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**“When women know their worth and understand their strength, they stand up more for themselves and their communities”**

With Actress and Model Hunter Phoenix





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*understand their strength, they stand up for themselves and their communities more. We are all in this together!*

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*I had the pleasure of interviewing Hunter Phoenix, a Canadian-born actress and model who is also proud to call herself a storyteller and entrepreneur. The versatile Ms. Phoenix has performed in everything from theatre in London, to television and feature films across Europe and North America, working alongside such greats as legendary director Tobe Hooper and academy award winning actor, Christoph Waltz. A highly sought after commercial print model she has appeared in more than 200 campaigns internationally, as well as a seasoned voice actor whose latests projects include English language voice dubbing for the record breaking European TV series ( Netflix America ) Babylon Berlin and another Netflix blockbuster FullMetal Alchemist.*

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**Thank you so much for joining us! Can you tell us a story about what brought you to this specific career path?**

I think this was probably predetermined before birth—my mother has two pictures of me when I was about 3 years old. She had me all dressed up in ‘Sunday best’ planning to take the perfect picture of her adorable daughter.... but I was sobbing! That was Picture #1. But in Picture #2 I’m all smiles! She says that’s when I suddenly saw the camera :) Yes, the camera and I have a long and passionate love affair, but I also have loved story telling and public speaking as long as I can remember. My mother taught me how to read before I started school and I just couldn’t get enough of it. But I wanted to read to other people—essentially I needed an audience. So at the tender age of 6 I talked the teacher into letting me take over and read to the once a week. Of course I would practice reading the book over and over before the big day—I wanted to be good at it. I really think this was my initial scene prep work. But where I grew up no one ever talked about being an actress, so I

figured I'd be a teacher or a doctor. Then I studied dance and thought I would be a ballerina. that didn't really work out, but chorus line work led me to the stage and a whole new world opened up. One way or another I knew my career would involve being in front of people and have something to do with the arts.

**Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you started this career?**

It's difficult to single out one thing as the most interesting... there are so many interesting things about shooting film and television, especially at the beginning—everything is new. I remember one of the very first films I was on; we were shooting a summer evening garden party, wearing summer clothes, but it was only the end of March. And the in the midwest! The snow hadn't even all melted yet. Not only did we have to laugh and dance and talk without visibly shivering, but because it was so cold outside you could see our breath when we spoke so a guy came around with a giant bowl of ice cubes for us to suck on in between takes to cool our mouths down. Then we would quickly spit them out onto the grass, do a take and start again. That was a long cold night!





**Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?**

Again, on one of the earliest projects I worked on, we were shooting a summer scene, but this time it was actually summer. We were in a house, windows open, no AC on and it was ridiculously hot. So hot in fact that the lipstick the make-up artists were carrying for touch ups was melting. I was wearing a short, fitted summer dress, but it was lined, so again just

hot and sticky. I thought why wear anything underneath?! Keep cool! The scene we were shooting was between me and a guy but we were sitting opposite each other. I was on camera but he was still in place and of course doing his part when he suddenly just lost his lines. He really started fumbling and the director called cut, threw his arms open and said “What happened?” The guy replied “She just did a fatal attraction leg-cross thing.” Everyone burst out laughing and I realized I had just switched the cross of my legs and flashed the entire crew. I was so embarrassed and now make sure I have ALL of my wardrobe on before I head to set and I’m super careful with short skirts!

**What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now?**

I just finished doing the English voice dubbing on two projects for Netflix. One is FullMetal Alchemist, a really cool Japanese animated action adventure, and the other is Babylon Berlin. Babylon Berlin is epic! Not only is it a phenomenal piece of work, but it is the biggest budget TV series ever to be produced in Europe. There was a huge buzz about it last year before the release and I was so honored to be able to work on this. It was also a little intimidating since the original actresses were so incredible and you have to try to match their tone of voice, mood and emotions.

There are also a few projects in development, two that I am creatively involved in from the ground up. One is my own concept and the other is a well known story that I have acquired the copyrights to, so really excited for both of those. I’m also in talks with a Los Angeles production company as well as a marketing company for a couple of longer productions and on-going campaigns that will most likely start mid to late 2019.

**Who are some of the most interesting people you have interacted with? What was that like? Do you have any stories?**

One of the things I love about the entertainment industry is that you get to work with so many different people. Sometimes, more so for modeling, you have kind of a ‘core group’ that you work with again and again—photographers, stylists, make-up artists etc. But with film and television, it’s constantly changing with each new project. And creatives or artists tend to have really unique and eccentric personalities which

can create a constant whirlwind of excitement on set—there is certainly never a dull moment! This can get amplified a bit when we are running behind schedule or on night shoots... fuses are a little shorter at 3 am. There have definitely been a few big names and I've worked with including a couple of Oscar winners. That in an of itself is amazing just for the experience.





**Which tips would you recommend to your colleagues in your industry to help them to thrive and not “burn out”?**

Two big things: One—stop listening to everyone else, especially people who tell you you ‘should’ be more like this or you ‘should’ do more of that. There is no single set path to success and no absolute right. Trying to please everyone ultimately pleases no one, including yourself. It just leaves you feeling exhausted and discouraged.

Two—develop a marketing plan as quick as you can. Set times and timelines and stick to it, revising every few months as need. Marketing is a BIG part of this business; you’ve got to do it. But without a plan you will stress out every day that you are not working.

**BONUS:** make sure you have a full and happy life outside of the business. As the saying goes”How you make a living is not how you make a life.”





**You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)**

The two big issues that really tug at my heartstrings are abuse of women and children and abuse of animals. Both are just so unkind, and I really think the key is education, empathy and understanding. We only take care whatever and whoever we love, and loves come through awareness and understanding. I think it's hard not to care if you can really understand someone else's suffering and see them the same as you rather than different. Personally, I have also started a self-help blog (accessible from my website) to help foster Women's Empowerment. When women know their worth and understand their strength, they stand up for themselves and their communities more. We are all in this together! Another organization that is already doing some wonderful work in this area is Artists for Change [www.artists4change.org](http://www.artists4change.org) I remember seeing Sean Penn in n interview years ago and he talked about the responsibility we have as artists using such a powerful and widespread medium.



**What are your “5 things I wish someone told me when I first started” and why. Please share a story or example for each.**

1. The biggest one is just be yourself! You can't please everyone and who wants to! I went through a phase where I just wasn't getting work so I started asking for advice from agents, managers and casting directors—everyone had something different to say. I turned myself inside out changing my hair color, wearing colored contacts, growing my hair out, cutting it off, changing my wardrobe and headshots repeatedly. Not only was it costly but I was miserable. I didn't feel like myself and it felt like no one liked who I was. Let it go! If people want something different, they'll find it—they won't wait around for you to try and become it.

2. This is above all a business! Many people who go into the entertainment industry are artists. We want to create and play with other creatives.... not deal with boring planning, marketing and numbers. No marketing = no working... ya just gotta get good at it! Learn about show business marketing, do it and stay on top of current trends. I fell into the trap of relying too heavily on agents; they simply can't do it all and when you switch agencies you lose the network. I have learned that ultimately it's up to me. It's my career and my money so I need to take care of it.

3. Stop waiting for a lucky break. Essentially that's just a lottery win, and how many people win the lottery? If you really want a career, treat it like you would any other career, just like you were pursuing a career as an accountant or a lawyer—work hard, build networks and upgrade your skills constantly. Even A-List celebrities still hustle, take meetings and do appearances—you don't get to rest. As artists we often want to feel 'special'—I had to learn that I was special just by being me, lottery win or not.

4. Stay. Stay. And stay longer. This is a marathon, not a race. The great careers span decades, not years. There are times when I felt like quitting and did a couple of times take a step back from the business. There is a normal ebb and flow like everything else in life. You can't push forward at the same speed all the time. When you feel like quitting, just hit the pause button. If it's really over, then it is and that's fine too—go on to do something else. But plan for decades not months or years and take care of yourself along the way.

5. I mentioned this earlier but it's worth saying again—have a rich and full life outside of the industry. It is a business that can absolutely drive you crazy and it's easy to become obsessed. People will tell you to be 'on 24/7' but that's just not realistic. And friends and family are what's going to sustain you in those dry spells and tough times when you feel like quitting. For a lot of years I really made the business my life and I don't think it helped my career significantly—maybe the opposite. I got tunnel vision a bit and it really strangled my creativity. Be diligent about the business but also go out and do all of those things that feed your soul.



**Can you please give us your favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?**

There is a well-known quote that I’ve got on a magnet and has been on my fridge for years—“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.” -Anaïs Nin. This has reminded me many times to just have a little more courage; to keep going when I felt like quitting or to step outside of my comfort zone. I have always been committed to an ever expanding life, but sometimes the unknown and the next steps seem crazy hard. This quote reminds me that it’s not just me who is on a journey, others are taking brave steps as well. Even a small step and a little bit of courage beats the hell out of doing nothing.

**None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?**

I am grateful to so many people, and you are so right—success is a team sport! I am deeply grateful to the late actress Maria Rohm. She was a mentor and a very dear friend. She always made time for me and shared the kind of wisdom that only comes with years of experience. I’m going to sneak one more in here; my favorite high school teacher, Mrs. Sylvia Fox. She opened up the world for me! I grew up in a small city and she was the first one to share a bigger vision of life! She also took me under her wing and helped me grow and thrive during an extremely difficult time. She really changed my life.

**Some of the biggest names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might see this. :-)**

So many to choose from, but if I was to pick just one right now it would be Kathryn Bigelow who directed the movies Detroit, K-11: The Widowmaker and The Hurt Locker. Her work is powerful and not the expected genres for a woman director. She has had an incredible career and is an inspiration for all women in this industry. I read an in-depth interview with her when the movie Detroit first came out (phenomenal by the way!) and was lucky enough to attend a screening where she and the key cast did a Q& A afterwards. When asked about her decision to pursue getting this movie made when it is so racially charged and

primarily about African American men, her response really struck me (paraphrasing) 'Am I the best person to tell this story? Maybe not. But I could get it made. And thats more important. The story needs to be told.'





**How can our readers follow you on social media?**

I'm hooked on social media! Instagram is my fav..... @hunter\_phoenix  
Twitter handle is the same. Facebook is fb/hunterphoenixfan Would love  
to connect!

**Thank you so much for joining us. This was very inspirational!**

