

Thank You, I Know Everything

While sipping a hot mint tea, Mohammed turned to me and offered this advice. He was clear in his message to me. “When you go to Marrakech, trust no one. Do you understand? No one. The people there will take advantage of you. I know, I am from Marrakech and the people there are not like here in Tangier. Here in the Medina, people know each other; they are nice to each other.”

Then he repeated his message again so as to underscore its importance



It was not always an active conversation between us. More than not, we sat quietly and took in the pedestrian traffic and enjoyed our tea. Occasionally, we broke into periodic conversation about his family and about the geodes that he retrieved from the Sahara Desert. His bag of stones must have weighed 12-15 pounds and each perfectly sphere was wrapped in paper to protect its precious cargo. It was this bag which was his livelihood and with which he approached anyone and everyone with a smile and greeting, hoping eventually to make a sale.

I ran into Mohammed early in the afternoon after my roller coaster ride on a stationary camel that had moved no further than a footprint from where it had lain. Mohammed was easy to spot with his flowing white beard and matching nearly white cotton djaballa.

“No, this is not a djallaba, it has no hood.”

Unfortunately, my Arabic wasn't so good that I immediately forgot what it was called. For that matter, neither was my French worth anything more than that offered in a few movies like Casablanca or Agatha Christie's Hercule Perot.

Still, with limited French, I was able to purchase a ticket from Tangier to Marrakech, well, at least I hoped so. Sign language and Google Translate work wonders.

The warning that Mohammed gave me weighed on my mind..."Shokran, Nara Kushi" or something to that effect.

“If you say that, they will leave you alone. It means, Thank you, but I know everything.”

He said it with such authority that I was instinctively convinced that it would work.

“They” meaning anyone attempting to sell you something, to have you take a photo with their pet snake or trained monkey or to follow you and to relieve you of the contents of your backpack.

Upon leaving, Mohammed again repeated his warning.

“You must remember. Shokran, Nara Kushi.”

“Write it down.”

“Do not trust anyone,” and like Charles DeGaulle saying goodbye to his soldiers, he symbolically pecked me on both cheeks and bid me adieu.

It was as in the final scene of the movie Casablanca where Bogie and Captain Louis disappear into the fog with those immortal words... “Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”

Yes, Mohammed, I think this will be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

The Old Medina
Tangier, Morocco