

“Andalusian Nights”
Miniseries Proposal by Jan Wilson

Logline:

During the Moorish invasion of Spain in 711 A.D. a young Muslim musician finds himself involved in an illicit love affair with Spanish woman. He uses the only weapon in his arsenal – music – to heal the religious, artistic and cultural rift between the Muslims and Christians.



Synopsis:

In 711 A.D. the Muslim Moors invaded Christian Spain. This “invasion” however was more like a secret invitation from the unhappy Spaniards themselves who were hoping the Moors would get rid of the Visigoth king Rodrigo who had unfairly taken the Spanish throne. A young musician, Ameer, accompanies his childhood friend General Tariq Ibn Ziyad on the invasion in hopes that his music will help the morale of the men. Along with an entirely different type of music the Moors bring with them a completely new way of life – new religion, new culture, new foods to this area, now called Andalusia.



Muslim Ameer meets and falls in love for Spanish Isabelle. Neither knows the other’s language or culture, but love knows no boundaries. At first it is an uneasy clash of cultures for the Spanish and Moors. Ameer and Isabelle must hide their new love or face the consequences after the newly arrived Moorish leader Musa discourages all things Spanish and forbids this type of relationship. Ameer uses the only weapon he has in his arsenal – his music – to heal the rift between the two cultures.

Andalusians - whether African, Spanish, Jewish or Arabic – lived in peaceful coexistence for over seven hundred years in what became known as the cultural center of the world.



Treatment:

711 AD. Spain. The new King of Spain, Rodrigo, is fully enjoying the benefits of being the supreme ruler. Luxurious palaces, the best food, servants, and all the best life can offer. The only trouble is, Rodrigo is not the rightful successor to the crown...he usurped the throne when the old King Witiza recently died. And now the dead king's son and other noble families of Spain want King Rodrigo put back in his place. But they need help.

In Northern Africa a young Arab musician, Ameer, visits his childhood friend Tariq Ibn Ziyad, who is now a Berber General. Tariq's superior is Musa, and it is Musa who has ordered Tariq to ready his troops of 300 Arabs and 7000 Berbers (collectively referred to as "Moors" by the Spanish). Tariq tells humble musician Ameer that the noble families of Spain have asked for



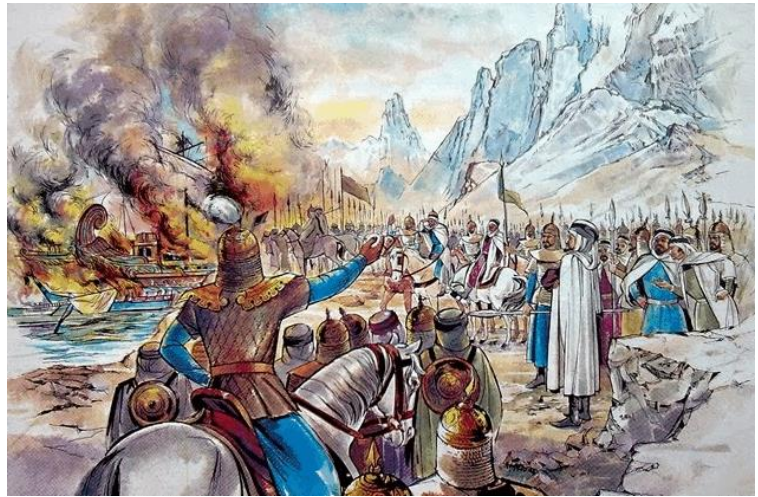
help, and Tariq is going on a 'peace-keeping mission' to Spain to help the Spanish people regain control. In his lust for power King Rodrigo is murdering family members and has left the people of Spain to their own devices. Rodrigo prefers to keep himself separate from the people he rules.

Ameer is a great lover of music and culture, and Tariq uses this to persuade him to join the forces. "We'll need someone to keep the morale up. Far from home, a strange country...your music could help soothe the men." Caught up in the romance of it all, Ameer agrees to go. Tariq teases him, "Besides, who else but a musician should help lead a peace-keeping mission?" Tariq assures Ameer that after Rodrigo is dealt with, they will all return home.

Ameer and Tariq leave North Africa, cross the waters and land on the coast of Spain. Some of the troops have already arrived and the shores are littered with their ships. As the Moors unload their supplies and horses, a growing mass of Spaniards appear on the horizon, watching from a distance. Tariq is uneasy as he watches the unknown army of people slowly approach. The troops notice, and their work slows down. The Moors are increasingly nervous by the oncoming crowds. Is the approaching army hostile? Tariq and his men drop what they are doing, and

slowly ready their swords. The unknown army advances, a dull roar audible now. It is an army of peasants and townspeople. As they approach the nervous Moors the dull roar is revealed to be cheering and shouts of joy. The Spaniards rush to the Moors with welcoming arms and smiling faces. Tariq turns to one of his soldiers. A sly smile creeps across his face. He nods toward their own ships. “Burn the ships.”

The Moors settle their camp near the edge of the town. Many of the townspeople do what they can to make the Moors comfortable. They bring them food and blankets. With the help of Arab soldiers who speak Spanish and a lot of sign language, the two cultures manage to communicate. A pretty



young woman named Isabelle who lives nearby soon catches Ameer’s eye. Around the campsite at night Ameer plays his oud (lute-like instrument) and the men feel at home hearing the familiar sound. Many men join in with darbukas (goblet shaped drums) and ouds. But Isabelle’s furrowed brow tells Ameer that she is struggling to appreciate their music. To her ‘western’ ear the music sounds off-key. Its eccentric modulations sound discordant and their singing voices nasal. Using only music and his singing voice, he ‘teaches’ her to hear his Middle Eastern music with new ears. She is an eager student. And he is soon in love.

King Rodrigo meanwhile is so preoccupied in-fighting with other Visigoths that he has barely noticed the gentle Moorish invasion. Tariq knows that at this point Rodrigo can easily be ambushed and killed. Despite having far fewer troops than Rodrigo, Tariq decides it is time to attack soon. At the camp Ameer hears one of the Spaniards refer to the mountain where the Moors landed as “Jabal Tariq” meaning “Mountain of Tariq”. With the Spanish struggling to use Arabic pronunciation, “Jabal Tariq” sounds like “Gibraltar.” It’s the Rock of Gibraltar - Tariq has named a Spanish mountain after himself. Ameer confronts Tariq about this. “If you are only planning on visiting, why name a mountain after yourself?” Tariq brushes off this question, “To show Rodrigo we mean business. Intimidation tactic.”

As the men prepare to do battle with Rodrigo, Isabelle and Ameer get closer. Ameer has encouraged her to expose him to their local music. Tariq and the townspeople can see the two getting closer, but it is tolerated. The Moors have come to be their heroes. Isabelle shows Ameer and Tariq one of her most cherished possessions: a small crude painting done by her late father. Islamic art prohibits realistic representation of objects, so Ameer is especially intrigued. He explains why the Moors will not attempt to draw, paint or sculpt anything in a realistic manner. To try to recreate something perfectly would be trying to do as Allah does, and that is disrespectful. She says it is sad that they do not have art. He is quite shocked at this comment! Of course they have art! But it is geometric, patterned, beautiful. To show her a sample, he takes a thick piece of paper out and shows her a beautifully ornate pattern. She is impressed by the geometric drawing, but flabbergasted by the paper. So smooth, so easily drawn upon...the Spanish have never seen anything like it. She turns it over. He tells her that she may use the back. She takes some pigment and with her finger draws a representation of a tree and an animal under it. He watches her with fascination. When she gestures for him to join her, he cannot bring himself to abandon his belief – he will not draw a realistic object.

Afterward, Isabelle and Ameer take a romantic stroll down to the beach. She tells him that she and all Spaniards consider him and his men heroes, getting rid of Rodrigo will free the Spanish from his neglectful rule. It is there on the beach that Ameer sees the smoldering remnants of the ships that have been burned down to the water line. He controls his fury and hurries Isabelle back home.

“You burned our ships! You have no intention of leaving Spain.” Tariq is startled by Ameer’s accusations as he bursts into Tariq’s meeting with his officers. Tariq’s status in the eyes of his men is threatened now...Ameer may be his childhood friend, but he is by no means anywhere close to being equal with Tariq’s rank. To save face in front of his men, Tariq must now treat Ameer as he would any lowly recruit. Tariq icily informs Ameer that Spain is weak now, ripe for conquering. His orders are coming from his superior Musa in North Africa: kill Rodrigo and take all of Spain. “This will be OUR land. Islamic. Your girlfriend’s drawings will have to come down.” Ameer is dismayed at Tariq’s implied intention of obliterating all Spanish culture.

Being a sensitive and artistic soul, Ameer is upset and turns to his music for solace. He starts on his oud with anguish, but it soon becomes a sweet tune. Summoned by his music, Isabelle listens to him play and sing his heart out. Clearly she can appreciate his music a bit more now. She motions questioningly to his beloved instrument. “Al-oud,” he states. She tries to repeat... “A lute?” She points to another larger lute-like instrument propped up against a wall. “Qitara,” he calls it. “Guitar-a...” she repeats. The beginnings of Andalusian music is evident, a blend of Spanish and Middle Eastern music that will last for centuries. Swept up in the precious musical moment they are sharing, she joins him as best she can on a Spanish drum – her drumbeat distinctly different from his Middle Eastern music – but somehow they meet in the middle and it’s a magical merging of Spanish and Moorish. The song is perfectly capped off with a long overdue kiss. And that night Ameer and Isabelle are themselves a magical merging of Spanish and Moorish.

Up north, Rodrigo caps off *his* night with a round of pillage and rape of a noble family’s home and daughter. Taking what he wants from their plush home, he passes by hungry peasant villagers as he strolls back to his camp. He would just prefer not to deal with the unpleasantness of poverty.

The next morning, flushed with desire and sleep, Ameer wakes up in Isabelle’s bed and stumbles outside to greet her with a kiss. But instead of a kiss he receives a look filled with daggers from not only Isabelle, but many of the townspeople he has befriended. Tariq has barreled through the town making his conquering intentions known by telling the Spaniards that they should learn Arabic, as Spanish will eventually be banned as the Moors begin to take over. “He’s your good friend, can you tell me this is a surprise to you?” His guilty look is all the answer she needs. Her contempt for him is clear. “I thought you were noble, here to save us.” “How? By murdering? You think I’m noble if I kill your king in cold blood?” She stumbles over her own conflicting thoughts. “Yes! Sometimes it isn’t murder but assassination for the good of the people.” “*Whose* people?” Anger is muddying her thoughts, nothing will make her feel better.

As the troops ready themselves for battle, Ameer has for the most part settled comfortably into his acceptance that Rodrigo must be killed. With Isabelle hating him now, and Tariq turning

militant on him, there's nothing left for him to do but what he came here to do. Join the battle to kill Rodrigo, and lift spirits with his music as they go.

Ameer learns that Musa will soon be joining Tariq and 5000 more infantry. This will not be 'keeping the peace' but downright conquering. Tariq is suddenly nervous about Musa's impending arrival. Any misbehavior by this troops will be a bad reflection on him. The Moors' cozying up to the Spaniards will not look good for a leader intent on conquering them. One night while singing and playing with some fellow Moors, Ameer tries to incorporate some Spanish beats into their songs, as Isabelle had done. The other Moors are intrigued. But Tariq has had enough and decides to put his foot down. In a rage of frustration and fear, Tariq forbids Ameer and the other men to play anything but purely Moorish music. He slashes a Spanish drum to bits with his sword to make his point. He then announces to the masses, including the Spanish, that "We are here to conquer and take this land as the land of Allah!" To punctuate his proclamation of no non-Islamic culture or art, he smashes a small Spanish sculpture with the base of his sword.

Spanish and Moorish relations are understandably strained in the town. The once welcoming Spaniards now detest the Moors and the Moors have gone from accommodating to intimidating. Ameer makes repeated attempts to reconnect with Isabelle. His smiles across a courtyard are not returned by her. When he offers bits of tasty Moorish treats to a table full of Spaniards, most give in and accept his gracious gesture. But she doesn't touch it.

Swallowing his anger of Tariq's behavior, Ameer sits with him at dinner. They eat Middle Eastern food only. Most of the men steer clear of Tariq now. Ameer joins him at the table where Tariq eats alone. Awkward silence. Ameer spots a bowl of fruit - something uniquely Spanish - and almost comically offers it to Tariq. With a sneer and a guffaw, Tariq swipes the Spanish bowl off the table. This gesture sums up his position: this whole Spanish-Moorish division has been a thorn in his side. But Ameer knows his friend well. "Is this coming from you? Or Musa?" Tariq's look tells Ameer that the ban on all things Spanish is actually coming from his superior, and Tariq is in the difficult position of being the one who must enforce it before Musa's arrival. Ameer takes this last quiet moment before the storm to implore his

friend's decency. "I understand that we are never leaving Spain. But why must we destroy what we conquer? What will be left worth having?" The square is full of Moors and Spanish, side by side. Not exactly the best of friends at this terse point in history, but living side by side that night. Men and women, peacefully coexisting. Tariq considers this for a moment. Then... "Tomorrow we attack."

The morning of the Battle of Guadalete...

In her home, Isabelle rises from bed and spots something unfamiliar on her windowsill. A thick piece of paper rolled up and tied with a leather thong with a flower. She unties it, and looks at the paper. It is a primitively drawn picture of a man and woman holding hands on the beach. It brings tears to her eyes. Outside she can see the town square – noticeably empty of Moors.

On the ride to meet Rodrigo, Tariq and Ameer still keep their distance from each other -- physically and emotionally -- but they are all united, the many troops. The Battle of Guadalete is about to begin. Though Rodrigo is ill-prepared and easily ambushed by Tariq, Rodrigo has 30,000 men – more than twice as many as the Moors. Fighting on horseback gets underway, and it's a long bloody day.

Many Moors and Visigoths fall, but Rodrigo – true to his nature – has kept himself separate from most of the brutal fighting. Ameer has done some damage too, mostly killing only when backed into a corner, never really charging into the action. But at the end of the day, Tariq singles Rodrigo out and goes after him with a vengeance. Blood, fallen bodies and loose horses fill the battleground. (The opposing Arabian horses and Spanish horses -- two very different horse breeds that will quite literally merge together in the coming years to become one of the most beautiful and famous horse breeds in the world, the Andalusian horse.)

When Tariq's sword takes one last well-aimed swing, Rodrigo finally loses his crown - and his head. Battle-weary and bloodied, Tariq is overjoyed that the king is dead. The battle is over. But Ameer is overcome with horror as he looks across the battlefield and the final carnage is revealed in all its gory spectacle. What has he become?

Back at the encampment, the weary troops are greeted by the newly arrived great Musa, who has

taken control, bringing more troops with him. The town is now overrun with Moors, and the Spaniards presence in their own city is very subdued. Truly intent on bulldozing over the Spaniards 'culture, religion and art, Musa commandeers the Christian church for the celebration of Rodrigo's demise. Musa's presence is strong and it is clear from the celebrations that all things Spanish will not be tolerated. Much food and celebrations are in full swing that night. Tariq is content to bask in the glow of Musa's praise for a job well done. Spanish men and women serve food and their presence is tolerated since they are reduced to the role of servants. Ameer sits sullen and pensive, not in a festive mood. Isabelle peers into the main room from a dark corner. Spying Ameer, she gives a sigh of relief. "He's alive."

Musa himself summons Ameer from the ranks, insisting on hearing this musician that he has heard so much about. Musa's jovial mood over 'conquering' all things Spanish does nothing to lighten Ameer's mood. Reluctantly Ameer steps up with his oud, ready to play. The room quiets. Tariq catches Ameer's eye and his looks says "don't you dare – you'll be beheaded in a fit of Musa's rage." Ameer begins to play...traditional Middle Eastern music. The room breathes a sigh of relief. Tariq breathes a sigh of relief. Isabelle breathes a sigh of relief. Other musicians join in, drums and qitaras. Musa is pleased. But it is tearing Ameer apart.

Isabelle begins to serve food to some of the tables. A ray of hope enters Ameer's life as he spots her. He nearly stops playing. The other musicians stumble a bit, waiting for him to continue to lead them. He recovers and continues to play. But then...very subtly, he starts to introduce that Spanish beat tapped out on the body of his oud. Isabelle notices immediately, and nearly drops her serving tray. Then Tariq hears the difference and tenses up, knowing what he's up to. The band falters, not knowing exactly how to follow. Soon the Spanish influence of the music is increasingly obvious. The troops notice. And of course Musa is struck still with incredulity. Is he hearing what he thinks he is? And at a banquet honoring the Moorish conquest of the Spaniard king?! Ameer is bold, his Spanish beat continues. Then he lapses back into the Middle Eastern style. The crowd breathes a bit, nervous laughter. They don't know what to think.

Catching Isabelle's eye, his Spanish beat takes over again. This is his love song for her. She is filled with love for him, but then terror, as she realizes his life is on the line. The other

musicians stop completely, stunned. By now it is obvious to all that these two people are communicating their love to each other. The room holds its breath. Musa glares, taking it all in. Another Moor jumps in and plays too, adding more Middle Eastern rhythms. A few Spanish men grab instruments and play their Spanish beat, and soon the room is alive with this new sound. Musa is now no longer stunned, but intrigued. Isabelle goes to Ameer in the center of all of the whirlwind of music and commotion. Oblivious to everyone else, Isabelle and Ameer fall into a long passionate kiss. By now the happy and lively reaction of the Moorish and Spanish crowd has overwhelmed Musa's reaction. Slowly Musa nods his approval...of the music...the lovers. Tariq joins the musical fusion, stomping his feet and clapping to the beat.

The festivities reach a fever pitch and Musa himself gets up and stomps his feet and claps in time to this new music. Ameer and Isabelle are now oblivious to the music, lost in each other as the town celebrates...together.

END CAPTION:

The Spanish and Moorish cultures blended their music, art, literature, architecture and cultures and this part of Spain became known as Andalusia.

Andalusians - whether African, Spanish, Jewish or Arabic – lived in peaceful coexistence for over seven hundred years in what became known as the cultural center of the world.