

## Moroccan Slave

He monopolizes me.

I gave him control of my daily life. We live in monotony. The monotony of love. The monotony of him and me at his place: a Parisian apartment.

I am with him, I love him, I have no choice. I exist in France only because of him, only because he cares for me. I am his boy, his love, his lover. He is my master.

I adore his name: Marlon! Like Marlon Brando. I love calling out: "Marlon, Marlon, Marlon, come to me... Marlon Marlon Marlon take me with you... in you..."

He is American. From New York.

I am Moroccan, from Rabat, the capital. I don't speak English very well, I make mistakes all the time. In my country I have learnt French as a foreign language. I came to Paris to finish my Doctorat in French literature at the Sorbonne. But then I met Marlon. Everything changed. I am not me.

Now I learn English, alone, everyday. I want to tell Marlon everything about me, my feelings, my country, my home town, my body, my skin... I want to be capable to understand all his words. He is from another world- a world far away. I was prepared to live only in the Arab and French worlds. I have never dreamt of myself in America. America came to me, two weeks before I left Morocco.

I was at the Oudaya Castle in Rabat. Alone. Sad. I was drinking tea with mint at the famous Café Maure. I was thinking of my mother M'Barka: she didn't want me to leave Morocco. She had her plans about my future life, about my job, my house, and even about my wife and my children. I love M'Barka. I read somewhere that to be an adult one must be far as possible from one's mother. I always thought of myself as a child. Somebody else's child. First M'Barka's. And now Marlon's.

I am Marlon's child. I like to repeat this to convince myself that it's true. The repetition keeps me feeling secure. Marlon loves me and protects me. He swore that he would never leave me. He took the first step in my direction. He simply asked me: "At what time will the café Maure close?" I looked at him: a man, a real man, big, so big, giant, white, bleu eyes, black hair, no moustache. I looked at him for a long moment. He asked me again: "At what time will this café close? Do you speak English?" I understood the second part of his question. I had the answer, a little one. "No!"

"Et le francais? Tu parles le francais?"

Thank God! He could speak French, not fluently but with a charming and virile accent.

“I am American. I have lived in Paris since last year. It’s my first time in Morocco, in Rabat. I like this town. Can I join you?”

Little sentences told with a big and warm voice. I was completely fascinated with him. He spoke to me naturally. He expressed what he wanted easily. He liked me, but he didn’t say it with words. His eyes, his hands, his head approaching mine did.

- “ - Yes, you can join me... with pleasure!  
- Are you from Rabat?  
- Yes, I am... Do you want mint tea like me?  
- Yes. Why don’t you speak English?  
- Oh! I have learnt it at the Lycee, but I have forgotten everything... everything. Now I am concentrating my whole energy only on French... because I am going to Paris.  
- Good! In Paris you should start learning English again... seriously... you’ll need it, I’m sure!  
- With who?  
- With me... only with me!”

He seemed serious. Somehow I was already in love with him.

He liked the Moroccan tea.

- “ - You know, I suppose, how to prepare this kind of tea?  
- No.  
- You should ask your mother how to make it, because I really like it and I want you to prepare it for me... in Paris.  
- I will ask her before my coming to Paris... I promise...  
- Good boy! A great future is waiting for you in Paris.  
- With you?  
- Yes, with me! Only...  
- ... with you!”

Two years later, here I am in Paris, la Ville des Lumieres. The apartment of Marlon is typically bourgeois-parisien. It is at Saint-Germain, near a lot of well-known publishing houses, le Seuil, Actes Sud, Stock... Every time he enters this apartment, he finds me waiting for him, my heart and my head pounding as the first time I saw him. I run to him, saying always, like Nina Simone, the same phrase: “ Hi you! I’m here for you... I’m completely yours!”

I do all I have to do before his return at 7:00 pm. I prepare his favorite tagines and arrange everything in the apartment. Everything clean, in its place. He is happier that way. So we can eat Moroccan food, drink mint tea and make love for a long time in peace. No clouds on the horizon. I don’t like him angry: I’m scared when he gives me a bad look sometimes, I don’t know what to do, what to say, I forget even the few English words I could use to defend myself. But I won’t. I want him happy, satisfied, in love with me all the time.

Yes, Nina Simone, I am completely his thing. You are the only person with whom I can speak clearly about my love, without shame, without regrets. I am his slave in the name of love. Your songs, Nina, talk about this, you understand me, that’s why I love you. One day, when I can read English easily, I will buy your autobiography, I PUT A SPELL ON YOU. I don’t want to

read it in French. I prefer to meet your life with your own words, own rhythm, inspiration and voice. Marlon offered me your records soon after I moved in. He said, I still remember his words exactly: "This Grande Dame is for you, one day you'll understand why..." He was right. He gave me his love and a confident, you, in the same time. Very generous, wasn't it? "Tell me more, and more and then some" was the first song of yours we heard together, in the bedroom, our bodies joined, inseparable, after lovemaking.

- Tell me... you... your life in America!
- Me?
- Yes, you, like Nina Simone singing her days, her story, her History.
- It will take much more time than you think...
- I have all my life just to hear you, to discover your American Life."

It's always like this: romantic! I want it to stay romantic. No war between us, no disagreements, just love. Just him and me in Paris.

He told me about his life. It was brief. I didn't understand all his words.

Born in Boston. A Political Science Major from NYU. Job in The United Nations, in NYC too. No brothers, no sisters. Mother and father dead. Alone in the world, as he says when he is sad. One big love affair with... a woman: he was 26 years old, they have lived together for 10 years. Now he is 40 and I am his first gay love. He has always liked sport, jazz and cinema. He didn't have a lot of friends in New York (same situation in Paris!). He could live anywhere, no problem for him, even, one day, in Morocco. He is not gay. He is in love with a boy. There is a difference, of course.

That's all I know about Marlon. He is very mysterious. Maybe he is a spy, a dangerous double agent. He laughed at me when I told him about these bad ideas. He laughed from the bottom of his heart. He is irresistible... Big... So present in my eyes... He filled a void inside me. I met him in Rabat. In my mind we are still there drinking our first Moroccan tea, discovering each other and looking for a cheap hotel in the old city, the Medina, where we could make love intensely, a place where to offer myself to him, my body, my soul and to go completely naked inside him.

Yesterday he surprised me again.

"I want you to teach me Arabic... I want to hear your voice in Arabic..."

A great proof of his love! I accepted, I will be his professor.

We start today September 11. The first lesson.

**ABDELLAH TAIA**