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# Free Men

By Ismaël Ferroukhi

This film is inspired by  
real events.  
In 1939, the last wave of immigration  
from North Africa occurred.  
Fleeing poverty workers from  
Algeria and Morocco were drawn ...  
to Paris to work in factories  
and on construction sites.  
The war and German occupation brought  
an end to this immigration.  
Most returned home,  
a few remained.  
Unemployed and with no help  
in occupied Paris.  
Are you okay?  
What have you got on you?  
lets eat?  
Do you have coffee?  
I want coffee and cigarettes.  
How much is that?  
-Six.  
I also'd like some cigarettes.  
And you?  
-Tea.  
Give me cigarettes.  
In exchange for this derbouka.  
What do you mean?  
It's all I have left.  
I have nothing left.  
It's worth money.  
It was El Hadj El Anka's  
That's true.  
Any post, Maryvonne?  
-No, nothing.  
I was looking for you.  
What is it, Ali?  
It is difficult.  
There are more and more controls.  
Be careful.  
-I know.  
I've lost many customers.  
Listen, Younes ...  
Listen.  
We will organize ourselves.

Tonight meeting. Are you coming?  
That's not for me.  
Does your father know  
where your money comes from?  
Stay out of it.  
You know why I'm here.  
To earn as much money as I can  
before I go back home.  
Dear brother, I hope you  
This letter reads in health.  
Did you receive my money?  
I hope the work on your house  
is going well. Here everything is okay.  
Cousin Ali also.  
We often work in the factory.  
I miss you.  
Police. Open up.  
Come with me.  
Identity Control. Against the wall.  
Search the rooms.  
What's this?  
Bring him.  
Walk.  
Answer the inspector's question.  
Where is Ali hiding?

**like I said:**

He tells me nothing.  
Don't lie to me.  
I know nothing.  
Who was that food for then?  
For myself.  
Lock him up.  
Forward.  
Younes Bendaoud ...  
Come.  
How long have you been in Paris?  
-Since 1939.  
Are you practicing?  
What do you mean?  
Do you go to the mosque?  
Sometimes, on holidays.  
I have a suggestion.  
If you help us ...

you can continue selling contraband.  
What should I do?  
-Go to the mosque.  
I want to know what happens there.  
Who visits the director.  
Report all foreigners.  
Understood?  
Younes, are you okay?  
Take some.  
This is the Quran that I was talking about.  
A personal gift from the sultan.  
It's very precious to us.  
Do you see? All the letters are gold.  
Very beautiful.  
Tell me, excellence ...  
How is our case going?  
I sent him the dossier.  
It is now with the king in Rabat.  
It's only a matter  
of weeks, if not days.  
I'm very grateful.  
A nice suit.  
It's big party today.  
The birthday of the Prophet.  
Everyone has their finest clothes.  
-How do you say it again? Mabrouke!  
Why, you speak well.  
Major, if I may?  
A young Algerian singer.  
Not so well known,  
but he's going to be.  
One of the most beautiful voices  
in the Arab world.  
I must go.  
-As you wish. I'll accompany you.  
Want some?  
I have a derbouka for sale.  
Interested?  
Show me.  
-I can bring it tomorrow.  
After I am going to The Andalussia.  
Do you know it?  
Come along.  
What do you want?

-I've come to see Salim.  
Salim?  
A visitor for you.  
Hello. Show me.  
Genuine rubies.  
How did you get it?  
-From my family.  
He was used by Hadj El Anka.  
Do you know that?  
I'll give you 800.  
Franc?  
-Why isn't that enough?  
Yes.  
Here.  
I'm singing here tomorrow night.  
Come along if you want.  
Look it's beautiful.  
Have you anything else similar?  
-Hang on it.  
This confidant ...  
whispering secrets to you ...  
gives you hope ...  
to reach the shrine.  
Until his last breath ...  
you must believe what he says:  
He asks no alms ...  
only goodness.  
May God bless your parents ...  
and give you long life.  
Now we come to the garden  
in true Andalusian style.  
This room serves as a prayer hall  
as the large room fills-up ...  
on holidays. Now we'll go  
to the beautiful Andalusian garden.  
In Marseille one looks strangely on ...  
collaborating with the French.  
What else can I do?  
Give the mosque to the Germans?  
It was full because of the party.  
A German officer was with the Director.  
They were friendly,  
listened to music.  
Is that all?

Then the director left  
with the imam ...  
but he seemed ill at ease.  
What happened?  
-I've no idea.  
He went off alone at night.  
Alone?  
Where to?  
No idea, he went in his car.  
-Interesting.  
I want to know more.  
The mosque provides false papers.  
I want to know to whom.  
Have you seen any of these men?  
You know him?  
No, but ...  
I've seen him in a nightclub.  
A friend of Salim.  
But never in the mosque.  
Who is Salim?  
A singer. He has a beautiful voice.  
Are you kidding me?  
His name is Salim Halali.  
An Algerian from the mosque.  
He sings at The Andalussia.  
That's all I know.  
Find out about him.  
I want to know what he meets  
with the communists.  
This is for you.  
If you bring me information  
there will be more.  
Omar ...  
Younes, what are you doing here?  
-I need merchandise.  
You can't come here.  
Come back tonight.  
-I can't come then.  
I finish in about an hour.  
Wait outside.  
About an hour.  
The days ...  
Every day an accident  
Days filled with pain and sorrow

I love a girl from Andalusia  
Young and beautiful as the sun  
My God, what is that beautiful girl  
Her eyebrows are magical  
Fascinating shape  
They bring to mind a man's head  
I love a girl from Andalusia  
Young and beautiful as the sun  
Her black eyes make me mad  
Like her wild hair  
I don't know how to approach her  
Praise God for such beauty  
Many beautiful girls here.  
Good day, Salim.  
-Good day, Jeannot. Are you okay?  
What do you think of  
that blonde at the bar?  
I'm kidding. Take a drink.  
Cheers.  
Health.  
Slow down, it's not tea.  
Day, Salim.  
-All right, honey?  
See you soon.  
Soon.  
You know everyone here.  
-Everyone knows me.  
When I arrived in Marseille,  
I was just fourteen.  
I knew nobody.  
I had no work.  
Now I'm taking advantage of it.  
After the war I'll  
open my own nightclub.  
Les Folies Ismailia.  
God grant that.  
To your health, brother.  
Not so fast, I'm drunk.  
I warned you.  
prohibitions on Jews in the performing arts,  
the film or in the music  
What's that?  
All bullshit. Come.  
Who's there?

-Larbi. Open up.  
I got this in the nightclub.  
Jews may no longer perform.  
-I know.  
I can't risk  
the police closing my place.  
Distrust everyone.  
Many people are informers.  
Fuck you, I have to perform.  
Nobody forbids me to sing.  
Tell me about the singer.  
Yesterday I went drinking with  
him in Pigalle.  
He lives in the 11th arrondissement.  
Have you learned anything?  
What?  
Speak.  
What are you doing?  
I see you often, but never  
in the prayer room.  
In the prayer you can partake ...  
of the world in which we live.  
Don't you think so?  
What are you doing here?  
What do you want?  
-I need to talk.  
Not now, I'm busy.  
I need to talk.  
Right now.  
I'm busy, I said.  
I knew you would come.  
I spotted you right away.  
You weren't very discreet.  
But I didn't know that they  
were interested in Salim.  
Does he know?  
I wanted to tell him, but ...  
What should I do?  
Do what you want,  
but I wouldn't tell him.  
Go to the mosque bathhouse.  
Ali.  
I thought you were dead.  
My cousin.



What are you doing here?  
-I was looking for you.  
Come.  
Because of you I'm in trouble.  
The police interrogated me.  
I was almost screwed.  
What were you thinking of?  
Relax, Younes.  
Don't get involved.  
I'm in a resistance group.  
I'm hiding in the mosque.  
Nobody can know.  
You have not seen me, you understand?  
Why? It's not our war.  
I fight for freedom.  
Now in France, soon in Algeria.  
And then across North Africa.  
I was with Ben Ghabrit.  
What are they accusing me of?  
What do they have against me?  
They don't know that you are Jewish.  
Sorry about the last time.  
I wasn't alone.  
Forget about it.  
A drink from me.  
Larbi.  
Where is Larbi?  
What do you know?  
I don't want to go back to them.  
A toast to  
the Franco-Arab friendship ...  
and I want to thank His Excellency  
Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit ...  
the minister and representative  
of the Sultan of Morocco ...  
for promoting  
friendship ...  
with North Africa, Lebanon, Syria  
and the Islamic world.  
Your Excellency,  
on behalf of the marshal and France ...  
I congratulate you for your role  
in our friendship.  
Thank you very much, Minister.

To your health. Long live France.  
Long live France.  
Please be seated.  
Excuse me ...  
Can I talk in private,  
Minister?  
Come in.  
Please be seated.  
Minister ...  
What is the meaning of this comedy?  
What do you mean?  
On the one hand you praise me,  
on the other you distrust me.  
Explain yourself further, friend.  
The agents from the rue Lecomte ...  
have sent a spy  
to the mosque.  
That is unacceptable  
and I regret it very much.  
It's nothing to do with me.  
I'll take it up with the  
Minister of the Interior.  
Welcome, enjoy your meal.  
Younes.  
What is it?  
What are you doing here? -Food.  
Why don't you eat with us?  
I have a request.  
I need to take someone some documents.  
But I can't go out during daylight.  
What about at night?  
By then it will be too late.  
What papers?  
False papers for a family  
that's in danger.  
I don't take risks for strangers.  
You're the only one I  
can ask. Do it for me.  
Imbecile. You work for me.  
Stop it. Understand?  
The next time I'll have no pity.  
Let him go.  
Get out.  
There's no-one home.

They were taken this morning.  
Who are you?  
I have something for them.  
Are you family?  
-No.  
Would you like to come in?  
Please?  
Their parents left them here.  
I can't keep them.  
What can you do?  
Nothing.  
I have their papers.  
They can't stay.  
The police usually come back.  
I'm finished if they find them here.  
Don't ask me....  
Who are these children?  
Orphans.  
Orphans?  
Where are your parents?  
What's your name?  
Tell me, what's your name?  
Sarah Bensoussan.  
Sorry, they're not allowed inside.  
They have no-one.  
Not my problem.  
We don't want trouble.  
I'm also not a solution.  
Take them back.  
Off you go.  
-What should I do?  
Don't bring them back.  
They're staying here.  
Let them inside.  
They are Jewish children.  
They are our children.  
Excuse me, it's not our business.  
I know. That's enough about it.  
Well, sir.  
Carry on praying.  
Come on, guys.  
I'm proud of you.  
I knew I could count on you.  
Enter.

This is Francis.

A colleague from the factory.

We were both in the union.

He supports our fight for freedom.

Nice to meet you, Younes.

And?

You can speak freely. He's my cousin.

Not now, it's dangerous.

We'll talk about it later.

What is it?

A visit. They must go inside.

Come on, guys.

What is it, Sarah?

Nothing.

Major ...

To what do we owe the  
honour of your visit?

If you've come ... Thank you.

for your honour, unfortunately I can not ...

-Sir ...

I want to discuss with you ...  
in private.

-You can.

What is that?

A memo from the political director ...

Ministry of Police

Vichy to the Minister.

The occupation ... suspects

That the Mosque of Paris ...

Provides false papers

to persons of the Jewish race ...

As they if they had converted to Islam.

The imam is must stop doing this immediately.

As many Israelites

take any opportunity ...

To hide their identity. "

Major ...

I don't believe a word of it.

I have every confidence in our imam.

It is through issuing

such statements.

that our enemies want try to blacken

the reputation of our mosque.

Please ...

change the imam.

-That's not possible, sir.

In that case, ...

We will hold you ...

directly responsible next time.

Have you seen Salim?

-No.

You okay?

-Yes.

What are you reading?

Seems interesting.

-You want to read it?

I can't wait.

I learned French at the factory.

We are one people.

We have our own rich language,  
Arabic.

We have an illustrious past.

All to their own nation.

Under the 'Algerian peoples'

we make no distinction of race.

If we demand universal suffrage ...

We do that for all the minorities  
of Algeria. Messali Hajj.

I need eggs. At least twelve.

I've stopped the black market.

Thanks for the book.

I read it. Inspiring!

Shall I help you?

If you want.

You're doing it well.

-You too.

You have to, as a bachelor.

How did you come in Paris?

-Through my cousin Ali.

He's lived here for ten years. I  
worked with him in a factory.

I stayed two years.

Then I got sick.

What did you have?

-Tuberculosis.

I was in hospital in England for several weeks.

Thank God I got out.

Can I have the brush? Thank you.

Now I'm unemployed but healthy.  
And you?  
I'm here for family reasons.  
Do you have family in Paris?  
I have a brother in Germany.  
What's he doing?  
He's in a camp.  
Soon he will be liberated.  
Perhaps we can see each other?  
Hello?  
Can you give us a minute?  
What is it?  
I just heard ...  
that there's going to be a large raid ...  
in the 11th arrondissement.  
I don't know what they want ...  
but I would leave France.  
Go to Morocco.  
You'll be safe. I have friends  
you can hide with them.  
I won't leave.  
I'm waiting for someone.  
As you wish.  
I want to stay as long as possible.  
I always have those papers.  
Which are no longer valid. The Germans  
know about the false papers.  
Listen, Salim.  
If you are caught ...  
say that your father is in the Islamic  
cemetery in Bobigny.  
My father?  
-That is hard proof ...  
that you too are Muslim.  
There is no news about her.  
Where'd she go?  
To a meeting.  
With who?  
Don't ask too many questions.  
We'll tell you tonight.  
He's with me.  
Excluded for collaboration  
with the fascists. One year ago ...  
Messali Hajj was given 16 years hard labor

due to his refusal to collaborate.

I'll be back.

-If he refuses ...

if he opposed

any form of fascism.

We want armed struggle ...

against colonialism and fascism.

Long live freedom. Away with

colonialism and fascism.

Leila was arrested.

-The police were tipped off.

There was a raid on the barge.

-Which boat?

They were helping escaped

prisoners from Germany.

Why did you let her go?

-She knew what she was doing.

Her brother had also escaped.

Wasn't he going to be set free?

They started a revolt

and were going to be shot.

Halt.

Hold it right there.

Papers.

Jew?

Hands up.

Arms up.

Quick, with the others.

He is not a jew, he's Muslim.

Are you sure?

-Yes.

Let him go.

Get out.

Younes, where were you?

Larbi.

Listen, Salim.

The police arrested everyone.

Did you hear me?

This is Mohamed Abdel Wahab.

I've wanted to sing with him for years. Listen.

I would like to welcome ...

one of the most beautiful voices

**I know:**

Salim, please join me on stage?  
Salim Halali? Police. Come with me.  
Today there were thousands  
Jewish families arrested ...  
in Paris.  
Men, women and children.  
Something is coming.  
Something terrible, I fear.  
What do we do about Salim?  
Do you know the Muslim cemetery?  
And?  
-He says he is Muslim.  
Do you have evidence?  
Who's to say that you're  
not an Algerian jew?  
My father is Muslim  
He's at the cemetery in Bobigny.  
Go and check.  
Where is his grave?  
I'm sure that you won't find it.  
Si Brahim Halali  
Are you okay, Salim?  
I have a weapon.  
There's no danger.  
I thought too, until I was arrested.  
The next time I'm done.  
There will be no next time.  
Who changed the grave?  
You?  
Your jacket.  
Don't stay here.  
This is London.  
The Free French radio.  
This morning  
landed in Morocco and Algeria  
led by General Eisenhower.  
This operation was possible  
thanks to French resistance groups ...  
that the Anglo-Saxons  
have persuaded.  
General De Gaulle and  
the Free French, congratulations ...  
for your courage and determination.  
And now a few private messages.



The predator has eaten lobster.  
I repeat ...  
... Don't carry a blow.  
Excellence ...  
-Welcome, Major.  
And, may I see the decoration?  
Please be seated.  
You know that he was promised it.  
But you need to go to him  
in Morocco to accept it.  
The sultan wants to keep the tradition alive.  
To Morocco? You're not serious.  
It's occupied by the Americans.  
Unfortunately. Nobody but the King  
can award it ...  
without breaking protocol.  
You know that the Ouissam Alaouite  
the highest award is ...  
only ever awarded by the king himself.  
You are very clever.  
But I have bad news for you.  
Until now, our military leadership ...  
have spared the Muslims.  
But that will change now.  
The counter-espionage, the Gestapo,  
has started looking into your activities.  
You are in danger.  
I wanted to warn you.  
In danger? But why?  
That I don't know. But you ...  
must surely know.  
This is our last meeting.  
I am leaving Paris.  
No problems?  
-No.  
Francis wanted to talk to you.  
-What does he want?  
Leila.  
She's in danger.  
Her brother has been tortured.  
They may be executed.  
Why?  
You must know the truth.  
Her name is not Leila,

but Warda Slimane.  
She's with the Algerian Communists.  
They fled after arrests ...  
and the French police were looking for her.  
They're moving her to Fresnes tomorrow.  
German stuff. Excellent quality.  
Don't get caught.  
You know what you're risking.  
They're not cigarettes.  
Don't worry, Omar.  
Who is it for?  
For friends.  
By this war  
we will be independent.  
Many boys will believe it.  
Hopefully they won't know failure.  
God grant it.

**Love says:**

He who gives his life ...  
gets 1001 lives in return.  
Who's there?  
Younes.  
I'm busy.  
Are you asleep yet?  
What do you want?  
Come sing for Maryvonne's birthday.  
I won't sing anymore.  
Come on. Get up.  
Get dressed. Come.  
Let me be, Younes.  
I said that you would come.  
Don't make me a liar.  
Is there alcohol at your Breton's house?  
What happened?  
He's Jewish, right?  
Why?  
-Just. I heard that.  
The Americans have landed.  
The women shouted  
and left their men in the lurch  
The blue eyes  
with their full bags  
walk down the street

and attract the girls  
Now she is proud  
because she is popular  
with the Americans.  
Everywhere you hear OK, OK  
They share cigars and dollars  
Old women buy nylon stockings  
Even small children  
treat them with respect  
The Americans  
Everywhere you hear OK, OK  
Come on, bye bye  
Congratulations.  
Thanks for the chocolate, Omar.  
My pleasure.  
Here, for your friend Salim.  
Would you like some?  
Looking for Salim? He's upstairs.  
Salim?  
I'm having a nap.  
What is it?  
Cake for you.  
-I don't like chocolate.  
Don't look at me like that. What is it?  
Where are you going?  
Sentenced to death  
Keep moving.  
What is it, Ali?  
Francis and his group have been captured.  
The Germans had bugged their transmitter.  
He was wounded and taken to hospital  
at Bobigny  
Quickly, the Gestapo is on the way.  
We'll bring him to the mosque.  
Warn Ghabrit.  
I'm coming with you.  
-It's too dangerous.  
I'm coming, I said.  
Duck.  
Warn the others.  
Can you walk?  
-Yes.  
No organs affected,  
but a lot of blood loss.

Where is he?  
-Excuse me?  
There's a wounded terrorist here.  
There was this morning, but he's gone.  
I alerted the police straight away.  
Beware, that is the TB ward.  
Enter, but at your own risk.  
Omar.  
You know him?  
An German informer.  
That's who brings him his merchandise.  
-What merchandise?  
There's a car behind us.  
We're being followed. What do we do?  
-Put your foot down!  
They hit us.  
Faster.  
Get out.  
You there. Comer on out.  
-Walk.  
Hands up.  
Hurry up.  
Quickly.  
Come.  
You should have warned me.  
I would not have agreed.  
The hospital is full of informers.  
Everybody knows that.  
You've put the mosque in danger.  
What were you thinking of?  
The mosque watched is night and day.  
The medical director was shot  
by the Germans.  
Now I need to evacuate the basement.  
For that I will need your help.  
Then you must return to your country.  
Back?  
-You know what Omar has done?  
He tipped off the Gestapo  
that you were at the hospital.  
And now, they're looking for you.  
Hurry up.  
Close off all the exits.  
Come on, hurry up.

We're going.  
Ghabrit said that you'd left.  
That we won't see each other again.  
That night ...  
That's past.  
Her sister is missing.  
Where is your sister?  
-She's looking for my nou-nou.  
Be right back.  
-We're waiting for you.  
What's going on? Today is  
a holy Muslim holiday.  
A little respect, please.  
This is unacceptable.  
This gets will get to your superior.  
You hear?  
You can speak to Lieutenant Colonel Helmut Knochen,  
the head of the SS.  
Come along.  
There's soldiers everywhere. I'm afraid.  
-Come.  
Stand up, please.  
I ask you all ...  
to go to the exit.  
Come.  
Let's go.  
A little while longer.  
Wait, they're here.  
Go to your brother.  
You're not going?  
Paris, August 1944  
Keep it with you.  
Where are you going?  
-I'll be back.  
Younes?  
Hello.  
I'm glad you're alive.  
How are you?  
-Good.  
And you?  
-Also good.  
Have you news of Salim?  
Salim is well.  
He's singing again.

He lives again in the 11th  
district. It suits him well.  
He always asks after you.  
Look him up, that will please him.  
Will you not sit with our friends?  
-No, thank you.  
I understand.  
Goodbye.  
Brothers ...  
We walk the road  
to victory confidently.  
We want to fight for freedom,  
but that requires sacrifice.  
Act now, brethren.  
We give our blood  
to make our country free.  
We fight along with the French Resistance.  
We give the same blood  
and will have the same rights.  
Long live the freedom of all peoples.  
Long live the brotherhood.  
Down with colonialism  
and fascism.  
Long live freedom.  
Long live freedom.  
After the war Salim opened  
a nightclub in Paris.  
He was the biggest advocate of  
North African music in Europe.  
After that followed a nightclub in  
Casablanca. He died in 2005.  
Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit received  
an award for resistance in 1947.  
He remained director of the mosque  
until his death in 1954.  
Younes is inspired by various  
free men from North Africa.  
This film is dedicated to  
all anonymous freedom fighters.