

PART ONE:

THE FIRST MEETING WITH THE PRODUCER

The director told me he wanted me to meet his producer who he met at the Davos. M6 the king liked the director's first big film so he sent him to attend the exclusive Swiss forum for the leaders of the world.

The producer was there because he had a big international company writing the code for passports and drivers licenses and bank cards for countries all over Africa. He told the director that he loved love his first film and that he wanted to invest in the next film. I had the music credit on the first film but really I just gave the music from my library to the director for free because his first producer was an old friend of mine. His company had done the tech for my big concert for the Moroccan national day at the Seville World's Fair Expo '92 with 350 Moroccan musicians and some hot international musicians including Jon Hassell on Trumpet and Steve Shehan on percussion.

When the director told me that he wanted me to meet his producer the first question that i asked was who had final cut on the film. Because usually if the director is the one who has the final creative decision in his contract then I try to avoid all contact with the producers at least at the beginning of the project. Otherwise it is inevitable that once you meet someone they will start to feel comfortable telling you what to do. Nour said that he had final cut and I said that I would rather not meet the producer. I have worked with rich first time producers who usually like to get into the film biz for all the wrong reasons. The director said that he really needed my help and that the producer would never agree to hire me if i didn't meet him. So after along discussion the director

drove me to meet the producer at his house in one of Casablanca's chic nouveau riche neocolonial neighborhoods. Casablanca is a harsh place in the winter because now one heats their houses, not even the nouveau riche. It was December and the house was dank and chilly. The small fire in the fireplace was just enough to keep the producer's right side warm and he wasn't about to give it up. Ever since i started to shave my head I've noticed that I seem to get cold quicker and the producer liked to keep the expansive sliding glass doors open to air out the smell of money, cologne, cigarettes and French Medoc. Casablanca is normally a lose lose situation in the winter because if you ask you host to close the doors then your stuck with the smell of cigarettes and if the doors are open you freeze to death. I decided to stay warm figuring that it would be less impolite to ask him to close the doors than to ask him to stop smoking in his own house. I looked around at the deluxe hand crafted wood walls and the posh furniture. There was a piano placed just next to the open glass doors assuring that it would detune even faster than my nascent relationship with the producer who stood up just long enough to shake my hand. He gestured toward an empty chair told me to toss my coat on it. i told him that i preferred to keep it on as i was too far from the fire. He was a bit shocked that i was being so bold but he still didn't dislodge himself. The standard excellent black olives and salty almonds cheered me up somewhat. He poured me a glass of wine. His movements were slow and relaxed like a sly big cat. He exuded a kind of intoxicated assurance that had a certain libidinal charm. His aura was that of of someone who exists in his own world with out a doubt. I asked him some questions about his company and what he thought the risks were in Morocco for identity theft were and what he thought about quantum computing. Then we veered off in to other science subjects like Quantum Entanglement and the latest

update of the Heisenberg principal. We spoke for over an hour with out once talking about film. The producer seemed impressed that i know something about his world and i relaxed into his lair letting my guard down I told a few of my off the cuff double double entendres in french and arabic. This impressed him too and he told some off color jokes about hookers while stuffing some buds into some rolling paper with his buttery thick hands. Our psychic dance continued as he placed the joint between his thick smooth lips. I couldn't shake a strange feeling that i some how had to pierce this power game before i became another planet revolving around this dark magnetic black hole. I saw that the director was getting restless. So finally I asked the question i know they were both waiting for me to offer up: "Well how do you hear the music for the film?" The producer stood up and walked over to his deluxe modern sound system and slipped a CD in as it was loading he announced in a voice filled with unnerving and smug self assurance that he thought Berlioz would be perfect for this film set in Casablanca. I was stunned. At first i thought it was a joke but then he continued on talking about Berlioz hoping to impress me with his knowledge of the composer. But it back fired and before I knew what was happening I felt my hands reach up and cover my ears and I felt my voice coming up from my gut and forming into an earth shattering scream, like only Odilon Redon could imagine and the next thing i knew i was running towards the closed glass doors. Luckily I remembered that they needed to be slide open and I ran out into the garden screaming. I sat on the edge of a stone fountain with my hands over my ears. Finally i heard the Berlioz stop and i let my hands down. This was pure theater of the absurd and i was cracking up. I figured that I'd made my point. My head was still tilted down but I caught a glimpse of the producer walking into the garden. I kept my head down and put my hands back on my ears with my

elbows on my knees. He came up to me and bent over. I could smell his thick wine soaked breath as he put his hand on my back with a conciliatory pat. I stayed focused on the grass. He said " D'accord Richard Pas de Berlioz dans la musique de film." I jumped up slapped him on the back and said " Mon ami Je te Taquine." I'm just kidding around with you. But of course he knew that I wasn't.

It was the first time I saw his Quoi Le Fuck expression but it wouldn't be the last. The director called us from the living room saying dinner was served. I was getting really cold so going back into the house seemed like the best option. I said "Formidable es ce qu on peut lessaiez le port ferme?" The producer's grin turned quizzical and we somehow bonded at that moment. The director hadn't moved from his seat. He had a strange expression like he was trying to smile thru a massive dose of Botox. The producer still trying to placate me said: "Richard Je vois que tu a une fort sensibilitie dramatic. This is good because I want you to write the music for my musical theater production too. I love musical theater even more than film and I have bought a beautiful old theater in Casablanca where I will produce the show.

I told him that my mother sang in musical theater productions and that I had grown up in the middle of rehearsals but that it wasn't really my thing. I told him my mother was a lesser know Judy Garland style singer and that she had a coast to coast radio show in the 40s and she was scouted by Paramount but she turned them down to have a family. The producer said: "Don't worry I will pay you enough to make it your thing."

I shrugged. The director was still very silent and so I tossed him a life line: " Sidi Producer you know I really love the script .It has a very interesting arc. The third act is really unexpected and brilliant."

The director started to relax. I really did like his script he is the real deal. He is a walking Encyclopedia of film and he

knows what he's doing. The script was about a sex slave ring run by fat cats from the Emirates and smooth operating Casablanca pimps. There is a bordello in Casablanca that's frequented by judges, the chief of police and international Euro Trash. And there's one young down on his luck good cop who brings them all down. It's the director's homage to Mean Streets and Taxi Driver. He wrote it with a picture of Scorsese over his desk in his apartment. (Later when I was working on the film in with the director in Casablanca the king's office asked for a copy of the film for Scorsese who was staying at the Mamounia in Marrakech.

My question to the producer and the director was about the censors in Morocco. The director's first film was the first Moroccan film to use in your face ultra raunchy rapper slang and it came out in 2008 just when the king decided to end censorship and the censors actually did back the fuck off. The film was a sensation in Morocco breaking all box office records. The new film was in the same style AND it had a very strong anti Emirati message. Morocco gets a ton of investments from the Emirates and I was interested if they thought that this would really get past them.

I played the opening concert at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and then spent two weeks days in Dubai with some high level insider types who told me a lot of stories. After all Dubai was built on slave labor with workers who are promised a good job and when they get to Dubai their passports are taken and they are forced to live in hell holes and work for peanuts. The same goes for the imported hookers only they have better apartments and some of them can keep their passports. The princes have a weakness for Moroccan women. And some times the women get a good deal. One of the retro Moroccan style five star hotels in Dubai was built for a hooker by a sheik who met her in Casablanca. He told her he was going to build a palace for her but she

didn't believe him.

It's interesting in retrospect how much the producer turned out to be a composite caricature of some of the lowlifes in his own film. But he was no run of the mill devious, unscrupulous, sex addicted fat cat. He was a French educated computer programmer who started off doing digital security all over the world for a top French firm. He spent a lot of time in Russia. His company had hundreds of employees in slick new Casablanca buildings. His wife was a French neo Freudian shrink and he had three kids. And he could in fact be very charming. He was a tanned, well oiled, soigneur cat in his mid fifties with a warm touch. He like to touch. He was very touchy feely - much more than other Moroccans I knew who were already touchy.. I never stopped to question weather he was Bi because he was so into women. He had a habit of talking to me with his nose about two inches from mine even when he was smoking and I had to literally push him away with a smile before i suffocated. This is what he did when I asked him about the Emirati investments in Morocco.

He said that the new policy of the kings would protect the film and that the wife of the new director of the Centre Du Cinema Marocain was pregnant and that she posed nude for a Moroccan Film Magazine imitating Demi Moore. He said Morocco was changing and that it was not Saudi Arabia or even Dubai. I've lived in Morocco long enough to know how special a place it holds in the Arab world. But I was not surprised to find out a year later when the film was being shot the the Emirates had been cut from the script.

The producer undoubtedly thought that I was mad but he was intrigued. My French was good I knew enough Arabic to fuck him up and i think he liked the idea of having some one around that he could but heads with. I found it amusing myself and for most of the 3/12 months i spent in Casa I had

my self talked into the idea that i could compartmentalize our relationship into half business and half friendship. This is probably for the best and it kept me sane.

The producer had a plan he wanted the director and me to come to spend three weeks at his deluxe beach palace in Cabo Negro on the Mediterranean talking about the film. This was the last thing I wanted to do. I had no contract and no advance and it sounded like a huge waist of time during which i would get lung cancer. I told him that i was to busy on other projects and we could stay i touch on Skyp because i had a special smoke filter built into my Skype.