

## Ain Mäeots

presents his feature film *Demons* (2012),  
a project developed through a Sources 2 Script Development Workshop.

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AIN MÄEOTS It's hard to find a more critical audience than in a scriptwriters' workshop. [laughter] I'm even more nervous than I was in Montréal last August when we had our premiere there. I would be very happy to get some honest feedback afterwards. I've been asked to say a few words about the background of this story, of this film, and about my experience at the Sources workshop.

I participated three years ago in Graz, Austria with my co-writer, Toomas Tilk, who is actually a rap musician and a good one, I can say. Nothing to hide — the background is that I, myself, have a gambler's history. This was more than ten years ago, but it's important. But that was not the point. Our basic idea was not to make a movie or tell a story about the bad casinos or something. That wasn't the point at all for us. I don't know how you perceived it. Our concern and our interest was how it works, how people start to lie, the network of lies, how it starts, how it happens, how it grows and how far you can go with that. Of course, there are many, many movies and plays about addiction, mostly drug or alcohol-addicted people, but very few about gambling addictions. What's the difference and what's interesting about it? The main thing is that if somebody is into drugs or alcohol, you can see it all. A gambler who needs money is very smart, very sober and can turn off the pattern of empathy. Of course, he or she can feel bad afterwards, but at the moment of lying, he or she is a kind of robot. He may act like a very empathic person, and people become very good actors when they need money, when they are gamblers.

Depending on the psychological condition and the strength of your mental state, you can go very far. But, sooner or later, this ends. And the end comes very, very suddenly in a very unexpected moment. In medical terms, this journey is very interesting and something I've experienced myself. Our idea was to experience as a viewer, as an observer, being in the shoes of a gambler. There are two ways to tell stories: either you put ordinary or common people into unusual situations; or you take unusual persons and put them into a common situation. But if you take unusual people and put them into unusual situations, you don't believe it anymore. It's too far from you. So our way was to use common people. I want to say I really don't like that word. But you understand what I mean.

These three main characters and these three stories are based approximately on ten different real stories. We put them together and mixed them up. We wanted to create a puzzle, and not tell linear stories but mix them up in a timeline and let the audience put them into a timeframe in their heads. It's really good to have a core writer on the same level as yourself. Together, Toomas and I played the situations out in dialogues, portraying different characters. Our aim was to make it real and believable. The whole time there needed to be a sense that these are real people and that these things could happen even if the situations are unbelievable.

I'm a theatre director myself, and there is a big tradition of summer theatre in Estonia. When June begins, it seems like all one million Estonians become theatre-goers. You can hardly find a person who has never gone to the theatre in Estonia. Summer theatre is especially popular. A few days ago, I saw one of the most interesting productions. It was amazingly simple, even trivial. There's

one actress and I would really like to show her picture to you. [He shows picture] For one and a half hours, she's alone. It's not even a play; it's a monologue.

She spent the last two years studying agriculture because she is very keen on gardening. She lived in the countryside and grew potatoes, peas, everything. By the way, she's a really good actress and is really popular in Estonia, playing roles in popular TV series and films. It wasn't a question of her having no work to do. She had a lot of work. But she spent two years studying agriculture, and at the same time had two small kids to care for and did television and theatre acting. In an hour and a half, she talks to the audience without any theatrical tricks, without any effects. The title is "Tiina's Tractor". She drives a tractor up onto the open-air stage – a real tractor – and tells us stories of how she spent her year in agricultural school, some absurd, some funny, some sad, all her problems with her family. She just told her story. It was so touching, interesting, funny. Afterwards, when the show was over, I thought it was not mere theatre because I just forgot about everything else. She did it in such a personal way. She wrote this story from her own experience, and that's the most important thing. You can have a very well-constructed story, a plot with many, many twists, everything. But if you don't have something very personal there, it doesn't work.

The personal touch doesn't guarantee that you will have a very good movie or play. But it's one of the basic things. The audience doesn't have to like it all, but it's real and on some levels it works no matter what. Or you must have a very big interest in it. Now I'm writing a script for a war movie. I've never been in a war and I hope I never have to be. But it's a real story.

But coming back to the *Demons* movie, I want to talk about the development in Graz at Sources. The Estonian film industry is one in which everybody knows everybody. We all apply for the same money. There are many promising directors but you can very rarely get money. You apply for the money and somebody gives his or her expertise on the script. But these experts are connected with other projects that are also applying for the money. It was really refreshing to be amongst people with whom you are not in competition. It sounds strange, but it works. We don't know one another and we have no other things between us. There are only our scripts.

I have written a scene with characters and a certain style and I'm very sure about how it will all work – the dialogue, the characters, the situation. But all of you have also written scripts and you all might say to me, "Well, no, for me it doesn't really work; it might work some other way." This is the moment when I have to face the truth about my illusions and my thoughts. This is the moment where I start to ask myself questions in an objective way, like why the strangers and professional people around the table don't think it works the way I thought it did.

The other thing is asking questions. Our mentor was Gabriela Prekop. She would never say: "Don't do this," or "Do this," or "Don't do that." Never. She just asked questions. What I learned most in Sources was asking questions and looking at my script, at my story, from different angles. There are so many ways to construct or de-construct stories. We saw these ways.

I'm an actor and a director. And I feel like everybody else is ten times more experienced in scriptwriting than I am. As a director, what I want to suggest and say is that one should never, never use adjectives. If you're writing a script for actors or a director, you shouldn't use these. Of course, for the financing people and funders, you can have adjectives. Here's an example: You have lines that say, "Mary enters the room. She sees John there. Mary whispers to John with cruelty in her voice." Or 'loudly', or 'warmly', or you name it. You can experiment if you have the opportunity, if you have some actors. Give them a scene written with adjectives. As scriptwriters, of course you have a vision of how it must sound and how it must look and everything. And this can be correct. But what happens when an actor receives this text? We call it result acting, and even,

result directing. It's an unconscious process. Very intelligent actors immediately delete or swipe away these adjectives and try to focus on the situation and the character's task. But not so experienced actors start with what's written there because that's what the scriptwriter has provided. That creates a result and this is the moment when they push the button of cliché. There will be no spontaneous and real moments because actors will focus on this adjective – 'warmly', or 'cruelty' in her voice, or whatever – and not to the situation. You can really do this experiment of giving a scene to actors with many adjectives and one without any, just for reading, not for acting. Even in the reading, you can hear, you can feel and experience the difference.

If you create a situation, you have characters. Never think about them as characters but as real people. This doesn't necessarily mean that you must imagine actors. I'm talking from a director's point of view. If you write a dialogue, you must hear a real person. It can be a friend. It can be your father, your fiancé, but he or she must be a real person. Then you have a filter that helps you avoid literalism. These people do not have to be actors, not at all. It's even better if they're not. If you ask somebody to read your lines, your main direction to them would be to please try not to act; just concentrate on the idea, the thought that is written there. This is where you realize you must take away all the adjectives because you will see and feel that the adjectives are big, big obstacles for a spontaneous relationship.

I need two volunteers, please, a man and a woman. No need to act! Okay, please come here. I'm going to give you very trivial lines. So yeah, stand like this. [to the woman] What's your name?

WOMAN Nana.

MÄEOTS [to the man] Say, "Hi, Nana."

MAN Hi, Nana.

WOMAN Hi Thomas.

MÄEOTS [to the man] Ask her, did she enjoy her lunch?

MAN How did you enjoy your lunch?

WOMAN It was fine.

MÄEOTS [to the man] You can also say how you enjoyed it.

MAN I enjoyed my lunch.

MÄEOTS [to the woman] You can say, "Okay."

WOMAN Okay.

MÄEOTS [to the man] And you say, "See you soon."

MAN See you soon.

MÄEOTS Okay, let's repeat it.

MAN Hi. Nana.

WOMAN Hi. Thomas.

MAN Did you enjoy your lunch?

WOMAN Yeah, it was okay.

MAN I enjoyed mine, too. See you soon.

WOMAN Okay, bye.

MÄEOTS Very common situation, small talk, blah, blah, blah. Now please move very closely together, into each other's personal space. Closer. [laughter] Don't try to pretend like you're lovers or something. Just say the lines.

MAN Hi. Nana. [laughter]

WOMAN Hi,Thomas.

MAN Did you enjoy lunch?

WOMAN Yeah, it was okay.

MAN I enjoyed it, too.

WOMAN Okay.

MAN See you later.

MÄEOTS Very good, thank you. What happened? [laughter] Okay, they started to love, to be emotional, everything. Why? Because this distance is the distance where people can't lie. I mean, to lie or pretend is really hard. Of course, these lines are very common. You can hear through your lines if they're artificial, literal, or not, when you put two people together like this. If there's something wrong or something literal in your lines, you will hear it when you use that kind of distance between two persons. Just experiment.

Okay. Last thing. [He seats the man and woman.] Don't look at each other. Don't act or give meaning, just say these same lines.

MAN Hi, Nana.

WOMAN Hi,Thomas.

MAN Did you enjoy lunch?

WOMAN Yeah, it was okay.

MAN I enjoyed it, too.

WOMAN Okay.

MAN See you later.

WOMAN Bye.

MÄEOTS Okay, and now the same thing but don't look at each other. [to the man] Try to focus on her. You're interested in understanding her mood but don't look at her at all, just say the lines. But concentrate on each other.

MAN Hi, Nana. Did you enjoy lunch?

WOMAN I had a line before. [laughter]

MÄEOTS Okay, start again.

MAN Hi, Nana.

WOMAN Wait, I have to start again.

MAN Hi, Nana.

WOMAN Hi, Thomas.

MAN Did you enjoy lunch?

WOMAN Yeah, it was okay.

MAN I enjoyed it, too.

WOMAN Okay.

MAN See you later.

WOMAN Bye.

MÄEOTS Okay, thank you. What difference did you see?

AUDIENCE It was more intense.

MÄEOTS Yeah, absolutely, because they were interested in each other. That's the theme.

AUDIENCE You could feel the focus or the tension between them.

MÄEOTS Absolutely. Now, you can imagine millions of versions of a relationship between them, these two people. They cannot act. They just must know it. They don't have to express it at all. They just must know it and use these very, very trivial lines, but we'll get it. We *will* get it, because we're humans, too. [to the man and woman] Thank you. Thank you very much. You can sit. [applause]

I very, very often fight with my TV scriptwriters and very often I just delete the lines. I tell them that I deleted this scene, this line. "Why?! Why?!" And afterwards they see it on the screen and say, "Ah, yeah, it works like that." There are many more things you can get from the actors and the director without writing it there in an obvious way, especially in the words, in the lines.

Let's go back to the beginning. Let's imagine real persons in a real situation. We know the relationship is what they've chosen, what they have, what they want. You can tell this from a minimum of information. Let the actors play it and afterwards, the others will say, "It was a really good script!" By the way, Chekhov does this. If you watch his plays, the dialogues are fucking trivial. They are so trivial. They talk about the weather. They don't talk about other things at all. But what happens between the characters means that you can trust the real situation between real people. Don't try to be obvious. I've made these mistakes myself and have tried to learn from them over time and I must repeat this all the time to myself. Even in my film, I redirected things that were too obvious. I'm talking from my experience.

Let's talk about reason and consequence. We all have read books about screenwriting, how to create situations, how a character must work, and we all have seen many well-constructed films, well-written, where everything is okay and everything is very professional, but it doesn't work. There can be many reasons for this, but in most cases we understand that this logical line of reason and consequence is there. Mary splits with John because. John fights something because. And then there are very logical reasons for this. And that's all.

The greatest art of all and how to achieve it is to realise that we are not logical. We people are not. We are very, very irrational. Just think about a situation from your life, and when somebody asks you, "Why did you behave so?", you'll say, "I don't know why." Of course, afterwards you can analyse yourself and think about the things that led to this irrational behaviour. In writing, we must construct a very logical structure, but the most interesting thing is what happens. The rest is just the fundament, the basis. What happens when irrationality comes in? This is the most interesting thing in the level of scriptwriting and directing. This is why I really enjoy working with actors. Most Estonian actors are really good and do a good job of acting. But it's not enough to be good. The job is to become a real person and react in a real way. Like you two showed [to the man and woman who performed the scene], you start to react, to love. Why? There is no logical reason; it was a spontaneous act and you achieved this spontaneity.

We developed this script in Graz. We had what I thought was a very good treatment. If you took that treatment and compared it with the finished script, you would know that there were many scenes that were re-written. I really had a plan and thought, okay, now all we have to do is write the dialogue into this treatment. The scene will start here and we know where it will end. There were many scenes where I started to write the dialogue and I couldn't. I mean, I did it, but it wasn't working because I tried to put in my already-there vision, putting this reason, consequence, reason, consequence line into it. It didn't work because it was not alive. This is the moment when you just have to let go and let the character tell you what he or she does. This is the most enjoyable moment. Don't force it. Don't force it at all, never. Let them live. You can reach a place you never planned to go to and it can be very interesting.

So I can go on talking and tell some interesting stories but I would really like to let you ask me some things.

AUDIENCE I think your film portrays addiction very well. I felt I could relate to that and it came across as quite real, in a sense. Did you have your three stories from the very beginning when you started writing, or was that part of the process also at Sources where you decided you'd do a three-story script?

MÄEOTS Yes, we had a plan to make these three stories. The very first version was only one story, but, by the way, we had a lot of characters, sidekicks. We had some very funny and interesting and colourful sidekicks, and my heart bled when we deleted them. But we had to remain focused on our main stories. But yes, we had three characters from the very beginning.

AUDIENCE A follow-up to that: You slightly shuffle the timeline with flash-forwards, starting with the suicide attempt and then pick up later. Is that an editing decision or was that scripted?

MÄEOTS It was scripted. We re-arranged this puzzle, but it was at the level of the scriptwriting. It was the hardest thing. It was real math. We even wrote down exact dates. This is the date where Joko enters the casino for the first time, which is the day when Ants makes a suicide attempt on the railway. But there are all the other things, too. There is Ant's colleague also doing something. Our brains were really smoked with this timeline play, but it was also very interesting.

AUDIENCE But why did you shuffle the timeline?

MÄEOTS As I told you, I really don't like linear stories. I'm a gambler. I'm still a gambler. I like to gamble! It's like poker, the order of cards. We really wanted this effect of mixed cards through this timeline. It was really fun. With scissors, we would split up the scene on the floor and shuffle it. It was really fun. I really think filmmaking and theatre making should be fun.

AUDIENCE I have two questions. First, in the editing, did you try not putting the suicide attempt in the beginning? Did you try that?

MÄEOTS Yeah, we tried. It was in a very final cut. I woke up in the morning and thought that it must be there [in the beginning]. My producer asked why, and my co-writer asked why. It's very irrational. I don't know why. There is no logical explanation. I just wanted to do it.

AUDIENCE For me, it functions well at the beginning because the beginning has to catch you. If we didn't see this suicide attempt, the beginning would be very general, some ordinary people, and the interest wouldn't be as high as with this story from the beginning.

MÄEOTS You can call it a 'hook' there. It's not very original. It's very often that way in a very Hollywood-ish way that starts with something like that. *Fight Club* starts like this. In this situation, if Ants were killed, I would not put it in the beginning.

AUDIENCE My second question was, how come you didn't choose to portray how it is to stop gambling? You tell three stories about people who are addicted and cannot get out. There is the story of the boy Joko with the pregnant woman. In the end, you see him with a girl so we might see that he probably got out of gambling and he was okay in the end.

MÄEOTS Probably, yes.

AUDIENCE But why didn't you choose to also tell a story about how it is to stop being a gambler and the process it takes to stop this addiction?

MÄEOTS In real life, there is only one way to stop like that. We see the attempts during the film. They want to stop it. Joko stops for a month, but then it happens again. That's the way it is, coming back to it, the moment of falling in is very sudden. It's not, "Oh, I'm fighting it, I'm fighting it. I won't go. I won't go. Oh! I can't. I must go." It's not like that.

AUDIENCE It's not like that?

MÄEOTS No, not at all! I'm very sure I'm not going to the casino. I'm very sure. But there's the moment [he snaps his fingers], "Okay, I'm going!" That's it.

AUDIENCE But you described that he didn't go for a month. I heard him say it to her, but I didn't see it, how it worked.

MÄEOTS You mean at the end of the film?

AUDIENCE No. Joko's wife or girlfriend tells him, "Look, don't call me ever again." He goes with flowers to the hospital, and then in the next scene you see them in the house. He's holding the baby and she's in the bath. Then the surprise of the chain and he says, "I haven't been there for a month." But this you didn't show in the film. In that sense, I didn't feel that he didn't go.

MÄEOTS Okay. The idea was that he actually didn't because he really tries to concentrate and be a real person, a real father. Even Evelyn says to him that she sees that he's a real father, that she wouldn't have believed he could do it or that he did do it. She knows what a good liar he can be. She can feel that he's a real person now and can love, but she can't believe it anymore. "I believe it, but I can't." We wrote her as a very, very smart person.

AUDIENCE If you say as someone with experience with gambling that you cannot show a process of how it is not to be a gambler, I can understand why you couldn't show it. Do you understand me? But I wonder if there's a process like some other addict that might have to go to meetings, or to a psychiatrist, or you say you won't go and you're standing in front of the casino, telling yourself, "No, I won't go back." Or is there no process like that?

MÄEOTS Actually, there is no process like that.

AUDIENCE There is something called Gamblers Anonymous.

MÄEOTS There is, but there is also a difference between fighting alcoholism and this. Alcoholism is physical. Your body is depending on this drug or this substance. But gambling is absolutely mental. There are physical processes such as adrenaline rushes, but . . .

AUDIENCE Is there no post-traumatic stress syndrome?

MÄEOTS It depends on the person, but mostly not.

AUDIENCE I also thought about not seeing him quit so I sort of didn't believe it, that the character had, indeed, stopped.

MÄEOTS You're absolutely right. That's the thing. You can't believe him anymore.

AUDIENCE Okay, so that's why you didn't show it.

MÄEOTS We really couldn't figure out any situation to *prove* his innocence.

AUDIENCE But from the moment when he came to her room in the hospital with flowers, you realise she's ready to give him another chance. We didn't see that he didn't go gambling, but as soon as she gives him another chance, you say okay, let's hope he won't screw up this time because that was the second or third chance, the second or third time he's telling her that he won't go to the casino anymore. Just before that, she sent him an SMS saying don't call me ever again. That's very brutal, you know? He doesn't call her, but comes to the hospital with flowers, doing the completely opposite thing. She lets him into that room, and so you realise she will give him another chance. You think she's rather stupid, too emotional about him, or she's really tolerant, a candidate for a saint kind of tolerance. [laughter]



MÄEOTS But the thing is that this is not something black and white. When the door closes, we don't know. Maybe in the next moment, in this situation, Joko might fly out.

AUDIENCE Also, at the end, you really don't know. Maybe they will be divorced and his daughter will see him only on the weekends on the beach.

MÄEOTS If you just kind of follow the rules of telling with images, we don't see the image of Evelyn there.

AUDIENCE That's what I'm saying. My perception was that they got divorced and he sees his daughter during the weekend or once a month, once a year, when he's not in the casino. [laughter]

MÄEOTS I said to our producer from the very beginning that I really wanted to do something that I actually don't like at all. I want to tell very embarrassingly trivial stories, very, very trivial. It's very hard for me to watch this movie because these are such trivial stories. But you know what I mean, either you take it or not. That's why I said that I really respect it if you don't like it at all. I understand why you wouldn't like it. It's absolutely understandable. It sounds pathetic but we are intellectual people and this movie is not intellectual at all. It's very banal what happens. But the force and the reason to do this movie anyway were stronger.

AUDIENCE I don't think it's banal and I really like the character of Evelyn and what you said about her, that you didn't want her to be stupid. She's smart and loving and caring. We also feel as the audience that we cannot trust Joko anymore.

MÄEOTS Thank you, thank you. What I wanted to say, coming back to this idea when you write: please imagine real, exact people, actors or persons, and how he or she will probably react. Because good actors will always surprise you. All of these characters were written for these actors. When my producer and some other people read this character of Evelyn in the script, they said that she seemed so dumb. I said, no, she's not dumb at all. Maybe when you read the script, you would conclude this. But I know how it works with this actress, with the real person.

AUDIENCE And how would you portray that in your script without using adjectives? [laughter]

MÄEOTS There were some adjectives. But I deleted them.

AUDIENCE For the actors, you deleted them.

MÄEOTS Yeah. Of course, I forgot to delete some adjectives. During rehearsals, I had problems with that. I said, "Please forget about these adjectives," but the actor had already seen them.

AUDIENCE For the shooting script, you have to write adjectives to get money.

MÄEOTS Yes, but if it goes to the director and the actors . . .

AUDIENCE During rehearsal, you use adjectives also.

MÄEOTS No, never! I only give the actors a task.

AUDIENCE Then they present you with something.

MÄEOTS I can say technical things. I can say don't spend so much time in this moment, and then make the task more exact. Sometimes it happens and I always apologise for that. I'm also human.

It was really this detox period when I realised that using adjectives is a hell of a problem for my work. It was really hard to avoid it. It was really hard and I had to fight it.

AUDIENCE It was up to her to show facial emotions when she's talking to Joko. She was the one who decided how she would react?

MÄEOTS Absolutely, I never ask actors to show a certain emotion. A really good actor really just avoids your recommendations, but bad actors do it in the most rubbish way. [laughter]

AUDIENCE It was interesting to see when they were at the weekend having dinner and he pretended that someone was calling him. He says he has to go to shoot something and he'll be back in three hours, and she was smiling. Another woman might be serious instead of smiling. I thought she was probably thinking, "Yeah, you're shooting something, motherfucker." It was completely opposite from the first time. The first time she cried because she thought he was going to another woman. And then she has doubts about that. You see that every time he lies to her she reacts differently. First she cries; she freaks out; she snaps. Then she smiles. Then she's angry. She sometimes has a poker face where you don't see any emotions at all, which is also very interesting.

MÄEOTS By the way, this actress is very popular. There was a talent show in Estonia. She's an incredible parodist, so funny. But thank you for saying that. Especially Joko and Eveyln's scenes were the moments where I really enjoyed this feeling of having achieved this irrationality. I really try to avoid emotional mapping. This is another thing that can be an obstacle to a real relationship between actors. If you say to an actor, "Okay, in this moment when he says this thing to you, you feel that." You don't say how he or she must react, but even if you say those words "you feel that," it's already wrong. If he or she is a smart actor, he or she can understand anything spontaneously anyway. It's this 'result' acting that I was speaking of before. Don't draw an emotional map.

Just a month ago, I had an angry moment with my TV scriptwriter again because he sent a letter to a new actor on a TV series I directed. This letter to the actor was a full emotional map of what this character must feel. It was the most wrong thing you can do. Trust the actor with the text. Let the dialogue, the lines, create the reactions, authentically, spontaneously. You can have a very, very interesting and lively result.

AUDIENCE How do you communicate or calibrate things then if somehow an actor gets something completely wrong?

MÄEOTS As a director, I never say that he or she is wrong or that the reaction was wrong.

AUDIENCE But you see that something is going in a completely wrong direction, or a direction you really don't like. How do you bring an actor more into the direction you prefer?

MÄEOTS I would say that I was misleading him or her. Sorry, sorry for misleading. We go back to the beginning and ask, "What is the situation?" It's always the director's fault, *a/ways*. Even to the point of having maybe chosen the 'wrong' actor.

AUDIENCE You say I was misleading you. Please tell me what you think is in this scene?

MÄEOTS I say to them that I saw they wanted to express something. "You don't need to express anything; your task is to achieve this thing from him. Please do it with these lines. Use these lines. Everything else is up to you." I don't say how to do it. It's up to the actor.

AUDIENCE There's a great example of this. I don't know how many of you have seen the movie *Robin Hood* with Kevin Costner. Alan Rickman plays the Sheriff of Nottingham. He refused the role when he was offered it the first time. He said he didn't like him. They really wanted him to play the Sheriff of Nottingham. They asked him three times and he kept saying he didn't like him. They told him he would have carte blanche to play the Sheriff of Nottingham the way he wanted. They just gave him the lines. In the end, that version of *Robin Hood* is worth watching just because of Alan Rickman. It was the greatest part of the movie.

MÄEOTS That reminds me of what great actors often do – consciously or unconsciously – it doesn't matter. Gene Hackman is a very good example of that. You can watch any role of Gene Hackman's and see this. There might be the line where he says, "I will kill you." A bad actor will put some emotion to it or even do it with a poker face. Gene Hackman always uses a controversial way. He says, "I will kill you," in a way that might sound like, "I love you." It's totally contradictory.

AUDIENCE Does he also say, "I love you," as if he might say, "I will kill you"? [laughter]

MÄEOTS Yeah! If these things can happen spontaneously, not only with Gene Hackman but also with other actors, it's a very interesting solution. When you give actors a task, not a description of emotions, you will always have a living process. If not, then an actor will follow these emotional points. If he or she is a good actor, he or she will avoid your way of doing this. It's putting obstacles to a real situation.

AUDIENCE Except when you are shooting the film, do you have rehearsal time in pre-production?

MÄEOTS Always, always. I never believe the stories of directors that say they didn't have time for rehearsals because of location and production issues, blah, blah, blah. "It's such a pity we didn't have time for rehearsals!" It's the director's problem to find and take the time and not to go to the shooting if you're not very sure that the actors understand what you want. This can only mean talking. It doesn't necessarily mean you have to rehearse all the exact reactions or exact emotions. You need the basis. What is it that the characters want? What happens between them in each scene? You can even make some experiments. For instance, with these actors, we just read. No acting, I always ask for no acting, please. Even before we make storyboards, I experiment with how they sit or where they are positioned. What's the mise-en-scène in a spontaneous way from the beginning? What are the distances between them? What can they be? After that, the storyboards are made and camera angles and all that based on this rehearsal. Not with every scene. There were some certain scenes I wanted to do this with for experimentation. But you always have to take the time for rehearsing. It doesn't mean that we have to rationally chew everything and squeeze all the juice out. But the basic things, yes. What works here?

AUDIENCE Do you rewrite dialogues after rehearsals?

MÄEOTS We change it a bit. Mostly, we delete some lines because we don't need them anymore.

AUDIENCE Less is more, it really is.

AUDIENCE The same thing happens to me when I work with actors. I always end up deleting half the lines. What's interesting is when I have the shooting script and when I read the lines, just the lines, it always sounds so much worse than the original script when you read it. But when the actors come and play the scene, it's better in live action. But the written script compared to the original if you gave it to somebody to read or gave them both scripts, the shooting one and the other, always the one with more lines would read better.

# SOURCES 2

SCREENWRITING | DEVELOPMENT  
NETWORKING | TRAINING

MÄEOTS Remember the scene when the old lady, Reeda, plays the second time in the casino? She loses and then finally wins again. This was a really awful shoot because the actress was sick. The technical situation was that we took her face and framed it so [indicating extreme close-up]. She didn't have an actual slot machine in front of her because of a lighting problem and the camera was right in front of her with a light on her face. It was difficult. We were on the sixth take. We were shooting on film, not digitally. We were looking at one another asking what the fuck can we do? There was no light in there. So I started having a dialogue with her playing the role of the slot machine. The slot machine tells her, "You know, you are not going to win now. I took your money. What are you going to do next, hmm?" The editor told me that when he edited the scene with the original sound, he was laughing so much. [laughter] But after I did this play with her, the scene worked.

But circling back and to conclude, test your dialogue with other people, not just with the actors, just to hear them, just to hear the lines. You'll find many things you'd never have written there, in a positive and a negative way.

Okay so now it's time for lunch. But let's keep talking later. Thank you very much.

[Applause]