don't think he meant to bite me, not enough to draw blood anyway. Donita told me not to worry about rabies and blood poisoning as "Darling Toto has had all his shots as he travels everywhere with me". Then she asked me if I had had all mine, as she didn't want Toto to catch a cold from me! Like I said, I'm absolutely great with kids and animals. And Donita is so talented. I did admire her in *Space Orphans* — those big blue eyes! Wonderful how the camera just loves some people who look quite ordinary when you see them for real.

I was amazed to find so many tourists on the Moon, even with the new cheap shuttle flights. (I couldn't believe it — bungee jumping at 1/6th gee!) Donita was surrounded by fans. Well, I suppose she is still a 'child star', although she must be at least 15. But no time to sign autographs. Merle had us all packed into our trailers and out to the location before you could say "Cut"! Merle is a wonderful director, so enthusiastic, almost like someone directing their first feature film. I watched out of the trailer window, very happy to pick up tips on low-gravity acting from such an old hand as Donita. Toto looked so cute

bouncing around in his pooch-suit!

By the time I was needed I was ready for a coffee break. But the show must go on! They put me in this crazy rubber outfit with an incorporated oxygen pack. I had quite a shock, Luke. I didn't realize I was expected to play a Moon tree! I told Merle the concept was ridiculous. Everyone knows there are no trees on the Moon. Merle was very short — told me to shut up and act! I told her I was a highly trained professional with years of experience and



she said I was a pompous Brit! This is not what I'm used to. But I did as she said — bouncing about like a rubber ball with a lot of other 'trees'. I felt a complete idiot!

Donita sang one of the main numbers from the show, asking Toto to protect her, but we had to have several takes because Toto quite lost control and kept jumping around us like he was on springs. We all heard his yapping over the sound system. I think he took us for real trees.

In the evening I felt one of my migraines coming on, but they told me the studio doctor was attending Toto for 'a nervous breakdown', so I had to retire to bed without the benefit of medical help! It was disappointing to find I was room-sharing with another tree — an absolute nobody on his first professional job. I had to complain. I do have my reputation to live up to. But apparently nothing could be done. Time pressure. The bottom line.

At least we were inside the complex for today's schedule, so no need for pressure suits. A dresser appeared and glued me

into another rubber costume. This time I was supposed to be a Moon zombie, whatever that is.

I asked Merle why we couldn't stay on Earth and use CGI like in the good old days, and save the real actors for real acting. She looked at me like I was a cockroach and told me a) CGI technicians were a lot more expensive than rookie actors and old has-beens and b) there were great tax breaks for movie makers filming at the Moon colony and we had one week to complete the shoot, so would I kindly not waste any more of her time! I was most insulted and felt another headache coming on.

This evening I felt happier. We were, at last, able to meet our fans. Donita was surrounded by autograph hunters of course. Then a delightful elderly couple came up to me waving an autograph book. They had seen my Hamlet on tour with the Shakespeare Players years ago out in Canada. I had just found a pen when Toto came rushing up, barking furiously. He suddenly recognized me as a 'tree' and treated my leg like one. This time he wasn't wearing his pooch-suit. I was mortified! Hearing the fuss, Donita ran up and gave me a

furious look as if it was my fault. So I was left there holding my pen while everyone had a good laugh!

Luke, this gig isn't quite what I thought I'd signed up to.

My tuxedo is ruined.

Best,
William

To: william@londonthesps.co.uk
From: lukas@dreamlightfilms.org
4/1/2015 — 22:00 GMT

Hi William,
You're fired. Merle e-mailed me. She has found a dog-owning Greenpeace activist who's very happy to play a tree. I'll buy you a new tuxedo.

Best,
Luke

Elizabeth Counihan has had stories published in *Asimov's*, *Realms of Fantasy*, *Interzone* and several anthologies. She edits the British fantasy magazine *Scheherazade*. She used to be an NHS family doctor.

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