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Wednesday, September 30, 2009

Memories of Jim - Part 2

PART 2

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A couple of weeks later I had my first one on one meeting with JC. We met for breakfast at a diner on the UES. I remember trying so hard to be cool but in reality I was more nervous than a kid on his first date. When Jim arrived he was warm, friendly and the vibe was really comfortable.

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We talked a lot about the options for The Basketball Diaries movie. Every couple of years some studio would pay him big bucks for the rights and never make the film. He was fine with that. Originally, brat-packer Anthony Michael Hall was set to play Jim. Jim hated the idea but conceded, "The kid could really play ball". After that fell apart, next in line was Jim's buddy Matt Dillon. Jim was disappointed that after years of script issues and other problems, Dillon had grown to old to play the role.

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Years later, Jim was flattered and enthusiastic about the choice of Leonardo DiCaprio - except for one thing. He couldn't play ball at all. It took weeks of training to even him get to the awkward skills displayed in the film. He HATED the fact that Mark Wahlberg was cast, "I don't want fucking Marky Mark in my movie." He was so angered that prior to shooting, he lobbied to have Wahlberg removed. Once filming began Jim and Mark hit it off. He recognized Wahlberg's talent and appreciated his work.

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Having played ball myself, I got up the nerve to ask Jim if he'd like to shoot some hoop some time. I could immediately tell the answer was no. He said he had recently playing in an "artists and writers" game with Paul Simon and others. He said that Simon and crew were such a bunch of hackers that, "they took the artistry out of the game." I don't think he ever played again.

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It was the first of many remarkably funny, rambling, circuitous conversations with Jim. He ordered rice pudding. It was served with a huge mound of whipped cream on top. He devoured it. I muddled through my bagel and like the kid who scores on that first date, walked out with a huge, stupid grin.

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