

Trois jours et une vie

A PROPOSAL FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE DIRECTOR

From: Author Pierre Lemaitre
Subject: Proposal for a film
To: Film director Nicolas Boukhrief
CC: Perrine Margaine

February 17, 2017

Dear Nicolas Boukhrief,

My name is Pierre Lemaitre, I am a novelist.
My latest novels are published by Albin Michel. I am finishing – with my accomplice Perrine Margaine – the adaptation for the cinema of my latest novel *Trois jours et une vie* and I would like to submit it to you.
To find out if you would be interested in filming it.

This film tells the story of a twelve-year-old boy who, by accident, becomes the murderer of one of his playmates.

I mainly, at least until 2013, wrote crime novels.
I had the choice, with *Trois jours et une vie*, to reconnect with this vein.
The story would then have been the disappearance of a child.
We would have discovered the culprit in the end.

However, this story, in my mind, is more the story of a fault than that of a crime.
I therefore opted for the *roman noir* rather than the detective novel: it is not a question of knowing who is the author of the crime, but of wondering how he can survive his act.
Especially since the young murderer is unlucky... to be lucky: after having hidden the body, a combination of circumstances allows him to escape justice for a long time.

The film, using narrative devices specific to *film noir*, tries to show that when an assassin has no judge, he becomes his own executioner.

A crime can only be perfect if the culprit manages to repress it completely, which is not the case with young Antoine.

Your talent in film noir makes me hope that this story interests you.
The big risk in this type of story is that the narrative mechanism, because it must be regulated like clockwork, takes precedence over the characters.
Your films show extreme attention to this dimension: the character is always the driving force behind the action, and the objective is always to make the viewer experience a situation through the emotion that the characters will generate.

This seems obvious but, in practice, it is less common than you think. . . It is because I share your approach that I come to you. I had the chance to attend, not long ago, a preview of your film *The Confession* and this viewing confirmed me in this analysis.

My second argument will seem paradoxical to you: it is because you write all your films that I suggest that you direct a screenplay that you did not write.

It is only a paradox in appearance: it is because you are an author that I would like you to agree to take on this story.

If it was a question of “putting a story into images”, the question would not arise.

But it is a question here of bringing the spectator to be, until the end, torn in his opinion concerning the young central character.

This permanent swing (going from condemnation to understanding, from compassion to forgiveness) can only be achieved with real cinematographic writing.

And so by an author. Your film, *The Confession*, shows that you know perfectly how to handle ambivalence, impediment, desire and its repression, etc.

You will forgive this somewhat long (and somewhat pretentious, no doubt) email.

See only the desire to draw your attention to a work that is close enough to my heart to be, for the first time in my career, invested as co-producer.

Best regards,

Pierre Lemaitre