



# **The Unkindest Cut: How a Hatchet-Man Critic Made His Own \$7,000 Movie and Put It All on His Credit Card**

*Joe Queenan*

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FROM DUST JACKET: "IN FEB. 1993, MEAN-SPIRITED MOVIE CRITIC JOE QUEENAN READ A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE THAT WOULD CHANGE THE COURSE OF HIS LIFE. THE ARTICLE DESCRIBED A MOVIE CALLED EL MARIACHI WHICH SUPPOSEDLY HAD BEEN MADE FOR A PALTRY \$7,000. ARMED WITH THE INFORMATION THAT SOMEONE COULD MAKE A MOVIE FOR A PALTRY \$7,000, QUEENAN NOW SET OUT TO PROVE THAT ANYONE COULD... IN FACT, HE WAS GOING TO MAKE IT FOR \$6,998. TWO YEARS LATER, ON A BITTERLY COLD FEBRUARY EVENING, QUEENAN'S FILM, TWELVE STEPS TO DEATH, WOULD WIN FIRST PRIZE AT THE FIRST TARRYTOWN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, NABBING THE COVETED GOLDEN HEADLESS HORSEMAN AWARD, AS HUNDREDS UPON HUNDRES OF DELIRIOUS MOVIE BUFFS LEAPT TO THEIR FEET TO APPLAUD HIS STAGGERING DIRECTORIAL DEBUT. BUT BEFORE QUEENAN WOULD HAVE HIS NIGHT OF TRIUMPH, THERE WOULD BE MANY FINANCIAL, PHYSICAL, AND EMOTIONAL DISASTERS. A KNIFE STABBING ON THE SET OF THE FILM. MASSIVE COST ERRUNS. SABOTAGED EQUIPMENT. THE TEARFUL RESIGNATION OF HIS SEVEN-YEAR-OLD SON FROM THE CAST. A RUINED MARRIAGE. AND THE CONSTERNATION OF HIS OLDEST, WISEST, AND CLOSEST FRIENDS, WHO QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF MAKING A \$7,000 FILM ABOUT A SOCIOPATHIC LOS ANGELES COP WHOSE WIFE AND CHILDREN HAD BEEN KILLED TWO YEARS EARLIER BY A SCHIZOID ANOREXIC RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER WHO WAS FLEEING AN ABUSIVE CHOCAHOLIC HUSBAND WHO USED TO BEAT HER UP WHENEVER HE HAD ONE TOO MANY OF THE NOUGAT CARAMELS." INCLUDES: TABLE OF CONTENTS 1. A TREE GROWS IN MANAYUNK 2. THE PRIDE AND THE PITY 3. OUR CRAP IS TWENTY TIMES BETTER THAN THEIR CRAP 4. DON'T GET IT RIGHT--GET IT WRITTEN TWELVE STEPS TO DEATH: THE SCREENPLAY 5. I'LL PLAY THE PART, ANDI WON'T NEED REHEARSING 6. THE FIRST CUT IS THE DEEPEST 7. MAKING A BIG SPLASH 8. THE KID DOESN'T STAY INT HE PICTURE 9. IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT LOOKING RIDICULOUS, YOU'RE IN THE WRONG F---ING MOVIE 10. WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART 11. THE GOLDEN HEADLESS HORSEMAN 12. DISSED IN DALLAS

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