

A SPLendid LITTLE WAR

Written by  
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EXT. NEW YORK CITY--TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: NEW YORK CITY--1948

SUPERIMPOSE CREDITS OVER THE FOLLOWING:

The nightly parade. TAXIS and LIMOS jam the streets attempting to get theater patrons to their shows in time for the 8:30 curtain.

One taxi leaves the procession and turns onto an eastbound street.

I/E. TAXI

The DRIVER checks his passenger. PAUL ROMANO, 26, in a suit and tie, watches the next digit drop on the meter. He counts the money clutched in his hands.

PAUL

You better let me off here. I'll walk the rest of the way.

DRIVER

Are you kidding? Nobody walks to the Waldorf-Astoria. Just sit back and relax.

The driver stops the meter.

PAUL

Yeah, but the tip...?

DRIVER

It's OK. My kid's tuition to Harvard is paid for.

EXT. WALDORF-ASTORIA - NIGHT

The TAXI pulls up to the entrance. The DOORMAN opens the door and Paul exits. He looks back at the driver.

DRIVER  
Hey, try to have a good time, will  
ya?

Paul smiles and enters the hotel.

INT. WALDORF-ASTORIA-GRAND BALLROOM/RECEPTION DESK - NIGHT

A CROWD of well dressed guests line up at the reception desk to exchange their invitations for name tags.

Paul points to the PRESS ID pinned to his breast pocket. The WOMAN issuing name tags is unimpressed.

WOMAN  
You need an invitation. Every newspaper was issued the same number of invitations.

PAUL  
But I'm substituting for the reporter who has the invitation.

WOMAN  
If we give your paper an extra one, the others will claim favoritism.

PAUL  
This won't be an extra one. He's not using his. He's...ill disposed.

WOMAN  
I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do. Please step aside.  
(to the next in line)  
May I help you?

An ANNOYED COUPLE step around Paul to the reception desk.

INT. WALDORF-ASTORIA/LOBBY -

Paul places a call on a public phone in the lobby. In the BACKGROUND, a huge BANNER reads:

THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS: 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

SUPER TITLE: A SPLENDID LITTLE WAR

END CREDITS:

PAUL

But that's the situation, Mr. Kaplan. They won't admit me. Look, can't we find Anderson? He's got the invitation with him.

INTERCUT THE FOLLOWING SCENES:

INT. NEWSPAPER CITY ROOM/KAPLAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

GEORGE KAPLAN, The editor, in shirt sleeves, his focus on the paper's early edition, cradles the phone to his ear.

The STAFF continue to interact with Kaplan during the phone conversation.

KAPLAN

Sure, we can check every bar from here to Canarsie. We find him--we don't need you. You want to be a hot-shot reporter--show some initiative. Consider this your test. Either find a way to cover your assignment or go back to the Classifieds.

PAUL

Yeah, but...

KAPLAN

That's it. And I want it on my desk in time for the AM edition.

The click sounds amplified in Paul's ear. He stares at the receiver, bewildered.

An elderly porter, ROBERTO GOMEZ, has monitored Paul's conversation while he sifts the cigarette butt container next to the bank of phones.

ROBERTO

Periodista?

PAUL

What? Oh, yeah...I'm a reporter.

ROBERTO

Follow me.

Roberto walks off. Paul doesn't follow.

PAUL

Where to? I'm covering a story.

ROBERTO

Si, I take you to a good place.  
Come with me.

Paul follows the porter who leads him through a service door.

SMALL BALCONY

From the small space used for chorales and string quartets, Paul and Roberto look down at the event in the ballroom below.

ROBERTO

Good, huh? From here you can see everything.

MONTAGE:

Speeches: Random words from different speakers--*America, World Power; Heroism; Efficient Fighting Strategies*; float up from the banquet floor.

Projected images on the huge screen of Col. Teddy Roosevelt; surrendering Spanish Soldiers, Cubans lined up on the street applauding a parade of American Soldiers; An American Naval ship firing its guns.

A Marine Band marches into the room followed by several ancient veterans of the war--several in wheel chairs.

Reactions from the guests seated at tables decorated with flowers and silver candelabra.

SMALL BALCONY (CONTINUOUS)

PAUL

You don't understand. The people I need to interview are down there.

ROBERTO

Senor, they are only there for the dinner, and you don't want to eat that dinner. Sometimes the waiters take out their frustrations on the food. You know what I mean?

PAUL

At the Waldorf Astoria?

ROBERTO

Especially the Waldorf Astoria.

Paul takes out his notebook, looks over the event below, doesn't know what to enter into it. He shoves the notebook back into his pocket.

PAUL

I appreciate your help, but I can't do my assignment from up here.

ROBERTO

I'll get you the guest list so you can spell the names right. Come with me.

INT HOTEL EMPLOYEES LOCKER ROOM

LOCKERS line the walls of the room. Three MEN play cards on a folding table.

Roberto and Paul enter the room from the SERVICE ELEVATOR.

One of the card players, CRISPIN LEGASPI, notices Paul.

CRISPIN

Hola Roberto, esta es mi noche de suerte. Este chico tiene dinero?

SUBTITLE:

Hey Roberto, this is my lucky night. Does this guy have any money?

ROBERTO

Nah. No es mas que un periodista. Tengo que cuidar de el.

SUBTITLE:

Nah. He's just a reporter. I've got to take care of him

CRISPIN

Todo lo que los vagos se peguen.

SUBTITLE:

All you bums stick together.

CRISPIN

(to Paul)

Hey Amigo. You got any money? We got a seat open here.

PAUL  
No thanks. I'm here to cover the  
Anniversary Celebration upstairs.

Another card player, ANTONIO RIVERA, scoffs.

ANTONIO  
Upstairs is full of shit. They  
don't tell the real story.

INT. WALDORF-ASTORIA'BANQUET - NIGHT

WAITERS service the tables where the guests pick at the  
gourmet food. In the background, a speaker delivers an  
address.

PAUL (O.S.)  
What do you mean...?

ANTONIO (O.S.)  
You know anything about history?  
About people--not dates.

EMPLOYEES LOCKER ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

PAUL  
I read Teddy Roosevelt's Memoirs.

ANTONIO  
You mean the Rough Riders? They  
were Cowboys and Polo players, for  
Chris' sakes.

Paul rises. Nothing to be gained here.

PAUL  
I better get upstairs. I'm losing  
too much time.

Roberto returns from his locker with a tattered leather  
briefcase.

ROBERTO  
Sit down Amigo. Here's something  
you won't see upstairs.

Roberto pulls out a silver-framed sepia toned photograph and  
places it in front of Paul.

INSERT: THE PHOTO

Twelve stern-faced women dressed in Cuban Rebel uniforms-- white pants and shirts, straw hats, and red bandanas. They stand graduation-day proud with their Mauser rifles at port arms.

Two young men stand to the side before a tattered Cuban Rebel flag.

BACK TO SCENE

Paul sits. He is intrigued by the photo.

PAUL  
Who are these women?

Roberto takes a moment. The memories are painful.

ROBERTO  
Las Hijas de Libertad. You know what that means?

PAUL  
Daughters of Liberty, right? Who are the guys?

Roberto points to one of the men

ROBERTO  
This one is me. The other is my partner. A photographer.

PAUL  
Your photographer? Were you a reporter?

For Paul, an epiphany.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
You were there! Why didn't you say something?

ROBERTO  
You came here for the celebration upstairs.

PAUL  
Isn't a personal account more important?

Antonio gets a bottle of rum from his locker and pours a water tumbler to the rim. He hands the glass to Paul.

ANTONIO

Here, no hard feelings. I like you even if you won't let me win your money.

Paul pushes the glass aside. His eyes still on the photo.

PAUL

Amazing! Why did the Cubans use women?

MONTAGE:

HOUSE ON FIRE: A woman escapes to a barn and rides out on a horse.

SPANISH ARMY WEAPONS CARRIER: A young woman is thrown from the rear and left on the ground.

BARRACKS: Strapped to a chair, a woman is threatened with a branding iron.

TWO SOLDIERS: The soldiers force a woman to witness the killing of her family.

ROAD: Several woman on horseback assemble.

ROBERTO (V.O.)

The women had no choice. They had lost everything--homes, family--everything.

CRISPIN (V.O.)

They were true heroes in the war. See any of them upstairs?

BACK TO SCENE

The men raise their glasses in silent toast.

PAUL

I never heard a thing about them. This other guy, your partner, where is he now?

FLASHBACK: CUBA

The other MAN in the photo, Roberto's partner, a rifle slung across his back, walks off and disappears in the mountain wilderness.

ROBERTO (V.O.)

I haven't the slightest idea

BACK TO SCENE

A WAITER exits the service elevator with an overloaded tray. He sets the dishes on the table.

The card players abandon their game and rush for the food.

ROBERTO  
(To the waiter)  
We thought you forgot about us.

WAITER  
The checker kept watching me.

The waiter takes the empty tray and leaves.

PAUL  
(to Roberto)  
Hey, you were going to tell me how you covered the war.

ROBERTO  
First, we eat.

PAUL  
But you said the food...you know...the waiters...

ROBERTO  
Not this food. It has been blessed by San Lorenzo.

Antonio pushes the glass of rum to Paul.

PAUL  
Oh no, I can't. I've got to...

THE ENTIRE GROUP  
Yeah, yeah...write a story for your paper.

ROBERTO  
What time is your paper's early edition?

FLASHBACK:

SUBTITLE: NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 1898

NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGE:

FREE CUBA GAZETTE HEADLINE: SPECIAL EDITION

USS MAINE EXPLODES IN HAVANA HARBOR--UNITED STATES DECLARES  
WAR ON SPAIN

INT. FREE CUBA GAZETTE OFFICES - DAY

A PLATE of CARNE ASADA and RICE. PULL BACK to reveal the one  
room office of the Free Cuba Gazette.

Excited WORKERS in a flurry of activity operate the three  
MIMEOGRAPH MACHINES spitting out the SPECIAL EDITION.

The FLAGS of the United States and Cuba stand in a corner,  
their poles crossed.

ROBERTO (V.O.)

We ate good in those days. Not like  
this pussy food. We didn't make  
much money but we ate good.

ROBERTO, 23, and FELIPE, 22, reporter and photographer,  
gather their luggage and equipment.

They shout out their goodbyes to the WORKERS in the  
overcharged room. No time for a farewell party.

ROBERTO (to Felipe)

Madre de Dios! We're going to Cuba!  
I can't believe it!

FELIPE

I was going to volunteer.

ROBERTO

Which army? You always brag about  
the Spanish blood in your veins.

FELIPE

I'm a second generation Cuban.  
We've waited a long time for this.

ROBERTO

Amigo, anybody can fire a gun. What  
we do is special. It will help  
people understand what the fight is  
about.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

NEW YORK JOURNAL HEADLINE:

AMERICA DECLARES WAR ON SPAIN!

A huge CARTOON of a rapist (Spain), attacking a young woman (Cuba) covers most of the front page. Near the bottom, a small article:

"Samuel Clemens and Andrew Carnegie oppose the war. "And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land." said Clemens."

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

CROWDS crushed together on a platform wait to board cars of a special train added to the regular schedule.

An ANTI-WAR SIGN proclaims--WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER. The man with the sign is roughly pushed aside by uniformed POLICE and CIVILIANS.

Roberto and Felipe, loaded down with CAMERA EQUIPMENT and LUGGAGE, fight their way to the train.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Roberto and Felipe secure two of the seats and place their luggage in the overhead racks. Exhausted, they fall into their seats.

FELIPE

Are we in the right seats?

ROBERTO

Any seat is the right seat.

MONTAGE:

INT/EXT. TRAIN/COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The passing landscapes seen through the window against the reflection of the sleeping journalists. The aisles are filled with passengers, many of whom are standing or sitting on their luggage.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The train travels through the countryside.

INT TRAIN

A SOLDIER separates himself from his BUDDIES and offers Felipe a drink from his bottle. Felipe accepts and takes a healthy swig.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train is at a station where the engine takes on water.

Five small BLACK KIDS dance for money. Several PASSENGERS, out for a stretch on the platform, throw them COINS.

A shouted ALL ABOARD ends the scene.

INT TRAIN NIGHT

The weary PASSENGERS show the effects of the long trip.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. TAMPA, FLORIDA/TRAIN STATION - DAY

Roberto and Felipe are part of the chaos of SOLDIERS, CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS, and BAGGAGE HANDLERS.

FARMER'S WAGON

A FARMER'S FAMILY in a WAGON stops across the street from the station.

TWO YOUNG BOYS in overalls jump out followed by their MOTHER who gathers them in her arms.

MOTHER

Remember to be polite and get plenty of sleep.

The grim FATHER doesn't move from the driver's seat-- he stares straight ahead.

QUARTERMASTER'S BOXCARS

QUARTERMASTERS work out of several BOXCARS. CIVILIANS walk in, and walk out as SOLDIERS in uniform.

A half-uniformed MAN rushes out of the boxcar and parades for the GIRL waiting outside.

MAN

Look at me Myrna. I'm a soldier.

A QUARTERMASTER yanks him back inside.

QUARTERMASTER

Not yet you ain't.

AUTOMOBILE

An AUTOMOBILE with PARTY PEOPLE jerks to an abrupt stop at the station entrance.

Two inebriated VOLUNTEERS are pushed out of the vehicle by the others.

PARTY GIRL 1

Out you go, Harold. Don't you and Bitsy win the war all by yourselves.

PARTY GIRL 2

(to the driver)  
Let's get out of here. They're waiting for the gin.

The vehicle makes a speedy departure leaving a confused Harold and Bitsy.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM

PEDRO GONZALES, 35, in COVERALLS, holds a SIGN with the reporter's names above his head. The surge of the crowd makes it difficult for him to hold his position.

GONZALES (shouting)

Senores Roberto Gomez, Felipe Perez, Senores Perez...Gomez...

Roberto and Felipe see their names on the sign.

ROBERTO

There he is.  
(shouting to Gonzales)  
Here! That's us! Hey, Gonzales!

GONZALES

Por su puesto, hombres. I received a cable from the Gazette so here I am a sus ordenes.

FELIPE

It's a miracle you found us in all this confusion.

GONZALES

That's my job. I have my wagon here. Where do you want to go?

ROBERTO

Where's the hotel?

GONZALES

A lot of reporters are staying at the Twin Palms Hotel, but...

ROBERTO

Take us there.

EXT. TWIN PALMS HOTEL - DAY

The Twin Palms is the hotel of choice. High Ranking MILITARY and CIVILIAN DIGNITARIES occupy the lounge chairs on the spacious lawns attended by uniformed hotel WAITERS.

There are startled reactions to the sight of Gonzales' PARCEL DELIVERY SERVICE WAGON approaching on the circular driveway.

Roberto and Felipe are perched on top. They jump off and collect their luggage and equipment.

ROBERTO

Muchas gracias, Pedro, we'll take it from here.

An ASSISTANT MANAGER blocks their attempt to enter the hotel.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Deliveries are in the rear.

FELIPE

We're checking in. We're journalists.

Roberto and Felipe step around the Assistant Manager and continue towards the entrance.

The Assistant Manager is immobilized. He looks off:

POV: Roberto and Felipe drag their luggage and equipment towards the hotel entrance.

POV: Gonzales straps on a feed bag for his horse.

POV: The Guests are amused.

HOTEL DRIVEWAY:

The manager can't leave quick enough.

INT. TWIN PALMS HOTEL/LOBBY - DAY

Roberto and Felipe wave off the BELLHOPS as they drag their gear towards the front desk.

FRONT DESK

The incredulous DESK CLERK queries the newly arrived reporters.

DESK CLERK  
You're with which publication...?

Roberto and Felipe hand their press IDs to the clerk. He studies the IDs, then Roberto and Felipe.

ROBERTO  
The Free Cuba Gazette. A weekly publication in Manhattan.

FELIPE  
Isn't this the hotel for Journalists?

DESK CLERK  
Yes, for members of the Official Press. At any rate, all our rooms are booked. There's nothing available at this time.

ROBERTO  
Can you recommend another hotel?

DESK CLERK  
Well, there's several near the waterfront, but I know very little about them. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm terribly busy.

Roberto and Felipe pull their gear to the lounge area. Now what? This was unexpected.

PETER SIMPSON and TODD RENFREW, approach Roberto and Felipe.

SIMPSON

Gentlemen, we overheard the problem with the hotel. They probably never received your paper's cable.

Renfrew stares at Felipe's ID.

RENFREW

Free Cuba Gazette...? Well, no matter. They're supposed to provide us all with accommodations.

SIMPSON

We're from the Journal. You know, the Hearst newspaper. It's really Willie Hearst's war. He wanted to personally declare war before the President. Anyway, we may have a solution to your problem.

ROBERTO

What problem?

RENFREW

Well, let's face it...your paper isn't exactly National Press.

SIMPSON

And you guys obviously know something about Cuba. The language, the customs. We've got top accommodations and plenty of gourmet food.

FELIPE

Are you suggesting that we work together?

SIMPSON

Why not? It may be your only option. The way it looks, you may never get to Cuba.

ROBERTO

What makes you think we won't?

RENFREW

Look, think of the experience of working with professionals...

(a blunder, but too late  
to retract)

Uhhh, I mean...

ROBERTO  
Thank you, but I think we'll just  
struggle along.

EXT. TWIN PALMS HOTEL - EVENING

Roberto and Felipe pile their gear back onto the wagon and  
climb aboard.

Gonzales unstraps the feed bag, climbs onto the drivers seat,  
and the wagon slowly moves away.

Some of the guests wave as their afternoon's entertainment  
departs.

EXT. TAMPA/RED LIGHT DISTRICT - NIGHT

The wagon moves slowly down the narrow street of the Red  
Light District.

WOMEN silently view the strange trade from their windows  
where they parade their goods. Some beckon suggestively.

ROBERTO  
Where are you taking us?

GONZALES  
You need a room, no?

Gonzales stops beneath a curtained window.

FELIPE  
We don't believe in exploiting  
women.

The threadbare curtains part as FLORIDITA, a handsome woman  
of thirty, looks out at the men.

FLORIDITA  
And my little daughter doesn't  
believe in going hungry.  
(to Gonzales)  
Who are these guys? Are you getting  
into a new line of business?

GONZALES  
They just need a room, that's all.

Floridita studies Roberto and Felipe.

FLORIDITA

All right, bring them in. They look clean.

INT. FLORIDITA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Felipe sleeps curled up on a small love seat. Roberto tries to find comfort on the floor.

Floridita, snuggled in her bed, watches the struggling Roberto. Another confused male animal.

FLORIDITA

You better come into my bed. It's good for sleeping, too. They won't let you into their war with a broken back.

Roberto considers the options.

EXT. FLORIDITA'S FLAT - DAY

Gonzales sits in the driver's seat of his wagon. Roberto straddles a carton in the back. Floridita smiles from her window.

Felipe, on the sidewalk, frames and shoots the tableau. He then composes a close-up of Floridita.

VIEWFINDER: CU Floridita.

BACK TO THE PRESENT:

INT. EMPLOYEES LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

CU: PHOTO of Floridita.

PAUL (V.O.)

She's lovely. Looks like you got lucky. You did, didn't you?

LOCKER ROOM

ROBERTO

What has that got to do with the story?

PAUL  
Well, you know, a reporter has to  
get all the facts.

ROBERTO  
There's nothing wrong with leaving  
a little for the reader's  
imagination.

Roberto abruptly closes the album.

The waiter returns for the empty dishes.

WAITER  
They're playing the Star Spangled  
Banner upstairs.

ROBERTO  
(to Paul)  
You want to go up for the big  
finish?

PAUL  
What for? I've missed the whole  
affair. Maybe your story...I need  
to turn in something.

Antonio and Crispin, in their civilian clothes, are ready to  
leave for the day.

ANTONIO  
Stay and finish the story for the  
boy, Roberto.

CRISPIN  
Don't forget to spell my name right  
in your paper, and don't call me a  
Cuban. I'm Filipino.

They leave. Roberto looks at his watch, shrugs, and takes a  
sip from Paul's untouched glass of rum.

FLASHBACK: EXT. TAMPA DOCKS - DAY

The same sense of hurried organization. Uniformed MILITARY  
board the TRANSPORT SHIP SS LIBERTY as A BAND on the dock  
plays a march.

TWO MARINES check Roberto's and Felipe's ID's at the bottom  
of the gangplank. Again, their credentials are not accepted  
and they are turned away

Roberto and Felipe sit on their luggage, puzzled by the latest obstacle.

EXT. S.S.LIBERTY DECK - DAY

Simpson and Renfrew, the two reporters who tried to enlist Roberto and Felipe, stand at the railing and look down at their stranded colleagues on the dock. They raise their glasses of champagne in toast.

EXT. DOCKSIDE - DAY

Gonzalez has not left his charges. The reporters acknowledge his presence.

Gonzales points skyward.

EXT. SKY

A flock of BIRDS circle.

EXT. HARBOR

The FISHING FLEET returns after a day at sea.

EXT. BOAT/ALMA DEL MAR - DAY

The forty foot ALMA DEL MAR lies in it's slip. The skipper, LOPEZ, mends nets as the two CREW MEN hose down the decks.

Gonzalez, Roberto, and Felipe approach the vessel.

GONZALES

Oye, Lopez.

Gonzales gestures to the reporters to wait on the dock. He steps onto the deck of the boat.

Gonzales and Lopes greet each other. The two men engage in a discussion. They glance back periodically at Roberto and Felipe.

ROBERTO AND FELIPE

They stare at the Alma Del Mar.

FELIPE

I know what he's doing. It'll never make it to Cuba.

ROBERTO  
Fisherman go out every day. It must  
be okay.

FELIPE  
I'm not setting foot on that tub.

ROBERTO  
The assignment, remember?

Gonzalez and Lopez approach Roberto and Felipe.

GONZALES  
He can take you to Cuba. He wants  
fifty dollars for the trip...meals  
included.

Decision time. Roberto and Felipe look at the Alma del Mar,  
at Gonzalez and Lopez, and at each other.

EXT. TAMPA BAY/ALMA DEL MAR - DAY

Lopez at the helm, maneuvers the Alma del Mar into the  
channel. The vessel passes the S.S. Liberty still tied to the  
dock.

Roberto and Felipe come on deck in work clothes and toast the  
Troop Ship with mugs of rum.

EXT. ALMA DEL MAR/OPEN SEA - NIGHT

The swells have increased. On deck, Lopez is at the helm and  
one of the crew plays a guitar. The other crew member comes  
out of the galley with portions of rice and beans.

Roberto and Felipe hang over the railing. Food is out of the  
question.

EXT. ALMA DEL MAR - DAWN

A magnificent sunrise promises a sparkling day.

Roberto and Felipe lie motionless on the deck, their jackets  
over their heads.

Lopez comes on deck, stretches, and notices his corpse-like  
passengers. He nudges Felipe with his foot.

Felipe uncovers his head and looks up at Lopez. It takes a  
moment for his eyes to adjust to the light.

FELIPE  
Am I dead?

LOPEZ  
Do I look like Jesus?

Roberto moves slightly.

ROBERTO  
If I'm not dead, I want to be. My  
head...

Lopez produces a flask.

LOPEZ  
Here, drink this, it'll fix  
everything.

ROBERTO  
My head is beyond help.

LOPEZ  
Suit yourself.

Felipe lunges for the flask and gulps several mouthfuls.

Lopez grabs the flask.

LOPEZ (CONT'D)  
There's a limit to feeling good.

EXT. ALMA DEL MAR - NIGHT

The evening produces a calm sea. The reporters and crew sit on the bulkhead cover and eat a dinner of fried pork.

Lopez observes them from the helm, satisfied with the improved health of his passengers.

THE NEXT DAY:

Roberto helps the crew adjust the sails. Felipe takes photos of the ship and crew.

ALMA DEL MAR--NIGHT

A THICK FOG ENVELOPES THE VESSEL. Lopez motions to one of the crew to drop the anchor. The man takes pain to avoid any sound.

Lopez swings a KEROSENE LANTERN as a signal.

ROBERTO AND FELIPE

They look at each other. The tension is as thick as the fog.

LOPEZ

He sees something...another lantern signals through the fog,

EXT. CUBAN COVE - NIGHT

PABLO MENDINA, a weathered 55, swings the answering lantern as his assistant, MANOLO, 25, in T shirt, cutoffs, and sandals, readies a small SKIFF.

EXT. ALMA DEL MAR - NIGHT

Satisfied that contact has been made, Lopez puts down the lantern and approaches the reporters.

LOPEZ

Welcome to Cuba. Get your things.  
Someone is coming for you

Felipe struggles to see the shore.

FELIPE

This isn't Havana...

LOPEZ

You want to write your reports from  
a prison cell? La Habana is under  
Spanish rule.

ROBERTO

But we're journalists, not  
combatants. No es verdad?

LOPEZ

Si como no

FELIPE

So where are we now?

LOPEZ

The US is sending the Navy to  
Santiago. You're going to have a  
front row seat, Senores.

ROBERTO

How far is Santiago?

LOPEZ  
No es importante. You'll get to see  
a beautiful country

MEDINA (O.S.)  
Oye. Soy Medina

LOPEZ  
Bueno. Estamos listo

The skiff comes alongside the Alma del Mar. One of the crew  
throws a line to Manolo who catches it and holds the skiff  
alongside the larger vessel.

MEDINA  
You bring guns?

LOPEZ  
No. I'm bringing two reporters from  
the United States

MEDINA  
We're taking risks for reporters?

LOPEZ  
They're going to help La Causa

MEDINA  
What are they going to do, throw  
their pencils at the Spanish?  
Listen you old pirate, I know you  
got paid plenty for this  
foolishness. I expect extra guns  
and shells on your next trip.

Roberto and Felipe appear with their gear and cautiously  
lower themselves into the bobbing skiff.

LOPEZ  
Vaya con Dios

ROBERTO  
Muchas gracias por todos

The skiff disappears into the night

EXT. CUBAN COVE - NIGHT

The skiff anchors several feet from the shore. Medina and  
Manolo slip into the waist deep water and carry pieces of  
equipment ashore. Roberto and Felipe follow.

On the shore, Medina leads the reporters to a small hut.

MEDINA  
 You'll stay here until first light.  
 Try to get some rest.

EXT. CUBAN COVE - DAWN

Roberto and Felipe wash themselves at the shoreline.

TWO TEENAGERS lead TWO MULES packed with supplies and the reporter's gear.

MOMENTS LATER

Roberto and Felipe appear in their inappropriate suits, hats, and shoes.

MEDINA  
 These two will be your guides.  
 Here, take these.

Medina hands them each a pistol.

ROBERTO  
 We can't carry arms. We're non-combatants. According to the rules...

MEDINA  
 There are no rules here. Take the guns and make every bullet count. Here's thirty shells for each of you.

Medina hands them each a bandana with the ammunition. The reporters place these into a saddle bag on one of the mules.

Medina hits the lead mule with a stick, then, as an afterthought, enters the hut and returns with some cigars-- three to each of the reporters.

Concerned, he studies Roberto and Felipe.

MEDINA (CONT'D)  
 (to himself)  
 I wish I knew how they're going to help the Cause.

The guides move the mules out. Roberto and Felipe trail behind.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CLEARING - DAY

The group finish a meal of rice served in hollowed coconut shells. The reporter's clothing attest to the ruggedness of the terrain.

FELIPE

Aren't there any roads in Cuba?

GUIDE 1

Si, but the Spanish troops use them. And the mules like this way better.

ROBERTO

What's your name, boy?

GUIDE 1

Miguelito, Senor

FELIPE

Is that what your parents call you?

MIGUELITO

I don't have any parents.

ROBERTO

I'm sorry. (turning to the other guide) and what's your name?

MIGUELITO

His name is Jesus. He doesn't speak. Ever since...

ROBERTO

What happened to him?

MIGUELITO

The Spanish burned his village to the ground. He watched his whole family die.

FELIPE

Madre de Dios. How did he escape?

MIGUELITO

He put on a girl's dress and hid in a well. When it was dark he came out but a drunken soldier saw him and tried to fuck him. He stabbed the soldier and ran into the jungle.

Silence. Time to move on. They gather their gear and move out.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

The guides and the reporters pick their way along a mountain ridge covered with thick underbrush. Below them lies a road.

Miguelito and Jesus are the first to hear HOOFBEATS of a Spanish Patrol on the road below. They fall to the ground for cover, Roberto and Felipe follow their example.

POV

The PATROL, in double file, stop at the CAPTAIN'S signal. The SOLDIERS dismount and lead their HORSES to a roadside brook.

JESUS

Inner turmoil. Something snaps. He hums the Cuban Patriot song, HIMNO BYAMOS.

ROBERTO and FELIPE

They watch, stunned.

MIGUELITO

Miguelito attempts to silence his friend.

JESUS

Jesus rises and begins the descent to the road below. He now sings in full voice.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The SOLDIERS stare, amused at the madness of the act.

JESUS

Within range, Jesus takes out a pistol and SHOOTS the nearest SOLDIER.

Everything freezes for a moment. The soldier who was shot defies gravity, an expression of disbelief on his face before he falls.

Jesus breaks and runs sure-footed up the slope.

CAPTAIN  
Stop him! Shoot the bastard!

The soldiers FIRE at the boy but the dense foliage does not allow for a clear shot.

Several try to follow on foot up the steep slope. Others mount their horses for the pursuit.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE

When Jesus reaches the ridge, Miguelito drags him into the forest thicket where they both disappear.

Roberto and Felipe lay motionless.

A bayonet hooks onto Roberto's jacket. The reporters hold up their press ID's.

ROBERTO & FELIPE  
Periodista! Periodista! We're from  
the Free...no, from the Journal.  
See, we have our papers.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

A HORSE stamps its hooves. CAMERA follows the straps from the saddle to Roberto and Felipe who are tethered together.

A SOLDIER leads the mule with Felipe's camera equipment to the Captain.

SOLDIER  
Mira, Capitan. I don't know what  
these things are but they are not  
weapons as far as I can tell.

The Captain checks the mules.

CAPTAIN  
This is camera equipment. Bueno.  
One of them can take a picture of  
the other one who I will shoot  
first. (to the patrol) Vamonos!

The patrol moves out with Roberto and Felipe forced to trot behind them.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - EVENING

The patrol continues the return to the garrison. The horse pulls the stumbling Roberto and Felipe behind it.

Suddenly, BLAZING, oil-soaked STALKS of BANANA PLANTS, fly onto the path of the patrol.

As the horses and men react, more burning stalks land at the rear of the column. It is an ambush.

Gunfire FLASHES from the surrounding darkness.

The soldiers can only return fire at the unseen targets. In a few moments, the Patrol is totally decimated.

ROBERTO and FELIPE

The horse to which they are tied panics and drags them to the ground.

THEIR POV

A FIGURE, silhouetted by the fires, stands above with a bloody MACHETE which glistens in the reflected firelight.

Their suffering may soon be over.

The weapon is raised and in SLOW MOTION begins its downward arc.

ROBERTO and FELIPE wait for the inevitable. The machete finds its target--the straps that tether the two together.

THE FIGURE

The FIGURE, a CUBAN REBEL, cleans the bloody machete and , studies the strange captives.

REBEL

Who are you? And why were you with the enemy Patrol?

ROBERTO

We're foreign correspondents, Sir. Journalists for the Free Cuba Gazette

Not one to suffer liars, the Rebel slaps Roberto. A primitive lie detector test.

REBEL

Never heard of it

Roberto flinches when the rebel extracts a cigar from his breast pocket.

The Rebel lowers the red bandana and puts a cigar into HER mouth.

CAPTAIN CONCHITA

CAPTAIN CONCHITA, 30, the strong featured leader of LAS HIJAS DE LIBERTAD, lights the cigar from a burning stalk and whistles a signal.

REBELS materialize and collect the GUNS, AMMUNITION, and CANTEENS from the fallen soldiers. Several return with liberated horses.

ROBERTO and FELIPE watch, incredulous--the Rebel fighters are women.

DOLORES, 23, mended eyeglasses, brings the mules with the camera equipment to Conchita.

Again, with the caution of one who knows betrayals, the Captain takes a revolver from her belt, cocks it, and rests it against Felipe's head.

CONCHITA

Why are you taking pictures?

FELIPE

To help the struggle...the fight for freedom

CONCHITA

You think photographs can win a struggle? You win by killing the enemy.

ROBERTO

Some people don't understand the Mambi Cause. We need to provide them with information.

The Rebels all laugh.

CONCHITA

Mambi Cause...? Where did you hear that name?

That's what they called La Causa in New York. The Mambi Cause.

## CONCHITA

We're not Mambis! That's what the Spanish call us. We're Cuban Rebels! Las Hijas de Libertad.  
 (to the others)  
 One thing is certain, they're not spies. They're too stupid to be spies.

Conchita raises her hand and the unit moves off.

Roberto and Felipe mount their mules and follow, impotent in the company of women warriors.

## EXT. REBEL CAMP - MORNING

A temporary camp. BANANA FRONDS form lean-tos to protect against the rays of the early blistering sun.

## ROBERTO

Roberto sits on a SADDLE BLANKET and composes his first news dispatch. Felipe lies next to him, still asleep.

## ROBERTO (V.O.)

It's amazing how fierce women can be when they are fighting for a cause. Their unwavering commitment to...

Roberto hears the SOUND of women's laughter and rises to search out the source. He follows a small path down to a pond.

## POND

The women, unclothed, take their morning baths as they wash their uniforms.

## ROBERTO

Roberto hides behind a nearby shrub.

## POV

The multicolors of the women are typical of Cuban society: The Black descendents of the slave trade; the indigenous Brown coloration of the original habitants; and the Whites of mixed Spanish heritage.

CONCHITA

Conchita stretches out her uniform on a rock to dry. She rises and leaves the pond wearing only her red bandana loosely draped around her shoulders.

Passing Roberto's hiding place, she tosses her bandana at him without making eye contact.

ROBERTO

The bandana falls across Roberto's eyes. He doesn't remove it.

LATER

The Rebels break camp. No wasted moves, their actions are precise.

ESTELLA

I wish we could stay in one place for awhile.

MARIA

Would you believe before I became a Hija, I slept in the same bed for twenty years.

Roberto watches the swift action.

CONCHITA

(to Roberto)  
Our maid left. You'll have to clean up after yourself. Your footprints can get us all killed.

Roberto takes the hint and picks up a rake to cover his tracks.

One of the Hijas, Rosa, distributes the SUGAR CANE which will be their breakfast.

Roberto reaches for one as she passes.

FELIPE

Felipe sets up a shot. Dolores holds one of his lenses. Felipe takes the lens and hands her a rifle. He has her pose for a photo. She smiles self-consciously into the camera.

CONCHITA

She watches the two from a distance.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

The farmhouse smolders from a recent fire. Crops have been uprooted and vultures circle the bodies and livestock strewn around the property.

The Rebels stand transfixed. They've seen this before but it still has the power to shock.

ROBERTO and FELIPE

Roberto cries, covering his face with his hat.

Felipe vomits.

Dolores brings a cloth to Felipe to clean himself.

CONCHITA

She galvanizes the Hijas.

CONCHITA  
Search around the area for anyone  
still breathing.

The Hijas disperse.

Conchita bends over a BODY and covers the eyes with the lids.

CONCHITA (CONT'D)  
(to Felipe)  
Here's your picture. I'm afraid he  
won't smile for your camera.

FELIPE

Felipe, still pale, sets up his camera.

REBELS

They prepare shallow ditches for the dead.

LOLITA hands Roberto and Felipe each a rifle.

ROBERTO  
We cannot bear arms. We're non-  
combatants.

FELIPE  
(an announcement to all)  
I wanted to volunteer.

ROBERTO  
 (to Felipe)  
 But you didn't, so stop talking  
 about it.

FELIPE  
 I thought it would be helpful for  
 them to know.

ROBERTO  
 No one cares.

CONCHITA and DOLORES

Conchita and Dolores watch the reporters refuse the weapons.

CONCHITA  
 (quietly)  
 They eat our food but will not  
 fight with us. The moment they  
 become a burden, shoot them.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The Rebels ride subdued after the encounter.

Roberto and Felipe now wear straw hats and a mix of clothing;  
 part original, part local.

Conchita rides alongside Dolores.

CONCHITA  
 I know how it feels to be without  
 the attention of a man.

DOLORES  
 It's not what you think. I just  
 want to learn to take pictures

CONCHITA  
 Do you think killing is my only  
 interest? I want to learn to play a  
 clarinet. Some things will have to  
 wait.

DOLORES  
 Maybe with the Americans here, we  
 can return to normal.

CONCHITA  
 Maybe, but for now, Las Hijas are  
 still needed.

DOLORES

Felipe says he wants to see a free  
Cuba.

CONCHITA

Listen Mija, all he wants to see is  
his pictures in the newspaper.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - DAY

The Hijas ride into the town.

VILLAGERS crowd around them with gifts of LIVE CHICKENS,  
VEGETABLES, FRUIT, and BEVERAGES.

EXT. RAILROAD STATION

Roberto and Felipe enter the railroad station.

INT. RAILROAD STATION

The reporters push their articles and photos through the  
telegrapher's window.

The TELEGRAPHER accepts the material and closes the window.

EXT RAILROAD STATION

Roberto and Felipe exit the station. Conchita rides up to  
them.

CONCHITA

Your stories will never leave Cuba.  
Railroad employees must submit all  
material to the Spanish censors  
before it can be dispatched.

ROBERTO

Then how are we going to get our  
stories to our paper?

CONCHITA

I'll show you how. Go back and get  
everything you left there.

Roberto and Felipe rush back into the station and in a  
moment, exit with their material

CONCHITA (CONT'D)

(to Roberto)

Follow me. Take your materials with  
you. Come alone, leave Felipe here.

Roberto, on his mule, follows the Captain.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Conchita stops at a shack near a river. She whistles and an ancient BEARDED MAN appears.

CONCHITA  
This is Antonio. Give him the  
things you want to send to America.

Roberto hesitates, but under Conchita's unwavering look,  
hands over the material.

Antonio needs no instructions. He turns and takes the package  
to his shack.

ROBERTO  
How will I know if it gets there?

CONCHITA  
You won't. But Antonio has never  
failed.

ROBERTO  
I have to be sure. That's why I'm  
here.

CONCHITA  
We're all here for a reason.

EXT. TOWN CENTER DAY

Roberto and Conchita return. Tamoro stands alone in front of  
a small building.

CONCHITA  
(to Tamoro)  
Where are my Hijas?

TAMORO  
They're inside. The Priest is here.

CONCHITA  
Bueno. Roberto, do you want to see  
the Priest? It will do you good.>

Roberto thinks for a moment.

ROBERTO  
I haven't been to confession for  
years.

(MORE)

ROBERTO (CONT'D)  
(calling to Felipe)  
Felipe, come with me to confession.

Felipe looks through his viewfinder: a five year old girl holds an infant in her arms.

FELIPE  
No, you go without me.

INT. SMALL BUILDING - DAY

A makeshift confessional booth made of raw lumber and tin stands in the middle of the room. The walls have religious pictures and a cross.

Several Hijas sit on benches awaiting their turn.

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH

MONTAGE:

Individual Hijas make their confessions.

NOTE: These scenes have purposely been left unwritten to allow the director and cast to find the proper emotional impact.

MUSIC:

A guitar will play over the scene.

MONTAGE ENDS:

Robert enters, looks at the opening covered with a woven mat.

ROBERTO  
My last confession was some years ago, I can't remember when. I am confused. I witness many violent acts. It's part of my job as a reporter. There's nothing I can do.

PRIEST  
There is no sin in performing a service. Go in peace.

EXT. TOWN CENTER DAY

Roberto approaches Felipe

ROBERTO  
You should go. It really helps.

Felipe composes a a shot of an old woman on crutches.

FELIPE  
It's too late for me. Do you think  
God really cares?.

ROBERTO  
I have to believe He does.

Several VILLAGERS pass. They carry dishes of food over their heads.

VILLAGER  
Come, Amigos. We have prepared a  
feast for you

EXT. TOWN CENTER - EVENING

The Priest blesses the food and the Hijas dig into the food.  
Felipe records the event. Roberto makes notes.

The villagers serenade them with song and dance.

Five SPANISH SOLDIERS appear. They walk single file and hold  
white kerchiefs above their head.

The Hijas jump up with their weapons ready.

The lead soldier speaks to a villager, Angelina.

LEAD SOLDIER  
Is the Priest still here?

Angelina looks at Conchita. Conchita looks away.

The Priest rises and walks to building. Angelina gestures to  
the soldiers to follow the Priest.

The Hijas clear a path for them. The celebration is over.

A short time later, the Spanish Soldiers walk past the diners  
on their way out of town. They stare hungrily at the food.  
The white kerchiefs are again displayed.

LATER

The villagers escort the visitors to the edge of the village.  
Drummers establish the cadence.

A goat, chickens, and various food stuff have been strapped to the rumps of several horses.

EXT. GLADE - NIGHT

Some distance from the village, Hijas spread their saddle blankets and turn in for the night.

Roberto and Felipe look for a place to sleep.

ROBERTO

Here, this is a good place.

They spread their blankets.

LATER

A YOUNG BOY, 10, dressed in a uniform with short pants, sneaks up to one of the sleeping Hijas, Lina, and shakes her.

Lina reaches for her machete.

BOY

No, No Senorita. I've come to warn you. A large company of Spanish Troops are coming this way.

Lina

Who are you? How do you know this?

BOY

I'm in the boys platoon. They made us all join.

LINA

Then why are you here?

BOY

My father told me to go and warn you. I must get back before I'm missed.

LINA

Bueno. Run, Hijo, run.

The boy runs off

LINA

Lina awakens the others. They fold their blankets and lead their horses into the surrounding forest.

Conchita approaches Lina.

CONCHITA

I don't see the Yanquis. Did you wake them?

LINA

Madre de Dios! I forgot all about them. They always sleep away from where we are. Do you want me to go back for them, Capitan?

CONCHITA

No, it's too late. Maybe the experience will give them a good news story.

GLADE

A Spanish COMPANY passes by. Some are mounted on horses, some ride in WEAPON WAGONS, and others are on foot.

A SOLDIER in the last squad breaks from the formation to relieve himself. He trips over a sleeping Felipe.

SQUAD SOLDIER

Mierda! Sargento Mayor! Por favor, venga aqui.

The MASTER SERGEANT joins the soldier.

SERGEANT MAJOR

Que es, hombre?

SQUAD SOLDIER

There are two bodies lying here. I almost pissed on them.

ROBERTO and FELIPE

Roberto and Felipe awaken and see the two Spanish soldiers. They resort to their safe passages.

ROBERTO & FELIPE

Periodista! Periodista!

SERGEANT MAJOR

You can speak English. What are you doing sleeping out here? Don't you have a room?

ROBERTO

We're...our newspaper wanted an article about the Cuban Countryside. We've been out all day. We got tired.

SERGEANT MAJOR

But your clothes. You almost look like Cuban Rebels.

FELIPE

We found these. When our regular clothes wore out, we put these on.

SQUAD SOLDIER

Shall I report them to the Capitan?

SERGEANT MAJOR

No, he's too far ahead. Go back to your squad. I think I can handle these dangerous...

ROBERTO & FELIPE

Periodistas.

SERGEANT MAJOR

Yes...periodistas.

He leads Roberto and Felipe onto the road where a wagon waits and motions them to climb aboard.

INT. WAGON (moving)

SERGEANT MAJOR

I learned English because I wanted to come to America, but I got drafted before I had the money to leave. Where are you two from?

ROBERTO

New York.

SERGEANT MAJOR

Ah, New York...La ciudad mas bello. Well, we're headed for San Jacinto-- nothing like New York. It's a small village but you'll be able to find a room there.

EXT. SAN JACINTO - NIGHT

In the town's center, the Sergeant halts the wagon and Roberto and Felipe jump off.

FELIPE  
Muchas Gracias, Sergento

The Sergeant moves off. The journalists exhale.

ROBERTO  
That was a close one. He didn't seem like the enemy.

FELIPE  
I wonder what happened to Las Hijas? I hope they protected my equipment.

EXT VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

Roberto checks out their surroundings.

EXT. TAVERN

Locals enter and exit.

ROBERTO  
I think that's a bar over there.

FELIPE  
Good! I'm thirsty.

Felipe runs towards the tavern, Roberto overtakes him.

ROBERTO  
We can't be seen in these clothes.

FELIPE  
I saw a clothes line a little way back. Maybe we can find something and get rid of these.

INT. TAVERNA - NIGHT

The local watering hole.

Roberto and Felipe enter in their ill-fitting exchanges. Assuming a casual presence, they seat themselves at a table.

TAVERN ENTRANCE

Two Spanish SOLDIERS enter. The room becomes quiet.

They push several drinkers aside, and make a place for themselves at the bar.

LOCAL DRINKER

One displaced local tries to reclaim his drink left on the bar.

LOCAL  
Por favor, Senior...mi bebida.

SOLDIER 1  
Oh, is this yours...? I'm sorry,  
here it is.

He takes the drink and pours it over the man's head.

ROBERTO and FELIPE

Roberto and Felipe sense the danger.

ROBERTO  
I don't think it's safe for us to  
be here.

SOLDIERS

One of the Soldiers nudges the other and points at Roberto and Felipe.

SOLDIER  
I've never seen them here before

The Soldiers saunter towards the Roberto and Felipe.

ANGLE:

TWO WOMEN appear and move to intercept the Soldiers.

FIRST WOMAN  
I love a man in a uniform

She strokes the arm of one of the soldiers

SECOND WOMAN  
We're so bored. There are no real  
men in this town

THE SOLDIERS

Their attention diverted, they bask in the possibilities.

FIRST SOLDIER  
We can take care of your problem.

SECOND SOLDIER  
Would you chicas like a drink?

WOMEN and SOLDIERS

The second woman hooks the arm of her soldier.

SECOND WOMAN  
Don't you find it stuffy in here?

The Soldiers take the cue and lead the women out of the tavern.

With the soldiers gone, the volume returns.

Roberto and Felipe relax.

SHORT TIME LATER

The two women return to the bar without the Soldiers. They approach Roberto and Felipe.

WOMAN 1  
(Whispering) You both must  
get up and escort us out.

ROBERTO  
Who are you? We're not ready to  
leave.

WOMAN 2  
Don't ask any questions. If you  
want to get out of here alive,  
you'll come with us.

Roberto and Felipe get the message.

The women take each man's arm and head for the door.

EXT. TAVERNA/ALLEY - NIGHT

In an alley behind the tavern, they pass the two soldiers, tied ether, red bandanas stuffed in their mouths, and their pants removed.

ROBERTO  
We can't leave. We have to find...

CONCHITA (O.S.)  
Thank you, Hijas. You handled that  
very well.

Roberto and Felipe are startled.

ROBERTO  
(To Conchita)  
Who are they?

CONCHITA  
New additions.

ROBERTO  
We're so glad to see you. We could  
of had a problem inside.

Roberto attempts to embrace Conchita. She shoves him away.

CONCHITA  
Several of the unit felt  
responsible for not warning you to  
leave. I was not one of them.

Roberto, rejected, walks away.

Felipe catches up to Roberto.

FELIPE  
I'm still thirsty.

Roberto doesn't answer, he keeps on walking.

EXT. MOUNTAIN STREAM - DAY

The women rest, Roberto writes. Felipe cleans his equipment.

MARIA, rides up to Conchita.

MARIA  
There's smoke rising from the  
mountain top to the East.

Conchita studies a MAP.

CONCHITA  
That's where the Tuberculosis  
Hospital is. We may be needed. Get  
everyone ready to leave. It will  
take a day and night to get there.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - AFTERNOON

The Rebels come to a clearing with a barn.

CLEARING

Three men work with picks and shovel. They wave at the Hijas.

CONCHITA

Conchita holds up her hand signalling the group to stop.  
Dolores rides up to her.

DOLORES

Why are we stopping, Captain?

CONCHITA

Something's not right here. Have  
the Hijas disperse. We don't want  
to be easy targets, just in case.

Conchita rides up to the men.

CONCHITA (CONT'D)

Hola, Amigos. Do you have any crops  
or livestock for sale?

MAN 1

It's been a poor season for  
growing. You can go to the barn. We  
still have some pigs and chickens.

Conchita looks down at the soil. She sees the military issue  
boots beneath the workers garb.

Conchita dismounts from her horse and trains her pistol on  
the men.

CONCHITA

Lead the way to the barn.

The men obey, Conchita following. The man with the pitchfork  
raises it and rushes towards her.

Conchita pushes one of the other men in front of her and he  
receives the thrust. The blades penetrate his torso.

Conchita SHOOTS the other two men killing them both.

ROBERTO AND FELIPE

Roberto and Felipe watch from a distance.

## BARN

At the SOUND of the GUNSHOTS, eight uniformed SPANISH SOLDIERS ride out of the barn and engage the Rebels in a FIRE FIGHT.

Conchita runs to her horse as a shield but the animal, fatally wounded, leaves her exposed.

## REBELS

The Hijas, FIRE back. Their defensive positions give them the advantage.

A soldier leaps onto Conchita's back, wraps an arm around her neck and holds a pistol to her head with his other hand.

## ROBERTO, CONCHITA, SOLDIER

The soldier looks up and sees Roberto pointing a pistol at him.

Roberto hesitates--he cannot fire his weapon.

The soldier also has a problem firing. He has a machete lodged in his back.

TAMORO, a Black Hija, reclaims her machete and joins the others who round up four soldiers who hold up their hands in surrender.

GUNSHOTS are HEARD. Roberto and Felipe look off.

POV: The four Soldiers lie dead at the feet of a Hija.

## ROBERTO AND CONCHITA

Roberto is horrified. Conchita shows no emotion.

## ROBERTO

What kind of women are you? You kill innocent farmers and shoot prisoners of war.

## CONCHITA

Innocent farmers? What farmer works in a field without crops? And Prisoners of War? They were traitors! Cuban landowners who joined the Spanish forces to protect their wealth. And now a question of my own...what kind of man are you?

## CLEARING

Conchita mounts a liberated horse and supervises the cleanup.

In the background, several Hijas carry one of their own to a hastily dug ditch in which to bury her. Others minister aid to their wounded companeras.

Felipe, confused, approaches Roberto.

FELIPE

I don't understand this war.

ROBERTO

Remember when I told you anyone could shoot a gun? I was wrong.

## THAT AFTERNOON

The Hijas ride in the direction of the mountain. Roberto and Felipe astride the mules, follow in the dust.

## EXT. FOOTHILL ROAD - NIGHT

The Unit continue towards the hospital--some of the Hijas doze on their mounts.

## EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The Hijas reach the road leading up to the hospital.

Dazed PATIENTS, DOCTORS, and NURSES stumble past the Hijas as they make their way down the mountain road.

A coughing man loses control of his wheelchair which goes plummeting off the road into the brush.

The survivors can only mumble incoherently when asked about the attack. They are intent on distancing themselves from the experience.

Roberto attempts to interview a nurse.

ROBERTO

Please Senora, tell us what happened up there. It's important for us to know.

The nurse steps around Roberto and continues walking.

Roberto doesn't follow her.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Las Hijas find another Cuban Company at the smoldering hospital. The other company rounds up the captured Spanish Soldiers.

The leader, COLONEL ZEMBE, a huge Black man, greets Conchita.

ZEMBE

They're singing songs of your exploits, Capitan. Wherever we go I hear "Las Hijas! Las Hijas!"

CONCHITA

I wish we could feel proud of what we do, Colonel.

ZEMBE

We do what we must. Just look at this savagery (he indicates the hospital). How else can we respond?

He notices Roberto and Felipe.

ZEMBE (CONT'D)

Are those men riding with you?

CONCHITA

They are newspaper reporters from America.

ZEMBE

Are they able to keep up?

CONCHITA

Barely. They would perish without us.

ZEMBE

The maternal instinct?

CONCHITA

I doubt that I have any left.

A CUBAN SOLDIER reports to the Colonel.

CUBAN SOLDIER

We have rounded up fifty-three of the enemy, Colonel. What are your orders?

The Colonel considers the situation.

ZEMBE

We will execute twelve of them. Disarm the others and turn them loose. If any of them survive in the wilderness, they might convince others to give up a useless fight.

CONCHITA

What would you like us to do, Colonel?

ZEMBE

Can your people handle a firing squad? My company is ready to attack an enemy encampment 30 kilometers from here.

CONCHITA

As you wish, Sir.

#### HOSPITAL YARD

The chosen twelve PRISONERS in blindfolds are placed in position against a wall. They are tied in two's--back to back.

#### THE PRISONERS

Panicked, some cannot control their bodily fluids. Stains appear on their trousers.

#### CONCHITA

Conchita gathers her group for the task.

CONCHITA

All right, Hijas, I will take six volunteers.

Roberto picks up a RIFLE and steps forward as one of the volunteers.

Conchita takes note.

When all lines are in place, Conchita takes her position.

CONCHITA (CONT'D)

Aim carefully. We only have one bullet for each two.

When all lines are in place, Conchita takes her position.

CONCHITA (CONT'D)  
Aim carefully. We only have one  
bullet for each two.

Ready. Aim....

CONCHITA

She interrupts the sequence.

ROBERTO

Roberto is unable to hold his weapon steady. Conchita steps  
up behind him and steadies his arms.

CONCHITA (CONT'D)  
...FIRE!

Conchita's finger pulls the trigger for Roberto.

She release Roberto who slumps to the ground. Conchita  
observes him for several moments.

HOSPITAL YARD

The executed men, still tied together, lie in awkward  
positions. The Hijas probe the bodies to make sure there are  
no survivors.

Felipe swings into a frenzied action, photographing each  
body. He looks at Roberto sitting on the ground in a stupor.

Felipe carefully sets his camera down, picks up a rifle and  
slings it over his shoulder. Without a word or a backward  
look, he walks off into the surrounding wilderness.

Roberto watches him go.

The released SPANISH SOLDIERS eagerly make their unsteady way  
into the forest.

One of them with a deep GASH in his leg receives FIRST AID  
treatment from a Hija.

Roberto brings Conchita's horse to her. She gestures that it  
is now his to ride.

ROBERTO

He understands. He is now a combatant. He places his rifle  
into the holster strapped to the horse and rides off with the  
others.

EXT. HILLTOP/SANTIAGO BAY DAY

The hilltop affords a view of the bay in which five ships of the Spanish Navy are anchored.

INT. SPANISH FLAGSHIP PELAYO/BRIDGE - DAY

ADMIRAL AUGUSTIN CERVERA, standing on the bridge, trains his telescope onto the shore.

A SEAMAN approaches the Admiral.

SEAMAN

The Captains are assembled, Sir.

The Admiral nods and leaves the bridge.

INT. SPANISH FLAGSHIP/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

FIVE CAPTAINS are waiting for the Admiral. They stand when he enters the room.

ADMIRAL

Be at ease gentlemen. This won't take long. (to a SEAMAN) Bring out the brandy and glasses, Luis.

The seaman moves off quickly.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

First, I want to thank each of you for your outstanding service to Espana. I am proud to have been your Admiral, even now as we await defeat.

He pauses for the reactions. The word "defeat" has never been uttered before.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

...you should all be proud of your commitment and courage in the line of duty.

CAPTAIN 1

But Admiral, we haven't had a chance to engage the enemy. How do we know...

ADMIRAL

It is inevitable, Captain. The fleet is not battle-ready.

CAPTAIN 2  
Our Navy's victorious history...?

ADMIRAL  
I agree, this is a sad occasion,  
Capitan Salazar.

CAPTAIN 3  
What are your orders, Admiral?

ADMIRAL  
The commanding General in Havana  
had the insolence to suggest that  
we take our ships into shallow  
water where our sailors could swim  
ashore to engage the enemy in hand-  
to-hand combat.

SALAZAR  
What insanity.

ADMIRAL  
Worse, it is demeaning to a once  
proud fighting force. I will not  
allow those under my command to  
assume a less honorable position in  
defeat, than they would in victory.

The seaman returns with the brandy and glasses

The Admiral pours and hands each Captain a glass. They all  
raise their glasses in a silent toast.

The Admiral embraces his Captains.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)  
Vaya con Dios.

The Admiral leaves and the Captains drain the contents of  
their glasses.

EXT. AMERICAN FLAGSHIP USS OREGON - DAY

An OFFICER dictates to a SEAMAN who sends a SEMAPHORE message  
to a troop ship.

SUPER MESSAGE:

PREPARE TO FIRE

A return message from the troop ship.

STANDING BY

EXT. HILLTOP/SANTIAGO BAY - DAY

In the distance, the FLASH of the US guns--the SOUNDS heard moments later.

Cuban citizens and Cuban Soldiers are ecstatic.

INT. PELAYO BRIDGE - DAY

The ship has been hit and is on fire. A young NAVAL LIEUTENANT approaches Admiral Cervera.

LIEUTENANT

Father...

ADMIRAL

I told you never to call me that. I insist on proper discipline at all times.

LIEUTENANT

Yes Sir...

A fireball wipes out the scene.

EXT. SANTIAGO BAY - DAY

A US TROOP SHIP approaches the shallow waters.

SOLDIERS drop over the side. It takes a moment for them to find their footing under the load of equipment each carries. Their heavy woolen uniforms absorb water, adding to the problem of movement.

Bullets SPLASH around them from several Spanish fortifications on shore. Occasional canon fire hits close to the landing troops.

Disregarding the danger, CUBAN REBEL FORCES wade in to embrace their comrades-in arms; the US Soldiers allow them to carry equipment ashore.

One severely overweight GENERAL is carried ashore by two of the CUBAN FIGHTERS. He summons one of his aides.

GENERAL

Give each of these lads a silver dollar from my bag.

The Cubans are perplexed but to refuse the coins might be seen as an insult.

GENERAL and COLONEL ZEMBE

Once on shore, Colonel Zembe extends his hand to the General who mistakes the gesture and signals the aide to give the Colonel a sliver dollar.

The Cubans take no offence--their joy is undiminished.

EXT. HILLTOP/SANTIAGO BAY - DAY

Las Hijas embrace each other as they watch the action from the shore.

Todd Renfrew, the reporter from the Journal, drives up in a CUDELL. He gets out and approaches Roberto.

RENFREW

Hello. We meet again.

It takes Roberto a moment to place Renfrew.

ROBERTO

Oh, yes. The Twin Palms Hotel.

RENFREW

(referring to Las Hijas)

You seem to have found a unique source in fulfilling your assignment.

ROBERTO

I'm no longer a working journalist.

Renfrew considers the information.

RENFREW

Well, a lot of things work out differently. My paper re-writes all of my dispatches.

ROBERTO

Why is that?

RENFREW

The needs of politics and business are more important than the facts.

ROBERTO

What happened to Cuban Independence?

RENFREW

I have no answer. Anyway, if you start reporting again, you're welcome to use our facilities for getting your stories out of Cuba.

ROBERTO

I'll wait until I get back to the States.

Renfrew starts to leave, then turns back to Roberto

RENFREW

My apologies for our arrogance in Tampa. Is your photographer with you?

ROBERTO

As you said--things have a way of turning out differently.

Renfrew gets into his vehicle and drives off.

EXT. SAN JUAN HILL - DAY

COLONEL TEDDY ROOSEVELT and his ROUGH RIDERS prepare to advance on the hill. Roosevelt sits astride a horse. His cavalry is on foot.

Guns FIRE from the Spanish Block House on top of San Juan hill. It takes its toll on the American forces attempting to climb the hill.

Roosevelt surveys the situation. He summons a Lieutenant.

ROOSEVELT

I'm not waiting for orders to charge. We're targets if we stay here. We're moving out.

Roosevelt positions himself in front of his troops.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

(yelling to his unit) GET READY TO CHARGE!...CHARGE!

Roosevelt rides up and down his cavalry. They yell as they move up the hill.

On the right flank of the Rough Riders, another unit--the 3rd Cavalry--made up of BLACK SOLDIERS--pick up the fever and join Roosevelt's charge.

The rattle of GATLING GUNS firing is HEARD.

TWO GATLING GUNS

Side by side, manned by US troops, the Gatlings FIRE above the heads of the charging troops.

The advancing units yell--GATLING GUN! GATLING GUN! Heartened by the support, they quicken their pace.

EXT. SPANISH BLOCK HOUSE DAY

SPANISH SOLDIERS fall to the ground, wounded and killed by the fast firing Gatlings.

SAN JUAN HILL

Roosevelt dismounts and with a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, leads the charge.

SPANISH BLOCK HOUSE

The few remaining SPANISH SOLDIERS raise their hands in surrender to the first unit to arrive--the 10th Cavalry.

SAN JUAN HILL

The Rough Riders climb the last few yards to the top of San Juan Hill.

At the top, Roosevelt's euphoria is frozen as he sees--

POV

The 10th Cavalry, also a BLACK company, round up the surrendering Spanish soldiers.

Members of the Third Cavalry rush to embrace their brothers-in-arms.

At one point, a Black soldier finds himself next to one of the Rough Riders. After a moment of indecision, they embrace one another.

Roosevelt studies the entire scene.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT. HOTEL EMPLOYEES LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Roberto is stretched out on one of the tables.

Paul's notebook is almost filled.

PAUL

So it was total victory, right?

He looks at Roberto who is nodding off to sleep.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Isn't that...Roberto! C'mon! You can't go to sleep yet. I need an ending.

Roberto shakes himself awake.

ROBERTO

Ending...? We're only half way through the story. Can you come back tomorrow?

Paul helps Roberto sit up.

PAUL

I need it tonight

FLASHBACK

EXT. SANTIAGO BAY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Soldiers erect several tents around a temporary headquarters tent.

INT. HEADQUARTER TENT - DAY

COLONEL ROOSEVELT and THREE CIVILIAN MEN sit around a small table.

An AIDE enters.

AIDE

Sir, there's a Cuban--a Negro-- waiting outside. He says he's a Colonel. He wants to speak to you

ROOSEVELT (to the civilians)  
Gentlemen, you should leave. We are  
not ready for your presence to be  
known.

CIVILIAN 1  
Let's continue our planning as  
quickly as possible. Our industrial  
presence will bring order to the  
country.

The civilians exit the tent.

ROOSEVELT  
(to the aide) All right, bring in  
the Cuban.

EXT. HEADQUARTER TENT - DAY

Passing US soldiers are amused at the sight of Colonel Zembe  
who squats on the dusty ground.

Conchita and Roberto note the inappropriate treatment of the  
Rebel Commander.

The aide gestures to Zembe to enter the tent. Roberto follows  
Zembe.

INT. HEADQUARTER TENT

The aide enters with Zembe and Roberto, then leaves.

Roosevelt motions Zembe to a chair. He pays no attention to  
Roberto who stands in the corner .

ROOSEVELT  
Sorry you had to wait, but I guess  
you're used to the heat. Am I  
right, chappy?

ZEMBE  
My name is Zembe, Colonel.

ROOSEVELT  
Oh, OK. Zembe.

ZEMBE  
That should be Colonel Zembe,  
Colonel Roosevelt.

Roosevelt observes Zembe and accepts the correction.

ROOSEVELT

Oh yes, of course. Colonel Zembe.  
Would you care for a cool glass of  
lemonade?

Zembe silently refuses.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

All right, what is it we need to  
discuss? You have my full  
attention.

ZEMBE

First, as a part of the Provisional  
Government of Cuba, I want to  
express our deep gratitude to the  
American Government for their help  
in freeing our country from foreign  
rule.

ROOSEVELT

The United States stands behind  
any country seeking a democratic  
future.

ZEMBE

So this is not a part of the  
"Manifest Destiny" mandate?

Roosevelt is surprised at Zembe's knowledge of the term.

ROOSEVELT

(to Roberto)  
I didn't get your name, sir. Do you  
have a reason for being here?

ROBERTO

Roberto Gonzalez, from the Free  
Cuba Gazette. I'd like to interview  
you for my paper, Sir.

ROOSEVELT

I'd be happy to oblige at another  
time. Now, I have to ask you to  
leave. My conversation with the  
Colonel is privileged.

ROBERTO

Thank you Colonel Roosevelt

Roberto exits the tent.

ROOSEVELT

In answer to your last question--I believe you used the term Manifest Destiny--please rest assured The United States has no intention of occupying Cuba.

ZEMBE

Thank you, Colonel. That's very reassuring. What then are your immediate plans?

ROOSEVELT

Well, establishing rule of law is our objective. Total disarmament will be the first order of business.

ZEMBE

But if we are to self-govern, that must be our decision.

ROOSEVELT

Colonel, let's postpone that topic for the moment. We all need time to find the best solutions.

ZEMBE

The Cuban people have had solutions for many years.

ROOSEVELT

I appreciate the suffering you've gone through but freedom is not automatic. We need to proceed carefully or all our efforts will be lost.

ZEMBE

With due respect, I think it comes down to the basic question of who is to govern Cuba.

ROOSEVELT

I have no doubt that we will all agree on the best path to establish a democratic Cuba, Colonel Zembe.

ZEMBE

Thank you for your time, Colonel Roosevelt. I wish you and your troops an enjoyable stay in my country.

Zembe rises, offers his hand which Roosevelt accepts, and leaves the tent.

The aide returns.

ROOSEVELT  
That was a most interesting meeting. I'm ready for my nap.

AIDE  
Yes Sir.

EXT. HEADQUARTER TENT - DAY

Conchita and Roberto join Zembe as they return to the Rebel compound.

CONCHITA  
How did it go, Colonel?

ZEMBE  
We had a cordial meeting, but there were some points the Colonel brought up to which we can never agree.

CONCHITA  
Like what, Colonel.

ZEMBE  
Like disarming the Rebel Army.

Conchita and Roberto react to the troubling information.

ROBERTO  
But we are allies, we fought a common enemy.

CONCHITA  
Perhaps the war is not yet over for us.

ZEMBE  
Let's not be hasty. It's too early to tell. We must just stay alert.

JOURNAL NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:

TEDDY ROOSEVELT--THE HERO OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR.

ANOTHER:

SAN JUAN HILL THE TURNING POINT OF THE WAR.

EXT. FREE CUBA GAZETTE - NIGHT

The street is filled with jubilant, celebrating citizens. Fireworks fill the sky. Employees of the Gazette exit with copies of their paper.

FREE CUBA GAZETTE HEADLINE:

CUBA FREE! CUBA FREE! CUBA FREE!

The employees distribute the newspaper to those passing. Many of the passers-by immediately discard the paper.

EXT. ROAD/CUBAN CANYON - DAY

Conchita and Roberto ride together at the head of Las Hijas. The road leads into a canyon

EXT. CANYON RIDGE - DAY

A man in CUBAN REBEL uniform appears on top of a canyon ridge. He beckons and OTHERS appear. They watch the column of Las Hijas below.

He signals another group across the canyon on the opposite ridge.

CANYON FLOOR

VELUPE, one of the Hijas, notices the Rebels on the ridge.

VELUPE  
OYE! MIRA! COMPANEROS.

Conchita holds up her hand to stop. The Hijas look up at the ridge.

RIDGES

The groups on both ridges begin to descend into the canyon.

CANYON FLOOR

Conchita and Dolores ride out to meet them.

When the two groups are almost down to the canyon floor, one of them calls out.

REBEL  
Como Estas, Mambis?

Tamoro spurs her mount towards Conchita and Dolores.

TAMORO  
 (shouting)  
 STOP. CUIDADO. THEY'RE NOT CUBAN  
 REBELS.

Roberto unshields his rifle and FIRES into the air as he rides to Conchita and Dolores.

ROBERTO CONT'D)  
 GO BACK! IT'S AN AMBUSH! THEY ARE  
 NOT REBELS.

The fake Rebels FIRE at the Hijas.

The Hijas abruptly turn their mounts and at a gallop, retrace their way back to the canyon entrance.

Roberto remains, covering their escape, FIRING at the attacking forces.

Roberto's horse is hit, throwing Roberto to the ground. His legs are pinned under the horse.

The Fake Rebels give chase to the fleeing Rebels.

One of the Fake Rebels, CARLOS, is left to guard Roberto.

CARLOS  
 Your lady protectors have abandoned  
 you, sissy boy.

Roberto's in pain. He doesn't notice Carlo's effeminate manner.

Carlos jabs Roberto with his rifle.

Roberto tries to grab the rifle away from Carlos.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
 Oh, my, you frighten me.

He jabs Roberto again. Roberto tries again to pull the rifle away from Carlos. This time, he is successful.

Carlos pulls out a pistol and aims it at Roberto

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
 I have no more time to play games  
 with you, sissy boy.

A SHOT rings out. Carlos falls mortally wounded.

Roberto looks up and sees Felipe, his face streaked with red and black streaks.

Felipe pulls Roberto out from the horse under which he is pinned and lift him onto the rump of his own horse.

Roberto is relieved to see his former partner.

LATER

EXT. BROOKSIDE - DAY

A safe distance from the previous confrontation, the Hijas rest while their horses drink from the brook. Several of the unit tend to the wounded.

Felipe appears. Several Hijas help Roberto down from the horse.

ROBERTO

(to Felipe)

Are you going to stay with us?

Felipe shakes his head "no" and rides off.

Roberto limps over to Conchita

ROBERTO (CONT'D)

Are we ever going to see the end of this war?

CONCHITA

There are still pockets not ready to surrender. If it weren't for your vigilance...

ROBERTO

They called us Mambis.

CONCHITA

Bravo. You're learning.

TAMORO

I knew right away. They were all white men.

ROBERTO

I don't think my country understands how complicated these things are.

CONCHITA

But you do. It's your job to alert them.

Conchita reaches over and gently feels Roberto's leg.

CONCHITA (CONT'D)

I think it's broken.

EXT. CUBAN CEMETERY - DAY

CITIZENS, SOLDIERS and FAMILIES gather for a Victory Celebration and to listen to the speeches. Freshly turned earth marks recent burials.

Conchita and Roberto stand at the rear of the crowd. Roberto leans heavily on a cane and wears a cast on his injured foot.

JAVIER MONTERO, 63, President of the Provisional Cuban Government, is helped to an improvised lectern.

THE CROWD

CROWD

El Presidente! El Presidente!  
Presidente Montero!

CONCHITA AND ROBERTO

Conchita steals Roberto's straw hat and teasingly starts edging away.

Roberto attempts to follow, hampered by his broken leg.

INTERCUT THE FOLLOWING SCENES:

LECTURN

Montero sets his cane down and adjusts his mended eye glasses. A SOLDIER brings a microphone attached to a bamboo pole and hands it to Montero. He tests the volume.

There is a hush from the assembled crowd.

MONTERO

Men and women of the struggle for a  
Free Cuba--everyone of you a hero.

CONCHITA AND ROBERTO

Conchita continues to lead Roberto away from the Celebration.

LECTURN

MONTERO

We stand here today, among our fallen comrades, to share with them the joy of victory. And to thank them for their sacrifice.

CONCHITA and ROBERTO

Conchita enters the side door of a small Chapel on the edge of the cemetery.

Roberto follows, doing his best to keep up with her.

LECTURN

MONTERO

...and no one better deserves our respect than Colonel Zembe--now Minister of Defense in our Provisional Government...

INT. CHAPEL

Roberto enters through the side door. Conchita is nowhere in sight.

CUBAN CEMETERY/LECTURN

Zembe makes his way through the crowd and joins Montero.

ZEMBE

Thank you, Mr. President...

He is off-mike and cannot be heard in the rear.

CROWD

LOUDER! LOUDER! WE CAN'T HEAR YOU.

INT CHAPEL

Robert continues limping through the chapel looking for Conchita. He sees something off-screen.

POV

One of the outstretched arm on the statue of Jesus holds his straw hat.

Roberto tries to genuflect but his broken leg wont allow him to assume the position. He hurriedly crosses himself and moves on.

LECTURN

Zembe picks up the bamboo stand to bring the microphone closer, but the microphone falls off. Zembe retrieves it.

ZEMBE

Thank you President Montero.  
Fortunately, I'm only the *temporary*  
Minister of Defense. I'm certain  
the permanent Minister will have  
better coordination.

INT CHAPEL

Roberto, continuing his search, opens the door to the cloak room behind the pulpit.

LECTURN

ZEMBE

After so long in coming, a day of  
peace reminds us that life can be a  
joyful experience. But we must not  
let happiness blur our vision. We  
must stay alert.

INT. CHAPEL/CLOAK ROOM

Roberto enters the cloak room. Conchita jumps out of the wardrobe closet wearing a choir robe.

Roberto nearly loses his balance. Conchita opens the robe-- she is naked. Now Roberto does lose his balance; He falls to the floor.

LECTURN

ZEMBE

For now, enjoy the moment. Return  
to your families, sing and dance,  
and become loving human beings once  
again.

INT. CHAPEL/CLOAK ROOM

Conchita and Roberto make love. Roberto's leg isn't bothering him anymore

SOUND:

The CHEERING of the crowd outside.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

CUBAN CITIZENS and SOLDIERS arrive at a magnificent well-illuminated mansion. Some are on horseback, others in HORSE-DRAWN WAGONS.

Dolores and an OLDER COUPLE stand at the entrance and welcome arriving guests.

Conchita and Roberto arrive in a carriage. She helps him out and up the steps of the portico.

CONCHITA

Catch your breath for a moment.  
I'll be upstairs.

Conchita leaves. Dolores joins Roberto.

ROBERTO

(referring to the older couple)  
Are those your parents?

DOLORES

No, they are the wife and brother of a Spanish General who died from Malaria. They invited my family to live with them when our home was destroyed in a hurricane.

ROBERTO

Surprise after surprise, there's no end.

INT. MANSION/MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

The interior is colorfully decorated. A QUINTET plays popular Cuban dance rhythms.

An OLDER MAN in a WHEELCHAIR, navigates through the DANCERS and serves drinks to all.

INT. MANSION/SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM

The Hijas exchange Rebel uniforms for feminine attire.

INT. MANSION/GUEST ROOM

Conchita hands Roberto a SUIT.

CONCHITA  
It is my brother's. He's quite large. I altered it for you.

ROBERTO  
No es una problema.

Roberto starts to disrobe.

Conchita tries to leave but the door knob comes off in her hand.

Conchita attempts to repair it. Roberto takes it from her and tosses it into a waste basket

ROBERTO (CONT'D)  
Hole in one.

He pulls Conchita towards him.

INT. MANSION/2ND FLOOR HALL

Tamoro exits the bedroom dressed in an African Print gown. She sees the other doorknob on the floor in front of the guest room. She picks it up and tries to refit it to the door. The door swings open.

INT. MANSION/GUEST ROOM

Tamoro enters. Roberto sits in a chair, his leg elevated onto a cushion, Conchita astride him *Flagrante delicto*.

Tamoro immediately averts her gaze.

CONCHITA  
(unfazed)  
Yes, Tammy, what is it?

TAMORO  
 (flustered)  
 Oh,,,I just wanted to  
 ...uuhh...what should we do with  
 the horses?

CONCHITA  
 Horses? What are you talking about?  
 We don't have any horses anymore.  
 We donated them.

TAMORO  
 Oh, that's right. Well, then...I'll  
 see you later.

Tsmoro rushes out of the room and pulls the door shut behind her.

Roberto picks up where they left off.

MANSION/MAIN FLOOR

Suddenly, all motion stops. Something off-screen demands everyone's attention.

A violin plays a lively rendition of Bizet's *March of the Toreadores*.

Las Hijas de Libertad, in their feminine finery, proudly descend the stairs.

MARIA  
 (as they descend)  
 I don't see our Capitan, Tamoro.

TAMORO  
 (sly)  
 She's being interviewed by Roberto.

The hushed audience watches the women coming down the stairs; it is a dramatic moment. A single clapping triggers the entire room to explode in applause.

The Quintet plays a *bolero son* and dancers take to the floor.

TWENTY MINUTES LATER:

ROBERTO and CONCHITA

Roberto and Conchita come down from the guest room. They assume a casual attitude.

Roberto dances awkwardly with his cast and cane.

Annoyed at not being able to hold Conchita properly, he hands the cane to the old man in the wheelchair.

The old man accepts it and attempts to stand, but after a few tentative steps, he falls to the floor, laughing.

The crowd, good-naturedly, roars with laughter.

EXT. HILLTOP NIGHT

An adolescent BOY and GIRL, enjoying the night, react to the uproarious laughter coming from the mansion.

BOY  
Adults are crazy.

GIRL  
We'll never be like that.

INT. MANSION/GUEST ROOM - DAWN

Roberto and Conchita lie in bed. He is awake, she dozes.

ROBERTO  
Je t'aime

CONCHITA (mumbling)  
What? What did you say?

ROBERTO  
It's the only French I know.

CONCHITA  
Congratulations, but I still don't know what it means.

ROBERTO  
I want you to be my wife.

Conchita's eyes pop open. She sits up.

CONCHITA  
What a nice thing to hear...on the morning after, no less.

ROBERTO  
I'm serious. Come to New York with me.

CONCHITA  
Don't you think I deserve some time  
to enjoy my own country?

ROBERTO  
Do you want me to stay in Cuba?

CONCHITA  
No. Your work is finished here, if  
the United States keeps its  
promise.

Roberto gets out of bed. He finds his clothes and dresses.

ROBERTO  
Why are you so suspicious? America  
is a Democracy. It's based on the  
will of the people.

CONCHITA  
Then go back and be one of the  
people.

Roberto limps back to the bed and holds Conchita.

ROBERTO  
I don't want to lose you.

CONCHITA  
I'm your first love, am I not?

ROBERTO  
What does that mean?

CONCHITA  
You can lose a first love. It  
prepares you for the next.

ROBERTO  
That makes no sense.

CONCHITA  
We had to lose our freedom before  
we understood its importance.

Roberto rises from the bed. He moves to the window and looks  
outside.

ROBERTO  
You still are Capitan Conchita.  
Isn't it time for you to become a  
woman again?

CONCHITA

I've never stopped being a woman,  
but you've just become a man.

Roberto reacts to the comment. He looks back at Conchita.

ROBERTO

My boat sails tomorrow. I hope  
you'll be coming with me.

EXT. DOCKSIDE - DAY

Roberto waits for Conchita.

At the final "All Aboard", he starts up the gangplank.

Dolores runs to the bottom of the gangplank

DOLORES

(calling)  
Roberto, wait. I have something for  
you.

Dolores runs up to him and gives him a SILVER CASE.

He opens it and finds a cigar wrapped in a red bandana.

THE PRESENT:

INT - EMPLOYEES LOCKER ROOM DAY

PAUL

Wow! What a story! Did you ever  
write it up?

ROBERTO

Well, I kept a journal of  
everything that happened. I wrote  
up the full account coming back on  
the boat.

FLASHBACK:

INT/EXT. FREE CUBA GAZETTE - DAY

Roberto stands outside the smoking ruins of the Gazette  
office. An employee, MANUEL, pokes around for saveable items.

MANUEL

Ah, Roberto, haven't heard from you in so long.

ROBERTO

I know, Manny. It's a long story. What happened to the Gazette?

MANUEL

We've become very unpopular.

ROBERTO

How could that happen? We were all fighting for the same Cause.

PRESENT:

INT. EMPLOYEES LOCKER ROOM - DAY

PAUL

Did you ever try to publish it somewhere else? There are many people who would have wanted to read it.

ROBERTO

It was the wrong time. Like George Orwell said, Telling the truth sometimes becomes a revolutionary act. I couldn't find work for years. I was lucky to get this job.

PAUL

You don't strike me as someone who gives up easily.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MANSION/GUEST ROOM

Conchita and Roberto

ROBERTO (V.O.)

I learned a valuable lesson. Losing something doesn't make you a loser.

PRESENT:

PAUL  
That's good to know, I think I just  
lost my job.

ROBERTO  
If you ever want to work in a  
hotel, I've got some influence  
here.

PAUL  
Thanks. I'll remember that.

EXT. WALDORF-ASTORIA -DAY

Roberto and Paul exit the hotel through the employees  
entrance. They take a moment to adjust to the daylight, then  
walk East towards Lexington Avenue.

PAUL  
I can't face my editor. He was so  
emphatic about my assignment.

ROBERTO  
He might be impressed, you know.  
Anyway, when you learn something,  
you own it, it's yours. No one can  
take it from you.

PAUL  
I guess so. Did you ever hear from  
Conchita?

ROBERTO  
She wouldn't let them take her  
pistol. They killed her.

Paul needs a moment to digest the information.

PAUL  
That's too sad an ending.

ROBERTO  
The ending is still being written,  
this was only a chapter.

PAUL  
But even a chapter needs closure.

ROBERTO  
That's your job. I passed you the  
torch when I told you the truth  
about the war.

Paul considers the implied responsibility.

PAUL  
I'm really only the messenger.

ROBERTO  
OK, then deliver the message.

Paul is still uncertain. He is relieved when he sees an  
approaching taxi. He flags it.

PAUL  
Can I give you a lift?

Roberto points to a subway entrance.

ROBERTO  
I've got my own transportation.

PAUL  
OK, then can you lend me five  
dollars?

ROBERTO  
Sure. You know where to find me if  
you ever want to pay me back.

Roberto hands the five dollars to Paul.

Paul enters the taxi. He waves at Roberto through the rear  
window as it drives off.

Roberto returns the wave.

END CREDITS PLAY OVER FOLLOWING SCENE:

INT. NEWSPAPER CITY ROOM/KAPLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Kaplan, the City Editor, reads Paul's notes. Paul waits for  
the response.

Kaplan shakes his head in disbelief

KAPLAN  
Unfucking believable!

Kaplan throws the notes across his desk at Paul.

KAPLAN (CONT'D)

Are you kidding with this bull  
crap? This is what you turn in  
instead of your assignment? Take  
this nonsense out of my office and  
get back to the Classifieds. If I  
had half a brain, I'd can you.

Paul gather his notes, some on the floor.

PAUL

Let me save you the trouble, I'm  
leaving. I'm a journalist and your  
paper isn't ready for me.

INT. NEWSPAPER CORRIDOR

Paul looks over his notes as he walks down the corridor to  
his office.

INT. NEWSPAPER CITY ROOM/KAPLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Kaplan takes a moment to consider Paul's action.

KAPLAN

(the phone rings)  
Kaplan, City Room.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Paul's notes lie scattered on his desk. He begins typing on  
his typewriter.

PAPER: UNBELIEVABLE FACTS FROM SOMEONE WHO WAS THERE.

PAUL

Paul pulls the paper out of the typewriter and trashes it. He  
put a fresh sheet into the roller. He starts typing.

PAPER: A SPLENDID LITTLE WAR.

PAUL

Paul looks at his notes and continues typing.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Looks are deceiving. How could I  
know that the old porter--his name  
was Roberto--

FaDE OUT