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To: The Members of the Spanish Academy of Arts and Cinematographic Sciences

'Hummingbird' is based on a true story which I was told while researching a different project. A homeless, damaged veteran of the Iraq war and a Nun who worked at a homeless shelter fell in love. It happened in Soho, at night, over many nights. To me it sounded like a fairy story and my vision was to *shoot* it as a kind of fairy story. Urban, night time environments, which are considered ugly and harsh, could be made to feel almost pastoral, while the fragility and brutality of humanity could be depicted realistically.

I needed an actor to play Joey Jones who was the real thing. In other words, I needed a man who, in other circumstances, might have become a Special Forces soldier for real and suffered Joey's fate. There are many brilliant actors to choose from who would have carried off the part, but I wanted a man who brings with him danger and unpredictability that seeps out of the screen. That was why I chose Jason Statham.

The fact that his work, to this point, was very different to Hummingbird was an attraction rather than a detraction. I had always believed that he had enormous potential as an actor. The thought was for me confirmed when I met David Fincher, asking him for advice on my directorial debut. He stated firmly that the man to play Joey Jones was Jason, and the process began.

In the true story, the Nun was East European and I wanted to stay true to that, and also reflect the growing presence of East Europeans in London. I watched hundreds of tapes and met a dozen actresses, but the other worldly beauty and tranquillity of Agata Buzek made her fit in perfectly with my fairy story ideal.

More than ten years ago I wrote a film called 'Dirty Pretty Things' which was directed by Stephen Frears and shot by Chris Menges, the legendary director and photographer. At the end of that shoot, Chris and I were talking and he said if I ever decided to direct a film he would like to shoot it.

It was an odd comment for me at the time but it stuck with me. When I decided to direct Hummingbird, he was the first DP I called (and luckily the last because he loved the script and said yes). Chris has embraced digital technology and is pleased to be playing around with available light rather than light from the back of a truck. He shares my love of Soho at night and he shot every scene lovingly, always doing justice to the characters, even if they are sleeping in boxes on the street.

I wanted to start my film at ground level, literally on the pavement, and climax it on the roof of one of the highest buildings in London. The film is unashamedly a cry of anger at the banking system and its apparent immunity from responsibility during the recent banking crisis and its continuing fall out. It is also a cry on behalf of the many damaged men and women who have returned from foreign wars to find themselves out on the street or inside a prison cell. In researching this film I met many men like this, as did Jason, and Jason's performance was informed directly by these encounters.

Why does a writer decide to direct suddenly? Perhaps it wasn't sudden, it had always been in the back of my mind. When you sit at your keyboard you see your movie shot and lit and performed perfectly. The trouble begins when you try to haul it out into the real world. I wanted to know if I could do it. I wanted to see how close I could get to the vision in my head. I discovered how brutally hard it is to direct a movie, but working in the company of people who were equally committed to the idea of the film, it was also a great pleasure.

So many people I meet have been moved by Hummingbird, and I am deeply flattered that it is being considered for this award.

Steven Knight