

WALK ME OUT

Written by
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ACT 1

FADE IN:

INT. OLD APARTMENT TILE STAIRWELL LANDING - MORNING

Open level on the tile floor, straight onto a wall and corner of a closed door. The sounds of people behind doors getting ready, another door opening and closing. Footsteps.

A cat wanders into frame from the left, hesitates, and then walks right as the camera follows along down the hall. The camera stops at another door, and the cat continues.

The door opens, and we see legs from the knees down walk out, close the door, and start walking left. The camera tracks along, following the man's legs as he walks the landing and down the stairs until he reaches the front door of the building and pulls it open.

EXT. 1977 NEW YORK, LOWER EAST SIDE STREET - SUMMER MORNING

MUSIC CUE: SPANISH Mambo

HECTOR (65, Cuban, stocky, quietly optimistic) steps out of the building, camera bag over his shoulder, and lights a cigar. The city hums with life around him. He exchanges nods and greetings with familiar faces—a newspaper vendor, a food cart owner, kids racing to school. At a small storefront, an old Cuban man hands him a fresh roll of cigars. A passerby's boom box blares disco, momentarily drowning out the Spanish music. Hector reaches his photo store, and shares a quick word with a friend. He steps inside, where his wife, MARIA (58, Cuban, overly cautious and suspicious), is with a customer.

INT. INSIDE THE STORE - MORNING

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
Good morning, my love.

Maria looks at the clock, showing 10:20 AM

MARIA
(In Spanish)
Did you come on a donkey
or what?

Hector grins and gives her a peck on the cheek as he passes her. He walks through the curtain, dividing the front and back of the store.

INT. THE BACK OF THE STORE - MORNING

The back of the store is crammed. A counter with pictures being packaged up and envelopes, film containers, and negatives, and photo machines run by two employees, Hector's cousin TELMA (73, Cuban) and her husband, LUIS (75, Cuban, short and thin).

HECTOR
(To TELMA, in Spanish)
Hello

TELMA
(In Spanish)
Hello

Hector walks further back

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
Hello, LUIS

INT. HECTORS OFFICE - DAY

Hector enters his crammed office. He takes his bag off his shoulder and puts it on the counter. He opens a door marked "Darkroom" and walks in.

INT. DARKROOM - DAY

Pictures from the previous day hang to dry. Hector pulls them down, including one he lingers on of one-two boys drinking from a hydrant as teenage girls walk by, a street photo he captured. (Credit: Camilo Jose Vergara, Chilean)

Hector pins it up, joining other street photographs. He walks out of his office, to the rear of the store, and exits.

EXT. BACK ALLEY OUTDOOR STAIRWAY TO SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Hector lights a cigar, walks upstairs and enters the gallery.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY
Hector walks to the front, passing a mix of artwork and photography and passing the only customer in the gallery. Sitting behind a small counter is FEDORA (65, Russian with a heavy accent), smoking a cigarette. She "manages" the gallery for Hector when she shows up.

HECTOR
Do you sell anything?

FEDORA

(In a heavy Russian accent
and snarky tone)

Well, good morning to you, too,
Hector. No, and I thought you were
going to be here at 10?! I have a
class I'm going to be late for now.

HECTOR

What class?

Fedora puts out her cigarette and grabs her coat and hat.

FEDORA

Painting. We paint nude today.

HECTOR

You!

FEDORA

Acht, Me? Model! Me? (beat) Maybe I
paint nude at home?

Fedora turns and smirks, flirting with Hector then walks out.

Hector turns to see the unfriendly customer and makes small talk with her, looking at the artwork.

HECTOR

Oh, that's a beautiful piece,
madam.

The woman smugly shrugs off Hector and walks away.

INT. STORE FRONT - LATE DAY

Hector and Maria attend to the last customer of the day.

HECTOR

Here's your change, ma'am and I
hope you have a good evening.

Hector follows her to the door to lock it and turn the sign to closed. Maria counts money and receipts at the register.

MARIA

(In Spanish)

Money comes in through the door and
leaves through the window. Did you
sell anything upstairs?

HECTOR

(In Spanish)

No, Nothing.

MARIA

How do we keep going like this? How
are we going to keep everyone on?

Maria looks towards the back of the shop. Hector knows she is right. Just then, Telma and Luis come through the curtain.

TELMA
OK that it's for tonight!
Everything is turned off.

Telma kisses Maria on the cheek and gives her a hug.

TELMA (CONT'D)
(In Spanish)
See you tomorrow

MARIA
(In Spanish)
See you tomorrow, baby

LUIS
(In Spanish)
See you tomorrow

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
Yes, Yes. See you tomorrow

Hector follows them to the door and locks up once again. He walks back to the counter.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
I have that job tonight uptown.
Birthday party. The Money is pretty good. Maybe I get another job out of it.

MARIA
Yeah, Yeah, be your charming self.
Don't eat their food, it makes you sick all the time... and fat. Too rich

Hector laughs

HECTOR
Oh, Yes, too rich. Definitely THEIR food.

Hector looks at Maria, then walks back to his office

EXT. WALKING UP TO A BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Hector, camera bag over his shoulder, walks down the street and turns up the steps of a nice brownstone. He rings the bell. A woman, KAREN (45, Tall, Skinny Blonde in a black dress), answers the door. She has a drink in her hand and is a little tipsy already.

HECTOR
Hello, I am Hector.

The woman looks puzzled.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
The photographer.

KAREN
OH! Yes, Yes, the photographer. Come in! Come In! I'm Karen. The party is just getting started.

She walks Hector through the house, talking as Hector pays half attention while admiring the beautiful home.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Now James knows nothing about the party so it will be a big surprise. Make sure you get him coming through the door. Then we need pictures with all his friends, especially his college buddies. Oh, his parents will be here so we need a picture with them, but his father never smiles so don't wait for that to happen, ha. You can put your bag down over there and well, that's about it. Any questions?

HECTOR
No, No, is good, is good!

KAREN
OK, well let me know if you need anything! (Karen Turns) Julia, Ken HI!!

Karen spins to welcome guests as Hector puts down his bag and sets up his camera and flash.

INT. THE PARTY - NIGHT

The party is in full swing. The guest of honor, JAMES (50, well to do), is there already. Hector is shooting away.

James gathers a bunch of his college buddies on the sofa.

JAMES
Hey, hey, get a picture of us. Schwarz, get your skinny ass in here!

SCHWARTZ
You always did like my ass.

Schwartz jumps into the group picture as they all laugh.

CROSS FADE

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

James and Karen are with two couples talking loudly and seeing Hector walking in.

JAMES
Guys, guys, all together!

Hector takes the cue and snaps a picture of them.

CROSS FADE

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A large dining room with food on trays, and in the middle is the birthday cake. Karen lights the candles.

KAREN
Come on, James, get in here! Come on everybody - "Haaappy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear James, Happy birthday to you!"

Everybody cheers and claps.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Make a wish, make a wish!

James blows out the candles. More cheers and claps.

CROSS FADE

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's late and the party is winding down. Hector is eating a piece of cake off to the side. He sees a man approaching him as he puts the cake down and wipes his mouth.

FERNANDO - (45, Cuban, sharply dressed, distinguished man with a perfect mustache), a bit drunk, approaches Hector.

FERNANDO
(In Spanish)
Hello, my friend. Please, please,
finish your cake.

Hector is pleased to hear him speak Spanish

HECTOR
(in Spanish)
Hello, hello, I'm Hector.

FERNANDO
(in Spanish)
Fernando, very nice to meet you.
Quite the party, no.

Fernando looks around the room.

HECTOR
(in Spanish)
Yes, Yes!

FERNANDO
(in Spanish)
Where are you from?

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
I live downtown, off Houston
Street.

Fernando cuts him before he finishes with a chuckle

FERNANDO
(In Spanish)
No, No, where are you FROM? La
Havana? Baracoa? Cienfuegos?

Now realizing Fernando is from Cuba, Hector's eyebrows raise
and he lightens up some.

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
Oh, oh, yes, Artemesa, not far from
Havana.

FERNANDO
(In Spanish)
Yes, Yes, I know Artemisa, yes. I
grew up in Matanzas. My father was
able to get us out right before "Mr
Fidel" (in a condescending
tone) shut it down. He had business
connections here in New York. How
about you? Did you get out before?

Hector's face changes, knowing he wasn't that lucky.

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
No, no, we weren't that fortunate.
My father worked for the newspaper
and, ah, we stayed. It didn't go
well.

Hector leaves it at that, preferring not to share details.

FERNANDO
(In Spanish)
Yes, yes, we all had to struggle.

Hector raises an eyebrow and looks sideways at Fernando as Fernando looks out at the room.

FERNANDO (CONT'D)
(In Spanish)
Struggle is no choice; success,
success is. (Beat) But now we all
have it good, right? Yes, yes,
good.

Smugly, Fernando starts to walk away while reaching out his hand to Hector. Hector shakes his hand.

FERNANDO (CONT'D)
(In English)
OK, my friend. Good to see you.
Good luck, good luck.

The party is over. Hector is near the front door, putting his coat on and grabbing his bag. Karen, very drunk, comes up behind him.

KAREN
(Slurring)
Hector, Hector, here, here, thank
you SO much. I hope you had a good
time.

Karen hands him a check. Hector takes the check as she almost falls into him.

HECTOR
Yes, thank you so much Mrs Karen,
thank you. I get you the pictures
next week.

Hector quickly grabs the door handle and makes a hasty exit.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - LIGHT RAIN

HECTOR
Good night, good night.

Hector walks down the steps and the street, looking at how late it is. He walks down to the subway.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Hector waits on the platform, again looking at his watch. The subway comes, and he gets on. Just a few people are on the subway, including two young characters eyeing him and his bag up. Hector pulls his bag closer, keeping an eye on the two out of the corner of his eye. The subway comes to the next stop, and the two guys peer at Hector again before getting off the train just as the doors close. Hector breathes a sigh of relief, staring at them as the subway pulls away.

Hector wipes his head and neck from sweat. The train finally gets to Hector's stop and he exits the train. He makes his way back up the stairs and out onto the streets downtown.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Hector walks with a jump in his step, anxious to be home. He turns off a main avenue and down a tree-lined side street. He is walking past a school playground. It's dark.

He walks along a chain link fence, unaware a group of 5 young black men are walking along the side of the school and are about to exit the schoolyard right where Hector is walking. The sound of a firetruck passing in the distance distracts Hector from noticing the gang. One of the gang notices Hector coming down the street and points to him. The rest of the gang lights up as they see a target, and they all start toward the exit quickly but quietly.

As Hector approaches the fence opening next to the school building, the gang steps out on the sidewalk in front of him. Hector is startled he stops and takes a step back.

GANG MEMBER 1
Hey man, where you goin?

GANG MEMBER 2
You got a heavy bag, let me help
you with that.

They start to circle Hector, pulling at his bags, his coat. Hector is terrified. He holds tightly to his bag.

HECTOR
I don't want any trouble guys.

JAMO
Maybe you don't,...but we LOVE
trouble. Ain't that right, boys.

Maurice (26, Black, street smart with a chip on his shoulder) clearly the gang leader, hangs back, enjoying the encounter as his gang harasses Hector. The gang is now pushing Hector up against the schoolyard fence.

JAMO (JARVEL MOSES, 22, Black, headstrong and Maurice's right-hand man) pulls at Hector's bag again. This time, he wants it, but Hector holds it close to his chest even more tightly. Jamo is visibly angry now and pulls out a gun and puts it to the side of Hector's jaw.

JAMO (CONT'D)
You ready to die over that bag, old
man?

Hector's hesitates for a second but then loosens up on the bag as Jamo rips it away from him. Jamo lowers the gun and

exits the gang, surrounding Hector to examine the bag. He starts to open it as he walks slowly over to Maurice, now leaning up against a car. Jamo pulls out Hector's camera, eyes now wide open, staring at Maurice.

JAMO (CONT'D)
OH, what do we have here?! Nice camera!

Jamo stares back at Hector.

JAMO (CONT'D)
Look at Mr photog man! What you doin with this?

Jamo hands the bag and camera to Maurice, coming out of the shadows, and leaning against the front of a car. Maurice puts the open bag on the car's hood and looks over the camera.

Jamo starts to walk back to Hector.

Hector is still being held against the fence by the other gang members.

JAMO (CONT'D)
What you taken pictures of Mr. photog man? Where you been tonight?

HECTOR
At, at a party.

JAMO
At a party? What you doin at a party, Mr photog man?

HECTOR
Shooting pictures for...

JAMO
Shooting pictures? Shooting? Ha, I like shooting too!

The rest of the gang laughing.

JAMO (CONT'D)
Maybe I start shooting. What you think a that.

Maurice starts going through the bag and pulls out a large book; it's Hector's portfolio of work. Maurice starts looking through it, flipping through pages of black & white street photography. All high contrast. Maurice is drawn in.

MAURICE
Yo! Bring him over here.

Jamo starts to walk him over to Maurice.

JAMO
(Sarcastically)
The boss will see you now!

Maurice looks up from the book, peering at Hector.

MAURICE
You take these?

Hector nervously hesitates to answer and Jamo, still holding his arm, shakes him a little.

HECTOR
Yes! Yes.

Maurice looks back down at the book, stopping on a picture. It's a picture of women, well dressed, standing on a street corner in the rain, holding an umbrella low. So low that you only see her lips holding a cigarette.

MAURICE
You know her?

HECTOR
Ah, No.

MAURICE
How you know to take her picture
like that?

A little taken aback by the question. Hector struggles for the answer. Maurice gets angry.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
You deaf!?

HECTOR
Ah, um, I just see her when I was
walking and think it might be a
picture.

MAURICE
Just like that you think it COULD
be a picture? Just walkin.

HECTOR
Si, yes.

MAURICE
And what about this one?

Maurice points to a picture of an old black man on a stoop, his face weathered and glistening with sweat. He is wiping his forehead with a handkerchief and holding a cigarette in the other hand.

HECTOR
I take from a distance, while
waiting for a bus.

MAURICE

You just see it!?

HECTOR

Si, yes,

JAMO

Yo, Maurice what we doin here, man?

Sirens break the moment, they look up, and police lights are seen coming down the street.

JAMO (CONT'D)

Time to go!

Maurice grabs the book and the camera and throws them back into the bag. He throws the bag over his shoulder, and grabs Hector by the arm and drags him along with the rest of the gang back into the schoolyard and down the side of the school. At a break in the school building, Maurice stops. Yelling AT the rest of the gang.

MAURICE

Head to the bar; I'll meet you guys there.

The gang looks a little puzzled, but seeing the police pulling up, they keep going. Maurice pulls Hector down the alley. Hector's even more distressed. They scurry down the alley, and the sounds of sirens echo.

Maurice pulls a lagging, out-of-breath Hector along. Hector falls to one knee and leans against the wall. Maurice is yelling and yanking on his arm as he struggles. This triggers a flashback in Hector.

BEGIN FLASHBACK 1 - STREET PROTEST

EXT. THE STREETS OF HAVANA - NIGHT

A 10-year-old child, Hector, is in the streets as a raucous demonstration occurs. It's chaos. It's the beginning of the revolution. A man is dragging young Hector by the arm down the street; protesters are marching, yelling, and simultaneously, a band on the street is playing. Big faces smoking big cigars are looking down at him. Finally, he is pulled down a side street to safety. Stopping momentarily, the man bends over to see if Hector is OK. He pushes him against a wall and jumps up on a crate to get high enough to take a picture or two of the demonstration. Then, he jumps down and grabs Hector by the arm again, whisking him down the alley away from the crowds.

END FLASHBACK 1

HECTOR

Look, look, I don't say nothing.
Take the bag.

MAURICE

Shut the fuck up, keep moving for
you get my ass popped.

They turn down another alley that leads to the street. Maurice stops at the corner edge of the building and peers down the street; all is clear. He settles against the building, lights a cigarette, and offers Hector one. Hector, taken aback, signals no and catches his breath.

HECTOR

Take the bag, look, I just go and
say nothing.

Maurice, his mind somewhere else, almost forgetting the situation, grabs open the bag on his shoulder and opens the book again. Stuck between two pages is Hector's business card. He grabs it. Hector, still catching his breath.

MAURICE

This you?

Hector looks at the card, then at Maurice, realizing he knows where his store is now. He doesn't say anything.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Yeah, this is you.

Maurice removes the bag and shoves it back at Hector, holding the card in his other hand.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna come see ya sometime.

Maurice looks both ways down the street again and heads down the street, leaving Hector on the corner of the alley. Hector, surprised, shaken, and disheveled, puts his bag over his shoulder, closes it up, and steps out of the alley. He walks a few steps down the street in the opposite direction and stands under a store awning to collect himself. Looking down the street to ensure Maurice is gone, he wipes his face with a handkerchief and starts a fast walk down the sidewalk, turning to ensure Maurice is not coming behind him.

INT. NIGHT - COMING INSIDE APARTMENT

From inside Hector's apartment, we hear struggling with keys. Hector opens the door, realizing he is making a racket. He tries to come the rest of the way in quietly and not wake up Maria. He goes to the kitchen, puts his bag on a kitchen chair, takes his coat off, and hangs it up on a hook. He

looks at his hands, and they are still shaking. He grabs a bottle of rum on the counter and a short glass from the cabinet. As he puts the glass down on the kitchen table, his hand still trembling, it falls over, making noise. He sits down and pours a drink. He leans over close to the glass and throws the drink back.

Just then, Maria enters the kitchen, woken by the noise. She rubs her eyes and looks at the stove clock.

MARIA
(In Spanish)
So late?

HECTOR
(In Spanish)

Yes, late. The party went late. She looks at the bottle in front of him, puzzled.

MARIA
(In Spanish)
What's wrong? What did you eat?

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
Oh, all is good. That rich American food. Too much.

MARIA
(In Spanish)
I told you not to overdo it.

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
Yes, yes, you're right.

Maria moves closer, they look into each other's eyes.

MARIA
(In Spanish)
You're tired, come to bed.

Hector grabs Maria's hand and kisses it.

HECTOR
(In Spanish)
I'll be right in, go to bed, go to bed.

Maria walks away and back to bed. Hector is left at the table to contemplate what happened. He stares off. In front of him on the wall, among other pictures, is a B&W picture of a young boy, Hector, 10 years old, standing next to his Father on a rural porch, leaning on a post. The camera pushes in towards the picture, then a close-up of Hector's face.

BEGIN FLASHBACK 2 - MEN HARASSING FATHER

EXT. - CUBA, RURAL HOME PORCH - DAY

A young Hector is standing on the porch with a concerned look. Off camera, the muffled sounds of three men arguing. Cut to the men standing on the road next to a car. Two large men arguing against the one with his back to us and the house. A slender man with a hat on. One of the two men puts his finger on the shoulder of the other, pushing him back some and knocking the man's hat off behind him. He stumbles back some and goes to pick up his hat. We see he is wearing a camera around his neck. It's Hector's Father. He sees the boy on the porch watching and quickly changes the distressed look on his face to a forced, uneasy smile in an attempt to console the worried boy. The other men also see the boy and decide to return to their car and leave.

END FLASHBACK 2

INT. - HECTOR'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A noise from garbage cans outside breaks the flashback. We zoom out from the top corner of the room, Hector finishing his drink, sitting at the kitchen table, staring at the wall.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. THE BACK OF THE STORE - DAY

It's business as usual at the store. Hector is happily working away. Thelma and Luis are working around him.

Maria calls to Hector from the front of the store as she finishes up with a customer.

MARIA
Hector...

Maria is looking beyond the customer, out to the street in front of the store. She calls out again, a little louder.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Hector?

Sensing that Hector isn't hearing her, she turns and sharply pulls back the curtain to the back of the store and leans in.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Hector! Someone is outside the
store!

>>> Contact howard@gobbsm.com for the full screenplay <<