

THE ARGENTINE

by
Peter Buchman

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OVER BLACK

The following words appear on screen:

In 1952, General Fulgencio Batista seized the Cuban presidency in a military coup and suspended free elections. Though Batista's corrupt dictatorship was supported by a 40,000 man army, a young lawyer named Fidel Castro attempted to incite a rebellion by attacking the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953. When his assault failed, he spent two years in prison before being exiled to Mexico. There, while planning his return to Cuba, Castro met an Argentine doctor who had fled the political turmoil of Guatemala. His name was Ernesto Guevara.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - PRE-DAWN

SUPERTITLE: TUXPAN, MEXICO NOVEMBER, 25 1956

Two men in civilian clothes march down a dirt road, carrying small packs.

One is ERNESTO GUEVARA, not yet known as Che. As this point, the twenty-eight year old Argentine looks more like the inexperienced doctor he is than the revolutionary icon he will become.

The other man is Che's close friend, NICO LOPEZ. He is four years younger than Che.

The two comrades climb a small rise and come to a halt. Both men are on edge as they scan the bank of a nearby river.

CHE
Where is it?

Nico indicates with a nod.

NICO
There.

As Che looks in that direction, a THIRD MAN comes up beside them. His face drops when he considers the sight.

THIRD MAN

That's taking us to Cuba? Fuck.

On the river before them is a sixty-five foot pleasure yacht, bearing the name: GRANMA. It hardly looks fit for the river, never mind the open sea.

EXT. GRANMA - GULF OF MEXICO - DAY

The Granma crashes through STORMY SEAS AND GALE-FORCE WINDS. The little yacht rises and falls with the steep, mountainous swells.

On the Granma's deck, the rough weather is clearly taking its toll. Many of the seasick rebels are moaning as they clutch their guts. Others are leaning over the side railing.

Unaffected by seasickness, Che is desperately searching through some medical supplies.

A GREEN-FACED REBEL approaches.

GREEN-FACED REBEL

They said you had pills. For my stomach.

But Che can't find what he's looking for. He shakes his head in frustration.

CHE

They must be back in Mexico.

Che turns to the sick rebel and hands him a canteen.

CHE

Have some water. But not too much. You'll get sick again.

The rebel nods a "thank you" and takes a sip of water. Then there's the sound of a sudden shouting.

DECKHAND (O.S.)

Water in the cabin!

As a DECKHAND emerges from the cabin below, a young FIDEL CASTRO - not yet sprouting his familiar beard - rushes his way. So does the boat's Dominican CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN

What is it?

DECKHAND

Must be a leak. She's taking water
like you wouldn't believe.

The Captain and Fidel look into the cabin. Sure enough, the
boat is quickly filling with water.

FIDEL

Check the pumps. Unload anything we
don't need. Anything. I'll get some
buckets.

The Captain nods.

MOMENTS LATER

The crew is throwing supplies into the water to lighten the
load.

EXT. GRANMA - GULF OF MEXICO - DAY

The storm has passed, and the gulf is calm.

In the Granma's cabin, a bucket scoops up some water from the
cabin floor.

The rebel holding the bucket passes up to another rebel. We
follow the bucket from one rebel to the next. A bucket
brigade is steadily clearing water from the cabin.

Che and Nico are among the line of rebels. Che's breathing is
becoming a bit labored.

Nico sees it.

NICO

Where's your inhaler?

Che shakes his head, not looking Nico in the eye.

OVER BY THE ENGINE, the Captain is making some adjustments to
the boat's motor.

An angry Fidel stands behind him.

FIDEL

You said ten knots.

CAPTAIN

Not with eighty people.

FIDEL

We need to reach Cuba by tomorrow.
There are people depending on it.

CAPTAIN

It's going to take another four
days - at least.

REBEL PLUMBER (O.S.)

Hey Fidel! We fixed the leak!

As some of the men clap their hands, Fidel turns to find a REBEL PLUMBER, standing beside the bucket brigade.

REBEL PLUMBER

Looks like it was coming from one
of those toilets. The hull is fine.

A beat as everyone realizes they've needlessly thrown supplies overboard. Then a handsome, easy-going rebel named CAMILO CIENFUEGOS cracks a smile.

CAMILO

It's Ramiro's fault, for plugging
up the toilet.

A number of rebels laugh, as RAMIRO VALDES gestures to Camilo.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

It has now been confirmed...

EXT. GRANMA - GULF OF MEXICO - NIGHT

The rebels are huddled about a small radio, listening intently. Che is among the group - his breathing still labored.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

*Despite heavy fighting at the
Police Station, the rebel forces of
the July 26th Movement have been
completely wiped out. The city of
Santiago is safe and secure. This
is Radio Havana reporting.*

A moment as the men consider the bleak news. Ramiro Valdes shakes his head.

RAMIRO

We should've been there.

EXT. GRANMA -- NIGHT

Some rebels sleep. Many are too hungry to do so.

Fidel talks to his loyal, younger brother, RAUL.

RAUL

The ham's rotting. We've still got
some eggs, a few sacks of oranges.
That's it.

A beat.

FIDEL

Ration all of it. The water too.

LATER

We follow an unpeeled orange as it is passed from one rebel to the next. Each fighter takes a piece and passes it on.

Camilo is last in line. He considers the last remaining slice of orange before finally putting it in his mouth. It is far from satisfying. This man can stand anything but hunger.

ELSEWHERE ON DECK, Che is in the throes of a severe asthmatic attack. He is on his back - desperately trying to take in oxygen.

Nico comes rushing over with a syringe and vial.

NICO

Is this it?

Che glances at the vial and nods.

Nico fills the syringe and hands it to Che. With Nico's help, Che manages to rise to a sitting position and give himself a shot of adrenaline.

There is no immediate change in his breathing.

JUST BEFORE DAWN

Che has managed to drift into a light sleep. Sensing another presence, he slowly opens his eyes.

Fidel is sitting nearby, watching over him.

FIDEL

How you feeling?

CHE

Good.

EXT. GRANMA - OFF THE SHORES OF CUBA - DAWN

The gulf is relatively calm. The sun is rising over the water.

At the Granma's bridge, the boat's captain stands at the wheel. Beside him, Fidel gazes through binoculars at the approaching shores of Cuba. Raul stands nearby. He's also gazing out at the approaching land.

RAUL

I don't see the lighthouse. Are you sure that's Cuba?

CAPTAIN

Positive.

Turning his binoculars toward the open water, Fidel suddenly stops. On the distant horizon, he can make out TWO SMALL CARGO SHIPS.

Fidel lowers his binoculars. He doesn't like the look of this.

FIDEL

(to the captain)

Head to shore as fast as you can.

RAUL

What is it?

FIDEL

They know we're coming.

The captain nods his head and opens the boat's throttle.

As the Granma speeds forward, we PAN PAST the Cuban rebels - loaded down with packs. Anticipation and fear are written on their faces.

By the time we reach Nico and Che, Che is trying to contain another asthmatic attack. It takes great effort for Che to lift his medical pack and put it on his shoulders.

By the time he's through, he looks up to find that the surrounding rebels are eyeing him with concern. One is JUAN ALMEIDA, a tough-looking rebel. Ramiro Valdes stands beside him.

JUAN ALMEIDA
How often does that happen?

CHE
I'm ready, che.

But Almeida isn't convinced. Then a YOUNGER REBEL turns to Che.

YOUNGER REBEL
How come you call everyone che?

NICO
He's from Argentina.

CAMILO
You know the quickest way to double your money? Buy an Argentine for what he's really worth and sell him for what he thinks he's worth.

As Che and Camilo consider each other, the boat suddenly SLAMS into something solid.

All around, rebels tumble to the deck.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - DAY

SUPERTITLE: *BELIC, CUBA DECEMBER 2, 1956*

In the heat of the mid-day sun, an exhausted group of rebels stumble their way through a twisted mangrove swamp.

Some of the men have already abandoned bazookas and machine guns in the torturous muck.

Juan Almeida is a workhorse - carrying the load of two.

Che, suffering from asthma and the weight of his medical supplies, rests against a mangrove bush. He looks behind him.

The last of the rebels struggle through the water, holding their rifles up as they move away from the stranded Granma.

Then, on the horizon, Che sees something else. One of the cargo ships is still in place. The other is sailing away.

Another EXHAUSTED REBEL walks up to Che. He's ready to drop.

Che looks up to find that Camilo is trudging past with Ramiro.

CAMILO
Need a rest, *che*?

The two rebels continue forward.

Despite his ragged breathing, Che forces himself to his feet and with an iron discipline, presses onward.

As the exhausted rebel stares after him, the sound of an approaching engine causes him to look up.

Over the canopy of trees, a government PLANE searches for the rebels.

EXT. PEASANT SHACK - DAY

Some rebels are sitting down on dry land now. Che catches his breath.

He watches as Fidel and Juan Almeida walk over to a small shack.

ANGEL, the shack's owner, seems afraid of the armed, young men descending on his property. Another rebel, UNIVERSO SANCHEZ, stands beside him. Universo is Fidel's personal bodyguard.

Fidel looks to Angel.

FIDEL
Don't be afraid. What's your name?
My name is Fidel Castro. These men
and I have come to liberate Cuba.

Angel nods, still wary.

ANGEL
Angel.

FIDEL
We'd like to buy some food from
you.

Angel is clearly confused.

ANGEL
You want to *pay*?

FIDEL
What do you do, Angel?

ANGEL
Cut cane.

FIDEL
Who own's this property?

ANGEL
The company.

FIDEL
But you work the land?

ANGEL
I have to.

FIDEL
You live the whole year on four
months pay.

ANGEL
Everyone does.

FIDEL
Where do you buy your sugar?

ANGEL
The company store.

FIDEL
And if you get sick, where do you
get medicine?

Angel doesn't answer.

FIDEL
See, the company is selling your
soul so they can line their
pockets. We're here to stop that.

As Angel glances around at the guerrillas, there is the sound
of explosions, coming from the coast.

Juan Almeida looks to Fidel.

JUAN ALMEIDA
Coast Guard.

FIDEL
Tell the men we're moving out.

EXT. THE EDGE OF A SUGARCANE FIELD - DAY

Che and his group of rebels collapse by a sugarcane field.

Having not had a decent meal for the past ten days, many of the famished rebels are eating the sugarcane.

Some are removing their bloody feet from stiff, new boots.

Che coughs, still struggling with his asthma. He is rubbing ointment on the cracked feet of an exhausted Nico.

NICO

These boots are useless.

Nico rises, and Che watches his friend hobble off to his post, carrying his boots.

Then a steady droning catches Che's attention.

High overhead, a SMALL PLANE flies past.

As Che curiously considers the plane, a BURST OF GUNFIRE suddenly breaks the quiet.

A moment of stunned silence. Then, from a wooded area, a tremendous onslaught of gunfire sends the rebels scattering in all directions. Trees EXPLODE all around them.

Some flee into the nearby woods, others into the sugarcane. Still others seemed too stunned to move. And many of them are struck by bullets.

Though Che's first few moments of battle are more terrifying than exhilarating, he seems to be calmer than most. With his adrenaline flowing, all signs of his asthma are gone. He drops to the ground and crawls behind a tree when a PANICKED REBEL drops a box of ammunition beside him.

Before Che can even comment, the panicked rebel sprints into the sugarcane.

Che picks up both his medical pack and the ammunition and struggles toward the cane field. He can't carry both loads. With bullets flying, Che drops his medical pack and pushes toward the field.

Just then, a bullet bounces off the ammo box and grazes Che's neck.

Beside him, another comrade is hit. The WOUNDED REBEL falls, shot in the face.

As Che crumbles to the ground - clutching his neck - not far off, he glimpses a courageous Camilo marching through the fray.

CAMILO
NO ONE SURRENDERS HERE!

Che barely seems to know where he is. The wounded rebel next to him is now lying dead on the field.

Suddenly, Juan Almeida is crouched beside him.

JUAN ALMEIDA
Pick up your rifle and plug your
wound.

As a dazed Che reaches for his gun, Juan yanks him to his feet and shoves him roughly toward the sugarcane.

JUAN ALMEIDA
Move.

Juan, Che, and a handful of rebels disappear into the cane. Ramiro is among the group.

INT. SUGARCANE FIELD - DAY

The rebels walk through the cane, as planes continue to strafe.

Amidst the noise and confusion, a FRIGHTENED REBEL is covering his ears and shouting.

FRIGHTENED REBEL
SILENCE!

Che follows Juan and the others out of the field and into a small, sheltering wood.

Behind them, they hear a terrible cry.

REBEL (O.S.)
FIRE!

Che glances back to see FLAMES AND SMOKE engulf the field.

ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE FIELD

Twenty of Batista's RURAL GUARD SOLDIERS are waiting with guns drawn.

Through the thick, black smoke, a group of coughing rebels - some of them wounded - scrambles out with their hands up.

A tense moment as the groups eye one another. Then Batista's army OPENS FIRE, killing the rebels.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A band of survivors - Che, Camilo, Ramiro, Juan Almeida, and a few others - stumble through the woods. They are thirsty, hungry, and beyond tired.

Suddenly, Juan Almeida comes to a halt.

JUAN ALMEIDA

Wait.

They can hear the faint strains of music drifting through the night. It sounds like a band.

Camilo lights up.

CAMILO

Let's go eat!

JUAN ALMEIDA

We can't show up at a fucking dance. Those peasants will talk.

CAMILO

They won't turn us in!

JUAN ALMEIDA

I'm not saying they'll turn us in. You know our people. They'll talk.

CAMILO

Fuck if they talk! We're going.

JUAN ALMEIDA

Like hell we are!

CAMILO

We need food.

The two men square off. Che doesn't think it's a good idea to go, but he wants to prevent a fight.

CHE

I'll go.

Almeida turns to him. After a moment, he reluctantly nods.

JUAN ALMEIDA
Take Ramiro.

Che nods.

EXT. WOODS NEAR THE PARTY - NIGHT

Che and Ramiro move stealthily through the dark.

The two men reach a barbed-wire fence. As they carefully make their way through the fence, suddenly, the music stops.

Che and Ramiro freeze, not sure if they've been caught.

Then, inside the nearby house, they can just make out a SOLDIER, rising to his feet with a drink in hand. They are clearly celebrating the massacre.

Ramiro and Che exchange a wary glance. Then, very carefully, they make their way back through the barbed-wire.

EXT. DOGTOOTH ROCK - DAY

The sun is scorching. Two army PLANES fly in the distance.

The exhausted rebels have made their way to the sea. They hide beneath a cliff.

Using the eyepiece from a telescopic sight, an intent Almeida is collecting rain water from a crevice in one of the rocks.

Che is dressing his own neck wound as best he can - with a piece of paper.

Over by a reef, a weak Camilo stumbles after several crabs. He finally manages to catch one, but gets only the claw.

CAMILO
Fuck!

Ramiro approaches.

RAMIRO
There's a shack up the road. No
sign of the army.

All eyes on Almeida. He thinks for a moment, then nods his assent. Camilo is clearly relieved.

INT. PEASANT HUT - DAY

ALFREDO GONZALEZ and his young WIFE, Seventh-Day Adventists, serve the rebels a stew.

One of their THREE DAUGHTERS, a four-year-old, stands nearby. Dirty and barefoot, she watches the rebels eat.

Che smiles at her, and she hides behind her mother, curiously peaking back at him.

Camilo is wolfing down his food with particular abandon.

ALFREDO

Sixteen more dead. The army killed them at Boca del Toro, *after* they surrendered.

Sitting on the floor, Che and the other rebels take in the bleak news.

Then, Juan Almeida, is suddenly overcome by a horrible nausea. He covers his mouth and rushes out of the hut.

As the other rebels listen to him vomit, suddenly, Camilo too is overcome by the same sickness.

Holding their guts, Che and the rest bolt also from the hut.

The family exchanges a glance as they listen to the sick guerrillas.

EXT. PEASANT HUT - DAY

A PASTOR rides up on a mule. A PEASANT WOMAN travels with him. So does a peasant named EUTIMIO GUERRA, who has volunteered to be a guide.

Alfredo and his wife greet the arriving guests. They open the door to their hut.

The peasant woman, carrying some plantains and a box of cigars, enters the hut.

She stops in the doorway, moved by the sorry state of the rebels - dirty, ragged, and pale.

The other peasants consider the rebels with curiosity as they step into the hut.

INT. PEASANT HUT - EVENING

The pastor, peasants, and rebels plan their next move. A few of the rebels are smoking cigars.

PASTOR
They say there's another group,
with Fidel.

The rebels turn to him in disbelief.

RAMIRO
Fidel's alive?

The pastor nods.

PASTOR
He's at the farm of Crescencio
Perez.

JUAN ALMEIDA
How far is that?

EUTIMIO
At the foot of the Sierra Maestra.
I can get you there in a couple of
days.

CAMILO
And get us past the army? How?

EXT. DIRT ROAD - ORIENTE PROVINCE - DAY

We are looking at the back of an open truck as it pulls away from us. The truck is packed with *GUAJIROS* - dirt poor peasants. The men wear beat-up palm-leaf hats and Huck Finn pants.

The guerrillas are mixed in with the peasants. So are a number of farm animals. Che himself is riding next to a small calf. He is barefoot.

EXT. ANOTHER DIRT ROAD - AFTERNOON

Still packed in the back of the truck, Che stares out at the passing countryside - scenes of extreme rural poverty.

Malnourished faces stare back at him. Barefoot children with distended stomachs.

EXT. PEREZ FARM - SUNDOWN

SUPERTITLE: **PEREZ FARM DECEMBER 20, 1956**

At a modest farm, a truck parks beneath a tree. Che's band of eight rebels meet up with Fidel's band of ten (also dressed as peasants). Raul and Universo are included in Fidel's group.

There is much laughter and embracing.

Off to the side, the guide, Eutimio, watches the joyful reunion. So does the gray-haired owner of this place, CRESCENCIO PEREZ.

But as Che himself heads toward the group, he suddenly stops, sadly considering the scene. Camilo walks up beside him.

CAMILO
Is *this* all that's left?

MOMENTS LATER

At the center of the gathering, stands Fidel, catching up with his comrades.

FIDEL
Juan Marquez?

JUAN ALMEIDA
Last I saw him, he was in the sugarcane.

FIDEL
Humberto?

Almeida shakes his head.

FIDEL
Nico?

A beat as Che realizes that Nico probably didn't make it.

CHE
We thought he was with you.

Many of the men shake their heads. After a long moment, Fidel nods with determination.

FIDEL

Did you listen to the way they were shooting at us?

Fidel looks to his grief-stricken men. The rebels don't know how to respond. Fidel mimics the staccato sound of gunfire.

FIDEL

They were terrified. They know that as long as there's one man - still willing to take a bullet for Cuba - that we will win this war.

The rebels are slowly infused with Fidel's unflagging optimism.

FIDEL

Batista claims he's wiped us out - that Fidel Castro is dead. We'll show them how the dead can fight.

Che and the men nod, ready to take on the world.

FIDEL

It's only fitting that the revolutionary army of Cuba is reunited as *guajiros*.

Fidel places a reassuring hand on the shoulders of his comrades.

FIDEL

Come with me. There's food for everyone. Bring your weapons...

CHE

I left our rifles with the pastor.

Fidel turns to him in surprise.

FIDEL

What?

CHE

He said he'd hide them for us.

Fidel can't believe his ears. His mood is quickly changing, and his eyes blaze.

FIDEL

Those guns are your only hope for survival. What would you do if you were attacked by the enemy?!

Che doesn't have an answer. He can barely look Fidel in the eye. Fidel shakes his head and scoffs - turns to the others.

FIDEL

You can't even pay for your mistake, because the price for abandoning those weapons is your life.

Fidel turns back to Che and takes the doctor's pistol from its holster.

FIDEL

You'll get this back when you've earned it.

EXT. PEREZ FARM - DAY

Standing around a nearby well, a number of rebels take a moment to wash themselves.

Che wipes his neck with a cloth and looks up. He sees Fidel on the far side of the farm.

THE FAR SIDE OF THE FARM

Fidel is talking to Crescencio Perez and one of his SONS.

FIDEL

I want a list of the worst overseers.

PEREZ

I'll do what I can.

Fidel nods.

FIDEL

What about the courier from Manzanillo?

PEREZ'S SON

Some new weapons should be arriving over the next few days.

FIDEL

Good. Recruits?

PEREZ'S SON

Six.

FIDEL

I want to attack Batista while he's still celebrating his victory.

PEREZ

Where?

FIDEL

It needs to be a garrison we can take - and somewhere remote, where they won't expect it.

EXT. CAMP - BY THE MAGDALENA RIVER - DAY

Fidel and Juan Almeida are teaching marksmanship to SIX PEASANT RECRUITS.

Many of them have never held a weapon. There are more men than guns. And no one is firing actual bullets.

LATER

Che has gathered a number of the new recruits.

CHE

How many of you know how to read and write?

No one raises their hand.

CHE

Come with me.

Che leads them over to a clearing. One recruit turns to another recruit.

PEASANT RECRUIT

Are we going to get thrown out?

The other recruit shrugs.

ONE HOUR LATER

Sitting on the ground, the recruits are scratching their letters in the dirt and repeating the sounds after Che.

Eutimio, the guide, is included in the group.

CHE

Aaaaaa...

RECRUITS

Aaaaaa...

CHE

Eeeeeee...

RECRUITS

Eeeeeee...

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

A peasant woman, EUGENIA, and her husband, QUIKE, are waiting under a palm tree. A stack of three books is sitting nearby.

They are approached by Che, Raul, and a few other rebels.

QUIKE

Here are the books, from Celia in Manzanillo.

He hands Che the stack of books.

RAUL

Books? What books?

QUIKE

For the doctor.

RAUL

Where's the other stuff?

From under her dress, Eugenia pulls out three sticks of dynamite, eight grenades, and four magazines of ammunition. Quike husband helps her.

The rebels put the armaments and books into canvas bags.

One of the books catches Raul's eye: THE HISTORY OF CUBA. He looks to Che.

CHE

For the students.

EXT. CAMP - BY THE MAGDALENA RIVER - NIGHT

Sitting around the embers of a fire, the rebels are talking and joking. The gregarious Camilo seems to be telling a story. The men laugh at his words.

Sitting on the edges of camp, Che quietly watches the other rebels. The Cuban history book is open before him.

EXT. CAMP - BY THE MAGDALENA RIVER - MORNING

Raul and Juan Almeida are handing out guns and bullets to a line of rebels. Each rebel is given only a handful of bullets.

The rebels are loaded down with packs, ready to march.

Che takes a moment with Ramiro, who is sitting on the ground, leaning against a stump.

The doctor is examining Ramiro's swollen knee. He doesn't like the look of it.

CHE

No. Sorry.

RAMIRO

I can't miss this fight.

CHE

If you march on this knee, you won't be fighting any fights.

Ramiro nods, sighing in frustration.

Not far off, Fidel converses with a Granma rebel named FAUSTINO PEREZ.

FIDEL

We need to get in the press.

FAUSTINO PEREZ

No Cuban is going to come out here and write a story on us.

FIDEL

Fuck, we go to the *Washington Post* if we have to. Promise them a first look at the Cuban revolution.

Faustino nods.

FIDEL

And send a message to Frank and Celia. I want to arrange a meeting with the Movement leaders.

FAUSTINO PEREZ

Where?

FIDEL
 The Sierra. After we hit the army,
 we'll make our way into the
 mountains.

Faustino shakes Fidel's hand and heads off.

Then Fidel turns to their peasant guide, Eutimio, who is standing nearby. He places a hand on their guide's shoulder.

FIDEL
 Are you ready to march, Eutimio?

EUTIMIO
 Always, sir...

FIDEL
 Call me Fidel.

EUTIMIO
 Can you tell me where I'm taking
 you?

FIDEL
 La Plata.

EXT. HILL OVERLOOKING LA PLATA - DAY

We are looking through the telescopic sight of a rifle. The zinc roof of the La Plata army barracks can be seen in the distance.

The barracks is currently under construction. A handful of HALF-DRESSED SOLDIERS are walking about.

The barracks is located in a clearing between the La Plata river and a Caribbean beach.

Fidel lowers the telescopic sight and consider the fort. Che and Juan Almeida stand beside him.

JUAN ALMEIDA
 If we don't take the barracks, we
 won't have the bullets to fight our
 way out of here.

FIDEL
 Then failure isn't an option.

Then TWO REBELS enter the clearing with TWO MALE PEASANTS. The rebels push the frightened peasants toward Fidel.

CUBAN REBEL #1
 (to the first peasant)
 Tell him.

The peasant looks to Fidel.

PEASANT #1
 Please, don't hurt us.

FIDEL
 Tell us the truth, and no one will
 hurt you.

The peasant nods, calming slightly.

PEASANT #1
 Chico Osorio is coming.

FIDEL
 Are you sure?

PEASANT #2
 Of all the company overseers, he's
 the worst. He burned down my house
 and shot one of my friends.

EXT. NEARBY TRAIL - ONE HOUR LATER

A drunk CHICO OSORIO is riding a mule.

After a few moments, a shout rises over the jungle.

UNIVERSO (O.S.)
 Halt, the rural guard! What's the
 password?

Chico comes to abrupt halt, scanning the nearby brush.

CHICO
 Mosquito.

Universo and two other armed rebels emerge from the brush.

EXT. CLEARING - LATE AFTERNOON

Universo and the two rebels escort Chico to a waiting Fidel Castro. He is trying to look as official as possible.

So do Che and the rest of the rebels, who stand nearby.

FIDEL
(introducing himself)
Colonel Rodriguez.

CHICO
Chico Osorio.

They shake hands.

FIDEL
I was sent here to find out why the
rebels haven't been wiped out.

CHICO
It's a pathetic situation. The
soldiers spend all their time in
the barracks. They're not tough
enough, even with the peasants.

FIDEL
But not you, I hear.

Chico smiles proudly.

CHICO
Let's just say that if I were
running this thing, I would've cut
the balls off of those rebels a
long time ago.

FIDEL
What about Castro. What would you
do if you ever caught him?

At the mention of Fidel, Chico runs his finger across his
throat.

Fidel nods. Then Chico lifts up his pant leg.

CHICO
See these shoes? I got them off one
of the rebels we shot at Boca del
Toro.

Chico considers the Mexican-made shoe. He's wearing a similar
pair. It's all the rebels can do not to jump on this guy
right now. The drunken Chico is oblivious to the reaction.

FIDEL
Will you come with us to the
garrison? You could help prove that
the soldiers have been negligent in
their duties.

CHICO

You take me to La Plata, and I'll show you where the sentries stand guard and where they sleep.

FIDEL

You're a credit to your country.

Fidel pats him on the back and ushers him forward.

As two other rebels escort Chico toward La Plata, Fidel takes a moment with Universo. The rebel commander whispers.

FIDEL

Right after the shooting starts.

Universo nods.

EXT. FIFTY YARDS FROM BARRACKS - LA PLATA - NIGHT

SUPRTITLE: LA PLATA JANUARY 17, 1957

We are in the middle of a fierce GUN BATTLE.

Fidel and his platoon of rebels are firing their guns at a nearby, palm-thatched house. Che is among the group.

The government troops are returning the steady fire.

Chico Osorio lies dead in a pool of blood.

Fidel take a break from the fighting and turns to Universo.

FIDEL

See if you can burn it down! We'll cover you!

Universo nods.

As Fidel and his men open fire, Universo picks up a torch and races toward the nearby house.

The intensity of the enemy forces him to duck for cover.

Then, from another platoon of rebels, Camilo darts toward the house with a torch in hand.

In the face of stiff resistance, Camilo, too, is forced to take shelter.

Then, before anyone realizes what's happening, Che dashes into the fray, torch in hand.

Seemingly oblivious to the bullets flying past, Che fearlessly races to the house, calmly lights his torch, and tosses it toward a nearby storehouse, full of coconuts.

The coconuts inside the storehouse quickly catch fire. The flames spread to the nearby house.

Afraid of being burned alive, a number of Batista SOLDIERS flee from the growing fire.

One of them nearly runs into Che, who reflexively fires his gun. The bullet pierces the man's chest, and he crumbles to the ground, mortally wounded.

As other Batista soldiers flee into the night, the approaching rebels overrun the area. Camilo is the first rebel into the house.

EXT. LA PLATA - ONE HOUR LATER

Lying on the ground are eight Springfield rifles, a Thompson machine gun, and a thousand rounds of ammunition.

Crouched nearby, Camilo picks up the machine gun. He glances at a nearby rebel.

CAMILO

Al Capone can suck on this.

Not far off, Che is treating five wounded army soldiers. Fidel approaches.

FIDEL

We're heading out. Leave all the medicine with the prisoners.

CHE

Shouldn't we keep some of it? They didn't exactly care for our wounded.

FIDEL

We'll never win over the soldiers if we treat them like they treat us.

EXT. CAMP - SIERRA JUNGLE - DAWN

After a long march, a number of rebels are taking a break. Too wired to sleep, they are celebrating their victory. Che and Camilo are both wearing Batista helmets.

Many rebels are smoking cigars, including their guide, Eutimio. Ramiro is heard as well, listening to the war stories.

CAMILO

A cigar! A cigar for the doctor!

Camilo hands Che a cigar and lights it for him.

Che puffs the cigar and coughs lightly. He's obviously a novice. The doctor looks out at his comrades. Though it doesn't come naturally, he attempts a joke.

CHE

Why can't an Argentine ever be pope?

The men consider him.

CHE

Because he'd only compete with God.

A beat as the joke lands. Then the men break into laughter.

As Fidel approaches, the laughter subsides. Their commander considers the Batista helmet on Che's head.

CHE

For Nico.

Fidel nods. Then he hands Che his old pistol.

FIDEL

For you.

Che takes the weapon.

Then Fidel turns to Eutimio and hands him two letters.

FIDEL

Eutimio, bring these to our courier and meet us on Caracas.

Eutimio nods.

FIDEL

For the rest of you, we march in an hour.

CAMILO

We're back from the dead, eh Fidel?

Fidel allows himself a cautious smile.

FIDEL

You did well, my friends. But we haven't won the war. Rest assured, the army will come looking for us.

EXT. AIRFIELD - CUBA - DAY

CAPTAIN SANCHEZ MOSQUERA stands on an airfield, watching a small plane slow to a halt.

A jeep and its DRIVER are parked nearby.

A figure emerges from the plane and heads toward the captain. This is MAJOR JOAQUIN CASILLAS - a powerful man with penetrating eyes. He is followed by a small entourage.

Captain Sanchez Mosquera salutes the approaching Major.

SANCHEZ MOSQUERA

Major Casillas. Welcome to the Sierra Maestra.

The two men make their way toward the jeep.

CASILLAS

General Batista wants the rebels exterminated. His words.

SANCHEZ MOSQUERA

Then I have permission to act as I see fit?

CASILLAS

Whatever it takes.

EXT. SIERRA MAESTA - DAY

A small village burns. There are dead peasants on the ground nearby. They look to have been executed.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

A group of guerrillas emerges from the jungle and slows to a halt. Smoke fills the distance sky. They hear the sound of distant gunshots.

On a dirt road before them scores of terrified, *guajiro* REFUGEEES are marching past, carrying their belongings. They don't look at the rebels standing nearby.

Che considers the scene. Ramiro is standing next to him. So is one of the new recruits.

CHE
What is it?

NEW RECRUIT
Casillas.

Che doesn't recognize the name.

NEW RECRUIT
His soldiers are on a rampage.
Burning farms, shooting any
suspected collaborators.

RAMIRO
After this, no *guajiro* will come
near us.

Che looks back to the fleeing peasants. Camilo is walking beside them.

CAMILO
This is just what he wants! Leave
what land you've got so he can take
that too.

They are too frightened to even look his way.

CAMILO
Stay - with us! Fight for what's
yours! How much longer are we going
to let this bastard kick us
around?!

But the refugees merely continue on their way.

CAMILO
You call yourselves Cubans?!

It's no use.

INT. PEASANT STORE - DAY

Eutimio is in a peasant store, buying some cigars from the STORE OWNER. As he pays the owner, Eutimio surreptitiously hands him the two letters Fidel gave to him.

EUTIMIO
For our friends in Manzanillo.

The owner nods. He is sweating nervously.

Not sure why the man is so agitated, Eutimio takes his cigars and exits the store.

EXT. PEASANT STORE - DAY

Eutimio leaves the store and comes to an abrupt halt. A BATISTA SOLDIER is standing before him.

BATISTA SOLDIER
Eutimio Guerra?

A wary Eutimio shakes his head.

But as the guide starts off in the other direction, here too he is brought to an abrupt halt.

TWO MORE SOLDIERS stand before him. One of them smiles.

EXT. STEEP TRAIL - DAY

The rebels are marching up a steep trail, further into the mountains of the Sierra Maestra.

Back with the rebels, a troubled Eutimio is leading the way. It is a grueling hike, and many of the men are showing signs of wear and tear.

Toward the back of the column, Ramiro's hurt knee is clearly slowing him down.

He himself brings up the rear. Though it is not a full-blown attack, his asthma is obviously bothering him.

EXT. DESERTED VILLAGE - DAY

He and the rebels are marching carefully through a deserted village.

The shacks and barns are completely empty, scared off by the army's threats. Even the animals are gone.

Suddenly, the men freeze. In the distance, they can just barely hear the sound of an approaching plane.

He and the rest of the men quickly duck into the shadows, look to the sky, and wait.

For the newer recruits, and some of the old, the tension is starting to get at them.

Then an army SEARCH PLANE flies past overhead.

EXT. CAMP - MOUNT CARACAS - DUSK

A rebel named LUIS CRESPO hurries into camp with a knapsack.

He approaches his comrades and quickly unloads his pack: sausages, plantains, and condensed milk.

He hands out the meagre rations to the famished men. Fidel and Che are among the group.

CRESPO

It was all I could buy before they started getting suspicious.

As the hungry rebels devour the food, Fidel speaks his mind.

FIDEL

Batista's terror will turn on itself. As long as we pay for any food, punish the worst of the overseers, and show the campesinos we can win this thing, in the end, the people will be with us.

EXT. CAMP - MOUNT CARACAS - NIGHT

Some of the rebels are lying down. Others are smoking the remnants of their cigars.

Che is cleaning his rifle. Sitting nearby is a rebel named MANUEL FAJARDO. He considers Che before speaking.

FAJARDO

You think we'll make it out of here?

CHE

Why are you asking me that?

FAJARDO

It's Moran. He wants to leave - he thinks we don't have a chance.

Che looks across camp. JOSE MORAN, a Granma veteran, is sitting across camp, smoking the butt of a cigar.

CHE
Did he ask you to go with him?

Fajardo nods.

ELSEWHERE IN CAMP

Fidel is sitting against a log, writing a letter.

Eutimio approaches. Though Fidel continues writing, he senses Eutimio's presence.

FIDEL
Yes.

EUTIMIO
I was wondering if I could leave for a few days, to see my mother.

FIDEL
(looking up)
Is there a problem?

EUTIMIO
(nodding)
It's her heart. She's not well.

Fidel nods.

FIDEL
Take some money for the trip. You can meet up with us at the Diaz farm.

As the guide nods his thanks and heads off, Che approaches.

CHE
Moran is trying to get the men to desert.

FIDEL
I know. He's testing their morale.

CHE
I don't understand.

FIDEL
There's a traitor in our ranks.

CHE
You think someone's telling the army where we are?

FIDEL
Wherever we go, they're never far
behind.

Beat.

CHE
I still don't trust Moran.

FIDEL
He was only doing what I asked.

CHE
There must be a more
straightforward way.

Fidel nods, thinking.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Fidel stands before his men.

FIDEL
I'm announcing three crimes that
will be punishable by death:
insubordination, desertion, and
defeatism.

Standing at the back of the crowd, Eutimio considers Fidel's words, then heads off into the night.

INT. SPOTTER PLANE - OVER THE SIERRA MAESTRA - DAWN

A PILOT is flying an army spotter plane low over the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. He glances to his right.

PILOT
You okay?

The man next to the pilot nods. It is Eutimio. The peasant guide has never been in a plane, and he's frozen in terror.

Up ahead, the plane is about to crash right into a mountain. Eutimio closes his eyes, bracing for impact. But the plane easily climbs over the impending obstacle.

When Eutimio pries open his eyes, he is gazing out at a beautiful mountain valley. The peasant stares amazed. And for the first time, forgets his fear.

EUTIMIO
I can see my farm.

PILOT
What about the rebels?

Eutimio tears his gaze from his distant farm and scans the mountains. After a few moments, he spots something. The peasant points to a place on a nearby mountaintop.

EUTIMIO
There! By that clearing!

The pilot glances in that direction and nods.

PILOT
Casillas is going to make you a
major for this.

As Eutimio considers his words, the pilot banks away from the rebel camp. Then the sound of EXPLOSIONS takes us into the next scene...

EXT. CARACAS CAMP - MORNING

The rebel camp is bombarded with BOMBS and MACHINE GUN FIRE.

Batista's FIGHTER PLANES swoop past overhead.

In the middle of the fray, Che is calmly racing forward beneath a hail of bullets. He darts from one place of cover to the next. He manages to pick up an abandoned rifle and pistol as he goes. Then he spots something across camp - some kind of small, black garment.

On the edges of camp, a band of rebels are hiding behind a stone wall. Juan Almeida and Camilo are among the group.

By the time Che reaches the last place of cover, he pockets the black garment and glances up at the sky.

One of Batista's planes is turning back toward the camp.

Che musters his strength, jumps to his feet, and charges forward.

Back at the stone wall, the tense rebels motion for Che to hurry up. But with the plane coming in, Che's legs seem to move in slow motion.

Almeida can't take it anymore.

JUAN ALMEIDA

MOVE!

The approaching plane spots Che and FIRES ITS MACHINE GUNS.

With a hail of bullets tracking his movement, Che just manages to leap to safety.

THE PLANE THUNDERS PAST.

At the stone wall, a panting Che takes a moment to catch his breath. Then he pulls out a black commander's hat and turns to his comrades.

JUAN ALMEIDA

Is that Fidel's?

Che nods.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - SUNDOWN

As the sun sets, the rebels slow to a halt in a forest clearing.

They are all on edge, listening intently to the sound of distant gunfire. The shots are closely followed by the unsettling sound of someone SCREAMING FOR HELP.

CAMILO

Must be Casillas's men.

Almeida nods.

JUAN ALMEIDA

Let's stop here for now. Fidel shouldn't be much further.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

The exhausted rebels are eating what meagre rations they have. Che takes a seat near Camilo, who has his own tin of food. A moment of silence.

CAMILO

Aren't you eating?

CHE

I lost my knapsack in the ambush.

Camilo carefully divides his food in half and offers it to Che. The doctor nods in appreciation. He knows how much Camilo likes his food.

CHE

Thank you.

They eat in silence.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - CUEVA DEL HUMO - DAY

Che's band of rebels is reunited with Fidel's forward column.

At the center of the gathering, Che and Raul warmly greet one another. Raul places a hand on Che's shoulder.

RAUL

Come on. Fidel wants to show you something.

Raul leads Che through the crowd.

THE EDGES OF CAMP

Fidel is standing with a peasant farmer, a campesino named LABRADA.

As Raul approaches with Che, Fidel looks to Labrada.

FIDEL

Tell him what you told me.

LABRADA

(to Che)

We saw Eutimio yesterday afternoon.

Che looks to him in surprise.

CHE

Here?

LABRADA

(shaking his head)

Near Caracas. He told us the whole area was going to be bombed.

Che looks to Fidel.

EXT. THE DIAZ FARM - MORNING

EPIFANIO DIAZ and his wife, MARIA MORENO are standing outside their modest farmhouse.

Fidel is leading his band of rebels toward the house. By now, the hair and beards on many of the men are getting noticeably longer.

Fidel approaches Epifanio and Maria and smiles.

FIDEL

Thank you for opening up your home to us.

EPIFANIO

Whatever we can do to help.

LATER THAT MORNING

Outside the farmhouse, the rebels are enjoying a meal of chicken and rice.

Fidel, Che, and Raul are talking with their two hosts.

MARIA

Faustino was able to get his hands on a journalist.

FIDEL

Which paper?

MARIA

The *New York Times*.

FIDEL

Excellent.

RAUL

Have you heard any more about Eutimio's whereabouts?

DIAZ

Nothing yet. But we have heard more reports about his collaboration with Casillas.

MARIA

He was picked up sometime after La Plata. We think they offered him money to kill Fidel.

A beat.

FIDEL

Don't let anyone know we're on to him. Eutimio will be back for more.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Fidel talks with Raul and the six other leaders of the July 26th Movement. Three are men, three are women. Having returned from Havana, Faustino Perez is among the group.

FAUSTINO PEREZ

What about opening a second front? In the Escambray? If we can divide Batista's forces -

FIDEL

We're not ready. We need to focus the bulk of our efforts right here. It's in these mountains that the war will be won. Give me twenty more armed men, and in two months, I can be launching a full-blown attack on a major army barracks.

EXT. CANEFIELD - DAWN

As the sun rises over the mountains, the Movement leadership is stretching outside of the shed.

Fidel himself is approaching the edge of the field.

Leaning against a tree, Che is waiting for him.

FIDEL

Fifty new recruits in two weeks.

CHE

Guns?

FIDEL

They've got a line on a stash in Havana.

Juan Almeida approaches.

JUAN ALMEIDA
Eutimio showed up at the farmhouse.

FIDEL
Take two men and arrest him.

As Almeida hurries off, Fidel turns back to Che.

FIDEL
In the meantime...how do we make
eighteen men look like an army?

EXT. WOODED CAMP NEAR DIAZ FARM - EARLY MORNING

SUPERTITLE: *THE DIAZ FARM FEBRUARY 17, 1957*

The distinguished *New York Times* journalist, HERBERT MATTHEWS (late fifties), stands in a wooded camp.

Two young GUIDES stand nearby. So does JAVIER PAZOS, a young translator.

A handful of rebels are milling about. Raul is among them.

Fidel approaches on foot, with his telescopic rifle slung over his shoulder. He is a commanding figure.

HERBERT MATTHEWS
Mr. Castro?

Fidel nods.

HERBERT MATTHEWS
Herbert Matthews, *New York Times*.

The men shake hands.

HERBERT MATTHEWS
You look pretty good for a dead
man.

As Javier translates, Fidel smiles. When he speaks, it is in English.

FIDEL
Welcome to the Sierra Maestra.

HERBERT MATTHEWS
That's an impressive weapon you're
carrying.

Fidel considers his rifle.

FIDEL

It can hit a man from a thousand yards away.

EXT. WOODED CAMP NEAR DIAZ FARM - DAY

Fidel and Matthews are sitting on a blanket. Javier sits nearby, translating the interview. A news PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures as they talk.

Fidel offers the reporter a cigar, lights it, and then lights his own. When Fidel speaks, his voice is hushed.

FIDEL

I apologize for having to whisper. But there are government columns all around us.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

Not at all. You were telling me how you first rallied the last twelve men from the Granma and started hitting back.

FIDEL

We've been fighting for seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever. The morale of the government troops is very low, and Batista's terrorism is arousing the anger of the *guajiros*.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

Have you taken many prisoners?

FIDEL

It's not our policy. We take their arms, tell them about the revolution, and set them free.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

How many men has Batista marshalled against you?

FIDEL

At the moment, three thousand. He works in columns of two hundred, we work in groups of ten to forty. It's a battle against time, and time is on our side.

EDGES OF WOODED CAMP

Che stands with most of the eighteen band of men that comprises the rebel army. They're trying to look presentable, tucking in their shirts and wetting down their hair.

Then Che notices the back of Manuel Fajardo's shirt. It is torn to shreds. He shoots Fajardo a look.

FAJARDO

It's from my knapsack.

Che nods his head and sighs.

CHE

Don't let him see your back.

Fajardo nervously nods.

BACK TO FIDEL

Herbert Matthews continues his interview.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

How is it that so few people know you're out here?

FIDEL

The Cuban people never hear a word about us, because of censorship. You will be the first to tell them.

As Fidel talks, we see a group of rebels marching past. In an effort to hide his torn shirt, Fajardo is walking sideways.

FIDEL

I have followers all over the island. All the best elements, especially the youth, are with us.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

Where does Batista get his arms?

FIDEL

From the United States, unfortunately. And Batista uses those arms not only against me, but against the Cuban people.

Then Raul approaches with the rebel named Luis Crespo.

RAUL

Excuse me, Comandante, there's a message from our Second Column.

Fidel looks to the messenger from the fictitious column.

FIDEL

When I'm finished.

Raul nods his head and walks off with Crespo.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

The 26th of July Movement talks of nationalism, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism. Do you have anything to say about that?

FIDEL

We're anti-imperialist if it means wanting to free Cuba of its economic chains. But we have no animosity toward the United States and the American people. We are fighting for a democratic Cuba, a restoration of the Constitution, and an end to the dictatorship.

MOMENTS LATER

Fidel is escorting Matthews and his entourage to the camp entrance. A jeep is waiting nearby.

As the two men talk, in the background we see the same group of rebels marching past. Fajardo is still walking sideways.

Matthews looks to Fidel.

HERBERT MATTHEWS

Thank you for your time. I'm anxious to tell the world what I've seen here.

FIDEL

Thank you.

The two men shake hands.

As Matthews walks off with his escort, Che and Raul approach Fidel. The three men consider the departing reporter.

CHE

What do you think?

FIDEL
Batista won't know what hit him.

EXT. WOODED CAMP - DUSK

Juan Almeida and Camilo shove Eutimio into camp. The guide's hands are tied behind him.

As the other guerrillas gather around, Eutimio stands before Fidel. The peasant is staring at the ground with a grim expression.

He finds a place at the back of the gathering.

As the scene plays out, a storm is getting closer. Thunder rumbles in the distance, and the first drops of rain are beginning to fall.

Almeida holds up a pistol.

JUAN ALMEIDA
He had this forty-five, three
grenades, and a safe-conduct pass
from the army.

Almeida hands the pass to Fidel.

JUAN ALMEIDA
It's signed by Casillas.

CAMILO
He's been ratting us out for weeks.
Confessed to everything.

Fidel reads the pass and shakes his head. He looks to Eutimio.

FIDEL
Do you have anything to say?

Eutimio stands in the rain - still staring at the ground. He seems to have already accepted his fate.

EUTIMIO
Promise me that when the revolution
wins, it will take care of my
children.

Fidel nods his head, then turns to Universo.

FIDEL
The penalty for treason is death.

Universo shifts uncomfortably. Despite Eutimio's crimes, no one is eager to kill this man.

Che steps forward, pistol in hand.

EXT. NEAR THE WOODED CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

In the rain, Eutimio drains a bottle of rum.

Che and Universo stand in front of him.

CHE

I can say in your favor that you have recognized your error and not asked for clemency.

Che levels his pistol at their peasant guide. As the doctor pulls the trigger, there is a flash of LIGHTNING and a CRACK OF THUNDER. Though we see Eutimio fall, we cannot hear the shot.

EXT. WOODED CAMP - LATER THAT NIGHT

The rebels sleep.

With a plastic tarp protecting him from the rain, Che lies on the ground, wheezing. His asthma is keeping him awake.

EXT. HILLS NEAR EL UVERO - CUBA - EVENING

SUPERTITLE: *EL UVERO MAY 27, 1957*

Fidel is standing before the largest group of rebels we've yet seen, nearly ONE-HUNDRED, FORTY MEN. Che is among them.

FIDEL

Take the barracks at El Uvero, and we will send a psychological blow to the enemy that will be felt across the country. If there's anyone who doesn't feel up to this task, now is your chance to leave.

As Fidel's words ring out, A HANDFUL OF NERVOUS REBELS slowly break away from the column and make their way into the woods.

FIDEL

To the rest of you, good luck.

MOMENTS LATER

Along with the rest of the men, Che is preparing to march. Fidel approaches.

FIDEL

You'll be in charge of one of the new Madsens. Choose a squad to help you out.

Che nods his head, and Fidel walks off.

Che approaches one of the Madsen machine-guns, lying nearby.

ELSEWHERE IN CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Che is carrying two heavy bags of ammunition. He approaches two new recruits.

One barefooted boy is JOEL IGLESIAS. The other is THE LITTLE COWBOY, a small youth with a large straw hat. Joel is in his mid teens. The Little Cowboy is just over twenty.

CHE

You know how to read?

LITTLE COWBOY

(lying)

Sure.

Che is clearly dubious, but he tosses the two heavy packs to the ground anyway.

CHE

Can you carry those?

Both boys quickly pick up the knapsacks. Che nods.

CHE

Come with me.

Che heads off.

Joel and the Little Cowboy exchange an excited glance and follow after him. When Joel catches up to Che, he looks to the doctor.

JOEL

When do we get guns?

CHE
When you've earned them.

EXT. FLAT GROUND - BATTLE OF EL UVERO - DAWN

Che is crawling forward on his stomach as enemy fire whips past all around.

Che makes his way to a nearby pile of logs. The rest of his squad is close behind.

Joel and the Little Cowboy are helping to carry Che's ammunition.

Che sets up his machine-gun, sees a couple of fleeing Batista soldiers, and fires at them.

Though the soldiers manage to get away, Che's fire has managed to attract the attention of the soldiers in a guard house.

As the soldiers fire at Che's squad, the rebels suddenly hear the sound of shouting among their nearby ranks. Che looks to Joel.

CHE
What is it?!

In the distance, Joel can see Juan Almeida being carried from the field.

JOEL
Almeida's been hit!

CHE
We've got to open up a path to that barracks!

The men nod, determined.

Che pulls out a stick of dynamite, lights it, and tosses it at the guard house.

The rebels wait for the explosion, but nothing happens. One of them peeks out at the stick of dynamite, lying in the distance.

CUBAN REBEL
It didn't light!

By way of a response, the Little Cowboy snatches up the lighter and jumps over the logs.

CHE

Roberto!

But it's too late. The fearless peasant is already dashing through enemy fire. With a recklessness to rival Che himself, the Little Cowboy just manages to reach the dynamite.

Oblivious to the bullets flying past, the Little Cowboy calmly relights the fuse, tosses the stick, and falls to the ground.

THE GUARD HOUSE EXPLODES.

From behind the logs, Che watches the destruction. Without breaking a sweat, the Little Cowboy hops back to his position. As Che considers his courageous, young fighter, the sound of a nearby commotion causes him to turn toward the field.

With the loss of the guard house, Raul's troops are indeed pressing their advantage. As they attack the main barracks, enemy soldiers can be seen coming out of the building with their hands raised.

EXT. STABLE - MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL - DAY

Wounded rebels are scattered about an abandoned stable. Some have been treated. Others have not.

Now wearing his doctor's coat, Che is tending to Juan Almeida. The man has been shot in the shoulder, head, and leg.

CHE

One bullet wasn't enough?

Almeida musters a smile. Then Camilo approaches.

CAMILO

Hey, Che! We're moving out.

Che turns to him in disbelief.

CHE

What?

CAMILO

Before the army gets here.

CHE

Most of these men can't even walk.

Camilo considers the wounded rebels and nods before exiting.

ELSEWHERE IN CAMP

Fidel is preparing to head out. Che approaches.

CHE

If we move the wounded, some of them won't make it.

FIDEL

We don't have a choice.

CHE

Then let me stay behind - with anyone not yet ready to march.

FIDEL

It's too risky.

CHE

There must be a safe place we can get to. We can give the men time to recuperate, then make our way back to the main column.

A beat.

FIDEL

All right. I'll see if I can get you some trucks.

CHE

(nodding)

We'll need a guide.

FIDEL

Take Sinesio. Go to the house of Israel Pardo. His family has been quite helpful.

Che nods.

FIDEL

Be careful. Once Casillas learns about El Uvero, his men will be looking under every shrub in the Sierras.

EXT. WOODS - JUST OFF A DIRT ROAD - DAY

An army SEARCH PLANE passes over the canopy of trees.

Five wounded men waiting to be transported. Juan Almeida is one of them. Three of the men can't walk.

Five healthy rebels are also accompanying Che on his journey. Including in the group are Joel, the Little Cowboy, and JOAQUIN, a stocky, good-natured peasant.

A grim Che stares down the road, waiting for the arrival of their trucks. Their guide, SINESIO, walks up beside him and also looks down the road.

SINESIO

They're three hours late. What do we do?

CHE

(beat)

Walk.

Sinesio turns to him in surprise.

SINESIO

All the way to Pardo's? How are we going to carry the wounded?

But Che is already heading toward his men. Joel turns to him as he passes.

JOEL

When do I get my gun?

Che doesn't even look back.

EXT. STEEP JUNGLE TRAIL - DAY

Che, Joaquin, Joel, and the Little Cowboy are carrying a wounded rebel in a makeshift stretcher. The wounded man is lying in a hammock.

It is grueling work. The rebels grunt and groan as they force their heavy burdens up the steep trail. Che's asthma is causing him trouble.

CLEARING AT THE TOP OF THE TRAIL

The rebels finally reach a clearing at the top of the trail. They carefully lower their burden the ground and collapse in an exhausted heap.

Four other wounded rebels are already waiting in the clearing. Two of them are also lying in hammocks.

Che is on his feet, breathing slowly, trying to calmly take in oxygen.

Then the guide, Sinesio, approaches from the nearby jungle. Three men are with him. One is ISRAEL PARDO, the young man they are trying to meet. The others are TWO PEASANT VOLUNTEERS.

SINESIO

I found help.

Che offers his hand to Israel Pardo.

CHE

Che Guevara.

ISRAEL

Israel Pardo.

As they shake hands, Che nods in relief.

EXT. PARDO FARM - DAY

Che's group of rebels are hungrily eating beans and rice outside of a poor farmhouse.

Still slightly asthmatic, Che stands with Israel.

Off to the side, Israel's younger brother, GUILLE PARDO is watching Che curiously.

ISRAEL'S WIFE approaches with a plate of cooked chicken.

ISRAEL'S WIFE

We killed a chicken.

CHE

You're very kind. But please, divide it among the men.

The woman nods and walks off. Che looks to Israel.

CHE

Is it okay if we rest here for a bit? Until the wounded are stronger.

ISRAEL

Take all the time you need.

THAT NIGHT

The rebels are taking a break, smoking cigars.

Che himself is sitting near their hosts. The two peasant volunteers are here as well. One man's name is BANDERA. The older of the two is FELICIANO.

Again, the young Guile quietly watches the scene.

Che is smoking *clarin* leaves, a local remedy for asthma.

ISRAEL'S WIFE

Is the *clarin* helping?

CHE

(nodding)

A bit. Thank you.

Che glances around at the impoverished farm and looks to Israel.

CHE

You own this land?

ISRAEL

(shaking his head)

Rent.

CHE

Does anyone here own their plots?

The other peasants shake their heads.

BANDERA

They keep the good land for themselves.

ISRAEL

That's why we cut cane. If we're lucky, we grow enough to feed our families. But we've still got to cover the rent.

Che nods.

CHE
You know how much land is owned by
Batista alone?

No one does.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - ARMY CAMP - DAY

Outside a well-kept farmhouse, Major Casillas takes a moment with Sanchez Mosquera.

SANCHEZ MOSQUERA
I'm closing in on Castro, sir. I
can feel it.

CASILLAS
You said that before.

SANCHEZ MOSQUERA
It's the *guajiros*. Without their
support, Castro would dry up. If I
can evacuate them, I can cut off
his support and open up the zone
for a major assault.

CASILLAS
Then do it.

EXT. PARDO FARM - DAY

Che has set up a temporary health clinic. A long line of peasants wait to see the doctor. The young Guile Pardo is assisting him.

Che is examining a FEMALE PATIENT, who sits on a table.

The woman's curious LITTLE GIRL stands by Che's side, closely watching everything he does.

After listening to the woman's heart, Che examines her teeth and gums. He nods in consternation.

FEMALE PATIENT
What is it?

CHE
Too much work and not enough to
eat. I'll give you some vitamins.

As Che reaches for the pills, the woman nods her thanks and heads off with her little girl.

Guile turns to Che.

GUILE

You say the same thing to everyone.

CHE

Because they all suffer from the same disease.

As Guile considers this, Sinesio approaches Che.

SINESIO

You're not going to believe this.

THE EDGES OF THE FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Sinesio leads Che to a group of FIFTEEN PEASANT RECRUITS. Many are armed with shotguns or hunting rifles.

CHE

Who are they?

SINESIO

Recruits - from Bayamo.

CHE

Out here?

SINESIO

They're lost.

One of the recruits looks to Che.

PEASANT RECRUIT

We're looking for Fidel.

One recruit in particular catches his eye. The young man's name is POMBO.

CHE

Where's your weapon?

POMBO

Don't have one.

CHE

How do you expect to fight Batista?
With your fists?

The men snicker, and Pombo is stung.

CHE
 Anyone with a gun is welcome to
 come with us. Anyone else better
 find one first.

As Che walks back toward the farm with Sinesio, the peasants with guns are heading after him.

Pombo is left behind with two other unarmed peasants.

EXT. PARDO HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

The rebel band is prepared to march. The three most seriously wounded men, including Almeida, are now on their feet.

The young Guile Pardo is among the group, ready to march. Che stops before the nervous youth.

CHE
 What are *you* doing?

GUILE
 Coming with you.

CHE
 We don't slow down for anyone.

GUILE
 You won't have to.

Che turns to the rag-tag bunch standing before him.

CHE
 We've got a difficult march ahead.
 Sometimes we will eat, sometimes we
 won't. And the enemy will always be
 close. If any one wants to leave,
 now's the time.

A moment as Che considers his men. No one leaves.

Che nods his head and starts off. As he marches past Joel, he hands him a twenty-two rifle.

CHE
 Don't lose it.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - DAY

SUPERTITLE: *SIERRA MAESTRA JUNE 15, 1957*

Che and his growing band of rebels make their way through the Sierra Maestra.

Che approaches the Little Cowboy and the rebel named Joaquin.

CHE
(to the Little Cowboy)
How well do you know the area?

LITTLE COWBOY
I can smell my way through these mountains.

CHE
(dubious)
I thought you were from Moron.

LITTLE COWBOY
(shrugging)
Mountains are mountains.

CHE
I want you and Joaquin a hundred yards in front of us at all times - whatever it takes to spot the army before they spot us.

The Little Cowboy nods his head and starts off with Joaquin. Then Joel approaches Che from behind. The young rebel is feeling a bit cocky with his new rifle.

JOEL
Hey, Doc'. Got a cigarette?

Che keeps right on walking.

CHE
When you write it down.

JOEL
What?

CHE
Cigarette.

JOEL
But I don't write.

CHE
Then you don't smoke.

As Che marches on, Joel is left shaking his head.

JOEL
Motherfucker.

EXT. ABANDONED FARM - DUSK

At the end of an exhausting day, Che and his rebels are huddled about a small transistor radio, listening intently.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)
*Today in Estrada Palma, heavy
clashes occurred between the army
and rebel forces. In one skirmish,
Fidel Castro's brother, Raul, was
seriously wounded.*

Che and the men consider the troubling news. Almeida shakes his head and looks to Che.

JUAN ALMEIDA
We need to get there.

As Che nods, Joaquin and the Little Cowboy enter the camp. Joaquin's face is grim.

JOAQUIN
Looks like the army finally showed
up.

THE EDGES OF THE ABANDONED FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Che catches up with Joaquin and the Little Cowboy.

Off to the side stands Guile Pardo, listening in.

CHE
Where?

LITTLE COWBOY
Camped in a valley - just over the
next ridge.

CHE
Can we go around them?

LITTLE COWBOY
Not without being seen.

CHE
What about Turquino?

JOAQUIN
No way. Even if we could drag the wounded over that mountain, we couldn't carry enough to feed 'em.

Che considers his options, then looks to Guile.

CHE
Can you send word to some of the other farmers?

GUILE
They're still terrified of Batista. No one wants to be labeled a collaborator.

CHE
If we lose this war, they'll have more to fear than that.

Guile nods.

GUILE
I'll see what I can do.

As Guile rushes off, the Argentine turns to find that Pombo is standing nearby. We haven't seen him since Che rebuked him at the farm.

CHE
Got yourself a gun?

Pombo pulls out a pistol. Che takes the weapon.

CHE
You'll get it back when you've earned it.

EXT. MOUNT TURQUINO - DAY

Che and his men are climbing over the peak of Mount Turquino.

Che pauses in his tracks. He looks back at his growing column of men. In addition to the wounded rebels and new recruits, there is also a number of PEASANT FARMERS and their mules, loaded down with food.

Che considers his peasant and rebel force, working together as a team. Then he takes in the incredible view.

The island of Cuba stretches out before them.

Che breathes deeply. Despite the altitude, all traces of his asthma are gone.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - WEST OF TURQUINO - DAY

Che leads his troops into the Fidel's main camp. Both columns have grown since we've last seen them.

It is a happy reunion. Che is particular pleased to see Raul.

CHE

We heard you were wounded.

RAUL

Actually, if you believe the news, I'm probably dead.

Raul leads him to a nearby recruit.

RAUL

Here. There's a new recruit I want you to meet.

DR. JULIO MARTINEZ PAEZ looks to Che and holds out his hand.

DR. PAEZ

Doctor Julio Paez.

Che shakes his hand, smiling.

CHE

It's good to see you, Doctor. We can use the help we can get.

As the doctor nods in appreciation, a nearby voice causes Che to turn.

CAMILO (O.S.)

I smell an Argentine.

Camilo approaches, gestures to the new recruits.

CAMILO

Who are all these guys?

CHE

My troops.

Camilo considers the motley assortment of walking wounded and new recruits.

CAMILO

Well, while you and "your troops" were taking nature hikes, we were chasing Sanchez Mosquera off Turquino.

RAUL

You're standing on our first Free Territory.

CHE

So where's Fidel?

CAMILO

Signing some sort of pact.

CHE

With who?

RAUL

(hesitating)
Chibas and Pazos.

EXT. FIDEL'S TENT - DAY

Not far off, Fidel is shaking hands with RAUL CHIBAS and FELIPE PAZOS, two moderate politicians from Havana.

Fidel smiles at the men, says goodbye, then heads back toward his tent.

Che is waiting for him by the entrance. Fidel smiles, placing a hand on his comrade's shoulder.

FIDEL

I hear you picked up some new recruits.

CHE

I hear you chased Sanchez Mosquera out of the Sierras.

FIDEL

We almost had that son-of-a-bitch surrounded.

INT. FIDEL'S TENT - DAY

Fidel and Che are in mid conversation.

CHE

I don't understand how you can even meet with them, let alone make a deal with them.

FIDEL

They're fighting the same guy.

CHE

You're the one fighting. They're waiting.

FIDEL

Maybe. But they have supporters, people I can't afford to alienate. Yet.

CHE

You win the war with Chibas, he'll hand the keys over to the Yankees.

FIDEL

When this thing is won, *no one* will be handing over any keys to anybody. I guarantee it.

Che nods, placated.

FIDEL

C'mere. There's something I need you to sign.

Che follows Fidel. A letter sits on top of the table. It has a number of signatures already on it.

FIDEL

It's a condolence letter to Frank. His brother was killed in Santiago.

Che nods his head and picks up a pen.

FIDEL

Put down...Comandante.

Che looks at him.

FIDEL

I'm forming a second column, to shore up the Free Territory. I want you to lead it.

Che nods and signs his name with his new rank: COMANDANTE CHE GUEVARA.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - WEST SIDE OF TURQUINO - DAY

A intent Che is marching through camp with a large, canvass bag. He reaches a hospital tent where a number of wounded rebels are recovering.

Doctor Paez is in the process of examining a PATIENT.

Che approaches the doctor and hands him the canvass bag. The doctor considers the bag and looks to Che.

DR. PAEZ
What is it?

CHE
My doctor's bag.

Che exits and the doctor opens the bag to look inside. His expression indicates there isn't much in the bag to use.

EXT. EDGES OF TURQUINO CAMP - DAY

Che's column of seventy-five men is preparing to march. Most of the rebels who marched with him over Turquino are included in the group.

We see a number of familiar faces: Joel, the Little Cowboy, Guile, Pombo, and Joaquin.

Ramiro Valdes, the Granma veteran, is here as well.

Fidel takes a moment with Che.

FIDEL
Set up a base in El Hombrito.
Attack any columns that enter the zone.

Che nods, and the two men shake hands.

CHE
I'll be in touch.

But as Che starts to march off...

FIDEL
Oh, and Che...

The Argentine turns to him.

FIDEL

Don't always put yourself in the front line. That's an order.

Che reluctantly nods.

MOMENTS LATER

Che is standing before his men.

CHE

No one leaves a wounded comrade on the field. If you abandon your gun in combat, you will go back and get it - alone. Fall asleep on guard duty, and you'll go three days without food. Are there any questions?

Che looks out at his silent men. When there is no response, Che starts off.

When their leader departs, a few of the men shake their heads, clearly unhappy with Che's strict set of rules.

EXT. TRAIL - FURTHER INTO THE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Che's troops march through the Sierra Maestra. It is a difficult trek, and many of the men are starting to lag.

Despite his slight wheezing, Che himself is setting the grueling pace.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Che and his men take a break in a jungle clearing.

Che stays on his feet as the exhausted men collapse to the ground.

The commander is quickly approached by Joel and the Little Cowboy.

JOEL

We think Ibrahim deserted.

LITTLE COWBOY

He went off to take a piss and never came back.

CHE
Did he take his gun?

Joel nods.

CHE
If you find him, shoot him.

At first, the two young men blanch at the order. Then they nod their heads and hurry off.

EXT. HILLSIDE CLEARING - DAY

Che is standing before his troops on a hillside clearing. Lying in the dirt is a DEAD RECRUIT.

CHE
This man could've easily revealed our location to the army. When someone abandons their post, they're not just betraying the revolution, but the lives of everyone here.

Che lets his words sink in, then continues up the hill.

As his men follow in his footsteps, they look down at the dead soldier with solemn expressions. Guile and Pombo are among the passing faces.

So are few of the unhappy men we noticed earlier. They exchange glances, obviously chafing under Che's rigid command.

EXT. VALLEY OF EL HOMBRITO - SUNSET

Che and his men slow to halt in the valley of El Hombrito.

As his tired men let their heavy packs fall to the ground, Che considers the remote valley - protected by high mountain walls on either side.

As Che nods, Ramiro comes up beside him.

CHE
This is it.

EXT. RIVER BANK - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

Che is standing next to a river.

TWO FORMER STUDENTS from Havana stand nearby. One of them is pointing toward the rushing water.

STUDENT #1

You could put the dam right there.

CHE

I want enough electricity for the whole zone.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

SUPERTITLE: *EL HOMBRITO AUGUST 3, 1957*

Che and the two students walks through a bustling camp.

A number of large structures are already coming together. They are being built by teams of rebels and peasants. Some of the rebels are wearing the peasants's palm-leaf hats.

ELSEWHERE IN CAMP

Che is walking before THIRTY-FOUR PEASANT RECRUITS.

The young recruits are nervously hoping to pass the Argentine's inspection. His eyes seem to take in every detail.

Che stops before a seventeen-year-old PEASANT GIRL.

CHE

Combat?

She nods, staring forward with steady eyes. Che moves to the peasant next to her.

This is a short, stout teenager named URBANO. He shifts nervously.

CHE

What have you came here for?

URBANO

Same as you.

Che nods. This seems as good an answer as any. He turns to the rest of the men.

CHE

All right, listen up! Since none of you have guns, I can only take twelve. One, two, three...

Che points out twelve recruits from the bunch, including Urbano and the young woman. When he's finished he turns to the rest.

CHE

For the rest of you, feel free to try again later!

As Che marches off with his new recruits, we hear the voice of a RADIO NEWS REPORTER.

RADIO REPORTER (V.O.)

The government confirms reports that Ernesto Guevara is leading a rebel column in the Sierra Maestra...

INT. REBEL CAMP - EL HOMBrito - NIGHT

A number of the rebels are gathered around a small radio, listening closely to a government broadcast.

Some of the disgruntled rebels we've seen before are among the group. So are the Little Cowboy, Pombo, Guile, and Urbano.

RADIO REPORTER (O.S.)

A hired mercenary for international communist forces, Guevara is already responsible for the murder of numerous army prisoners.

As the report ends, someone turns off the radio. A moment as the men consider the news. Then one of the DISGRUNTLED REBELS speaks up.

DISGRUNTLED REBEL

You think he's really a communist?

EXT. PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Che is reading a book by Lenin and enjoying a cigar.

Pombo nervously approaches. He considers the book and waits for his reading commander to acknowledge him. Finally:

CHE
Yes?

POMBO
Who was Lenin?

CHE
A leader.

POMBO
Russian?

Che looks up, nods.

CHE
He fought for his people, like Jose
Marti.

Pombo takes this in.

CHE
Do you read?

Pombo nods. Che is glad to hear it. He hands Pombo the book.

CHE
Then see for yourself.

EXT. CLEARING NEAR EL HOMBRITO - DAY

Che and the veterans are instructing a number of new recruits in weapons handling.

At the moment, Che is helping Urbano, who is aiming his rifle at a distant bottle.

When Urbano pulls the trigger, the bottle bursts into pieces. Che nods, impressed. Urbano beams.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Inside a one-room schoolhouse, A FEMALE TEACHER is teaching the alphabet to a number of the rebels.

Joel is included in the group, taking an honest stab at learning. So is Urbano.

A number of male and female peasants are here as well. More and more, the rebels and peasants are starting to merge.

EXT. BREAD OVEN - DAY

A rebel BAKER pulls out the first loaf of bread from a bread oven.

A smiling Che takes the bread and hands it to a waiting, OLDER COMPESINA. She studies the bread curiously. Other smiling peasants are gathered around. Che is clearly charming them.

EXT. PEAK - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

A twenty-foot JULY 26 FLAG flies at the top of the mountain - wishing the Movement a Happy 1958.

Standing nearby, Che and a handful of rebels are looking up at the sky.

A P-47 PLANE is heading their way.

As the plane OPENS FIRE, the rebels run for cover. All except the Little Cowboy, who is recklessly firing a pistol at the approaching plane

Che spots the Little Cowboy and charges in his direction.

As the plane's bullets near the Little Cowboy, Che knocks him out of harm's way. Both men tumble to the ground as the plane roars past overhead.

EXT. BENEATH A TREE - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

Che is writing a letter beneath a large tree. One of the students from Havana excitedly hurries his way. Che looks to him.

STUDENT #1

It's here!

INT. OFFICE - EL HOMBRITO

The student leads Che into a small office.

The second student is waiting by a large machine.

Che approaches the machine and reverently studies it. It is an old 1903 mimeograph machine.

CHE
How many copies can we print?

STUDENT #2
We've got enough paper for seven hundred.

CHE
Good. Start distributing them to the people as soon as you can.

EXT. THE EDGES OF CAMP - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

Che walks with his friend Camilo, who has just returned to camp. The mood is tense.

CHE
Whose troops are they?

CAMILO
Sanchez Mosquera's.

Che looks to Camilo in surprise.

CHE
Are you sure?

CAMILO
They're burning farms again. Only this time, they're using some *guajiros* as shields.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

Che stands before his men, armed and ready to march.

CHE
If there's anyone who has the slightest doubt about why he's here, I only ask that you leave your weapons.

A moment of consideration. Then some of the disgruntled rebels we've been tracking exchange glances.

One by one, the frustrated rebels hand their guns to nearby comrades and march off.

EXT. ROAD - MAR VERDE - MORNING

THREE SOLDIERS from Sanchez Mosquera's advance guard are cautiously making their way down a road.

Nearby, a stream flows into the Turquino river.

As the soldiers make their way toward a grove of trees, we now see that a handful of rebels are positioned behind the trees.

Che himself is behind a mango tree, armed with a Luger pistol. Joel is also among the group.

As the soldiers are nearly upon them, Che peeks out from behind his tree, aims his pistol, and FIRES.

His shot misses. The soldiers quickly shoot in Che's direction.

Then other rebels begin firing at the soldiers. Realizing that they are outgunned, the three soldiers quickly beat a retreat, disappearing through a tunnel in a nearby thicket.

As Che and his squad emerge from behind their trees, Che nods to Joel.

Joel tears off after the fleeing soldiers. He is immediately followed by Urbano and Guile. Over in the thicket, we can hear Joel shouting:

JOEL (O.S.)
Prisoners will not be harmed!

As Che heads in that direction, a sudden BURST OF GUNFIRE causes him to freeze in his tracks.

Guile and Urbano come running out of the thicket, their faces pale. Che rushes their way.

CHE
Where's Joel?!

Guile shakes his head.

INT. THICKET - MORNING

As Che barrels forward, we can hear more staccato bursts of gunfire.

EXT. THE FAR SIDE OF THE THICKET - MORNING

The three fleeing soldiers have found a place to dig in. They are returning fire out into a nearby clearing.

At the center of the clearing, we see Joel's bloody, unmoving body. The bullets are flying overhead.

Then the soldiers see something that astounds them. It's the sight of Che, bursting into the clearing, oblivious to the bullets whizzing past.

The soldiers are so surprised by this that they actually stop firing. They watch transfixed as Che bends down, throws Joel over his shoulder, and flees the clearing.

EXT. THICKET - MORNING

Che emerges from the thicket with Joel in his arms. He is covered in the young man's blood. If Che himself is also wounded, it's clearly not on his mind. He heads toward the nearby road.

EXT. NEARBY ROAD - MINUTES LATER

As the sounds of a heavy gunfight continue, Joel is lying in a hammock, about to be hauled away.

Che has already dressed the young man's wounds. Although there was a lot of blood, Joel is still conscious, barely.

JOEL

Thank you.

CHE

This won't get you out of class.

Joel musters a weak smile. Then Che looks to the three rebels who are going to carry him.

CHE

Take him to Dr. Paez.

The rebels nod their heads and haul Joel away.

Joaquin approaches. The three Batista soldiers are now rebel prisoners.

JOAQUIN
 (re: soldiers)
 You want me to shoot them?

CHE
 No.

As Che continues walking, he finds Camilo and Ramiro quickly approaching. Their faces are grim.

CHE
 What is it?

CAMILO
 Reenforcements.

CHE
 How many?

RAMIRO
 Lots. One fifty, at least. Maybe more.

Che takes in the bleak news, then nods with determination.

CHE
 Fall back to El Hombrito.

CAMILO
 And do what?

CHE
 Defend it.

CAMILO
 Che, we don't have the men.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EL HOMBRITO - DAY

A number of wounded are gathered outside of the hospital, ready to move out. A number of healthy rebels are waiting to escort them.

Joel is the only one who can't walk. He is again lying in a hammock.

An intent Che approaches Doctor Paez, splattered with blood.

CHE
 How is he?

DR. PAEZ
Lucky. Five bullet wounds, and all
of them superficial.

Che nods, relieved.

DR. PAEZ
Where are we going?

CHE
La Mesa. We'll catch up with you
when we can.

Paez nods his head and hurries off.

Che looks to Camilo, who is standing nearby.

CHE
Fall back to Altos de Conrado.
Let's give the wounded a chance to
get away.

As Camilo nods, Che takes one last look at the base he spent
so much time building.

LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Batista soldiers are occupying the rebel base.

One LIEUTENANT approaches Captain Sanchez Mosquera.

LIEUTENANT
What do you want us to do with it?

Sanchez Mosquera looks out on the empty camp and weighs his
options.

EXT. ROCKY HILL - ALTOS DE CONRADO - DUSK

From a rocky hilltop, a solemn Che looks back toward the
base. Camilo stands beside him.

In the distance, the two men can see dark clouds of smoke
rising into the sky. El Hombrito is burning.

Camilo places a reassuring hand on his friend's shoulder.

FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY JEEP - MONTHS LATER - DAY

SUPERTITLE: **ESTRADA PALMA SUGAR MILL APRIL 14, 1958**

Sanchez Mosquera, now a lieutenant colonel, is being driven in a military jeep.

The jeep turns into a nearby compound. The DRIVER approaches a guard post and stops. A GUARD waves them through the gate.

The jeep is heading toward the sugar mill of Estrada Palma, the current regional headquarters for Batista's army.

EXT. GROUNDS - ESTRADA PALMA SUGAR MILL- DAY

Cigar in hand, GENERAL CANTILLO is walking with his two subordinates: Sanchez Mosquera and MAJOR IZAGUIRRE.

GENERAL CANTILLO

We'll push into the Sierra on several fronts, surround the rebels, and destroy Castro's headquarters at La Plata.

Cantillo turns to Izaguirre.

GENERAL CANTILLO

Major Izaguirre, you will attack the rebel column at Las Mercedes.

MAJOR IZAGUIRRE

Sir, how many battalions will we have at our disposal?

GENERAL CANTILLO

Fourteen. Plus air and tank support, artillery.

SANCHEZ MOSQUERA

Where do I come in?

GENERAL CANTILLO

You go after Guevara.

EXT. NARROW MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

A jeep tears around the corner of a narrow, mountain road. A steep precipice drops off from the dirt road.

The jeep continues forward at a harrowing speed.

INT. JEEP

Che is at the wheel of the careening jeep. He glances over at an ashen young, doctor. FERNANDEZ MELL is trying not to look at the steep drop off on his side of the jeep.

CHE
You're a Doctor?

FERNANDEZ MELL
From Havana. Just joined up.

CHE
When we get to where we're going,
remind me to tell you something.

As the doctor nods, Che takes another dust-raising turn.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - EL JIBARO - DAY

Che pulls the jeep to a halt, and Fernandez Mell breathes a deep sigh of relief.

As the two men exit the jeep, Che nods to the doctor and starts off.

FERNANDEZ MELL
Commandante? You said to remind you
to tell me something.

CHE
Oh, right. I wanted to tell you
that was my first time driving.

EXT. FIDEL'S TENT - EL JUBARO - DAY

Che talks with Fidel.

CHE
So far, Sanchez Mosquera doesn't
seem too eager to fight. Our
patrols skirmish at night, but the
army spends most of its time
shooting peasants.

Fidel nods, preoccupied.

CHE
Is everything all right?

FIDEL

I need you to go to Minas del Frio,
to the training school.

CHE

What?

FIDEL

I want you to take charge of the
new recruits.

CHE

What about my column?

FIDEL

Ramiro can take over for now.

CHE

We're days away from an attack.

FIDEL

This is more important.

CHE

More important than holding the
front line?

FIDEL

I want you to start putting
together a new command.
When we break this offensive, I
want to bring the war down from the
Sierra Maestra - Camaguey,
Santiago. I want you take a column
to Las Villas and cut the island in
half.

A beat.

FIDEL

Camilo will be heading that way
with a column of his own.

CHE

There's a lot of other rebel
factions operating in the region
already.

FIDEL

I know. I want you to take control
of the resistance and hit Batista
with everything you've got.

EXT. TRAINING SCHOOL - MINOS DEL FRIO - DAY

SUPERTITLE: *MINOS DEL FRIO AUGUST 24, 1958*

Che is standing before a group of young rebels.

Many are faces we are beginning to know: the Little Cowboy, Guile, Pombo, and Urbano. Fernandez Mell, the new doctor, is also here.

CHE

We will be in completely new terrain, where the people don't yet know us. We'll have soldiers for breakfast, planes for lunch, and tanks for dinner. This will be the most dangerous situation we've ever faced. To be totally frank, most of you won't make it. A number of your comrades have already said no. I wouldn't blame anyone here for not going.

No one leaves.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CAMAGUEY - NIGHT

HURRICANE WINDS AND DRIVING RAIN.

Che and his men are leaning into the wind, trudging down a muddy road with heavy packs.

EXT. SWAMPLAND - HIGH OVER CAMAGUEY - DAY

An army FIGHTER PLANE roars past.

As the plane continues on its way, in the swampland below, we can see a column of tiny figures, marching through water.

EXT. SWAMP - CAMAGUEY - DAY

Che and his exhausted men are stumbling through the watery terrain. Many are barefoot. Che himself is wearing one boot and one shoe.

The men are making their way from one small island to the next. For some, like the Little Cowboy, the water is chest high. They hold their guns over their heads.

As one weary rebel reaches one of the islands, he collapses.

Che's asthma is acting up. He reaches one of the islands and stops beside Ramiro. Ramiro's eyes are glued to a faint blue line on the edge of the horizon. Che follows his gaze.

RAMIRO
Las Villas.

Che considers the distant mountains, then continues forward - on painful step at a time.

EXT. WOODS - LAS VILLAS - DAY

FOUR ARMED MEN in civilian clothes are walking through the woods.

Suddenly, the Little Cowboy emerges from the brush with his gun drawn. The young rebel wears a beard with no mustache.

LITTLE COWBOY
Stop! Who are you?

One of the men raises his hands.

ARMED MAN
We're with the resistance in Yaguajay. We're looking for the Comandante.

Guile, Urbano, and a handful of other rebels also emerge from the brush.

GUILE
It's okay. We're Che's men.

Though the words are spoken with great pride, Ovidio considers the gaunt, ragged, shoeless men.

EXT. HUT - DIRECTORIO CAMP - DAY

Inside a small hut, Che and Ramiro are meeting with two Directorio commanders, FAURE CHAMON and ROLANDO CUBELA.

The four men are in deep discussion, smoking cigars.

INT. HUT - DIRECTORIO CAMP - DAY

Che is talking to the Directorio commanders.

CHE

We'll take the towns, one by one, and isolate Santa Clara from the rest of the province. Santa Clara is the key, but it's too big to be taken by any one rebel group. We have to start coordinating our actions.

Chamon and Cubela nod cautiously.

CHE

Is there a problem?

Chamon hesitates. Cubela steps in.

CUBELA

We're open to a cooperation with the July 26th Movement. But the Directorio can't be involved in a deal with the Communists.

CHE

Then you make your deal with me. And I'll make my deals with whoever I please.

EXT. EDGES OF REBEL CAMP - CABELLETE DE CASAS - DAY

On the outskirts of the bustling rebel camp, Che talks with VICTOR BORDON, the local July 26 guerrilla chief. Bordon's troops stand off to the side.

Bordon is wearing a large cowboy hat. Che himself is suffering from a bit of asthma. He's still quite thin, and his shirt is unbuttoned to his navel.

CHE

In two days, we're attacking the Fomento barracks.

BORDON

You sure you're ready?

CHE

If we're going to reach Santa Clara, we'll need ammo to it. How many guerrillas do you have there?

Bordon senses he's been tested.

BORDON
They're not mine. They're the
Movement's.

CHE
(nodding)
Then as commander in chief of the
Las Villas region, you and your men
are officially under my command. Is
that a problem for you?

BORDON
Hardly. It's good to see someone
taking charge around here.

Che nods, pleased, and the two men shake hands. But as Bordon
heads off, another voice causes Che to turn.

ALEIDA (O.S.)
Are you Comandante Guevara?

A compelling young woman approaches on a horse. This is
ALEIDA MARCH. She dismounts her horse and approaches the
Comandante.

ALEIDA
I've got money - from Diego in
Santa Clara.

Aleida proceeds to lift her shirt. A large wad of cash is
tightly taped around her waist. As she tries to remove the
tape, however, it tears her skin.

Che turns to a nearby rebel.

CHE
Get the doctor.

MOMENTS LATER

Che watches the Dr. Fernandez Mell slice through Aleida's
tape. Once he's able to get a firm grasp on the cut tape, the
doctor looks to Aleida.

FERNANDEZ MELL
Ready?

Aleida nods. Fernandez Mell yanks off the tape, and Aleida
muffles a cry of pain.

Che picks up the impressive wad of cash that was taped to her
waist and looks to Aleida.

CHE
How much do you keep under there?

ALEIDA
Fifty thousand pesos.

MOMENTS LATER

Che walks Aleida to her horse.

CHE
Tell Diego the money will be well
spent.

ALEIDA
I wish I could.

Che looks to her.

ALEIDA
Batista's police searched my home
two nights ago. I can't go back to
Santa Clara.

A beat.

CHE
You're welcome to stay here. I know
the doctor could use a nurse.

ALEIDA
With all due respect, Comandante, I
think I can do more than hand out
medicine. I want to fight.

Another beat.

CHE
We've started taxing some of the
larger landowners. I need someone
to collect the money. After that,
we'll see.

Aleida nods, partially placated. The sounds of a CELEBRATION
draw us forward...

EXT. MAIN SQUARE - FOMENTO - DAY

SUPERTITLE: FOMENTO DECEMBER 18, 1958

The rebels have taken the town of Fomento. Over a hundred BATISTA SOLDIERS are being guarded by a handful of rebels. The rebel leader, Bordon, is talking to a young LIEUTENANT, the barracks commander.

CHEERING CITIZENS are celebrating in the streets. One young man is standing on a jeep, waving a July 26th Movement flag.

A number of rebels - like the Little Cowboy, Urbano, and Guile - are flirting with the girls. The Little Cowboy is loaded down with ammunition belts and grenades.

Che marches with his two deputies, Ramiro and Cubela, the commander of the Directorio forces. Ramiro is updated Che about their recent capture.

RAMIRO

One machine gun. One hundred, thirty-eight rifles. Nine thousand rounds of ammunition.

CHE

Now blow the rail to Cabaiguan.

RAMIRO

What for?

CHE

We're taking the town.

Cubela looks to Che in surprise.

CUBELA

You want to take Cabaiguan? Now?

CHE

(nodding)

Cabaiguan, Gayos, Placetas. And any other town between us and Santa Clara.

As Che turns on his heels and starts off, he finds that Aleida is standing nearby, a satchel thrown over her shoulder and a pistol at her waist. We sense that she has heard their conversation.

ALEIDA

I have money - from the land tax.

CHE

Take it to Orlando.

Aleida nods, but isn't going anywhere. Che looks to her.

ALEIDA

I want to offer my services as a guide. I know these towns like the back of my hand.

CHE

I already have a guide.

ALEIDA

Not like me.

A beat.

CHE

I couldn't guarantee your safety.

ALEIDA

For the last two years, I've smuggled guns, bombs, and fugitives all across this province. If I wanted security, I wouldn't have joined the revolution.

As Che weighs his options, we hear the RUMBLE of a plane...

EXT. ROAD TO CABAIGUAN - DAY

On the outskirts of town, TWO B-26 FIGHTERS swoop over a paved road, dropping bombs as they pass.

After the bombs EXPLODE, a squad of rebels emerge from hiding. Guile is leading them. He nods to his men, and they continue into town.

As we watch them go, we hear the voice of REBEL RADIO.

REBEL RADIO (V.O.)

*Give the recent successes in the
Las Villas struggle for
liberation...*

INT. MICROWAVE STATION - CABAIGUAN - DAY

A handful of BATISTA SOLDIERS are guarding the station.

REBEL RADIO (V.O.)

*...the zone covering the Amazonas
and Santa Isabel sugar mills is
declared Cuban Free Territory.*

Suddenly, the Little Cowboy and Urbano burst into the station, guns in the air. They are followed by the rest of their squad.

The surprised soldiers drop their weapons and put their hands in the air.

REBEL RADIO (V.O.)
*All of Batista's union bosses are
hereby ordered to stand down...*

EXT. POLICE STATION - REMEDIOS - DAY

The police station is on fire. OFFICERS escape the burning building with their hands raised.

REBEL RADIO (V.O.)
*...and worker assemblies are called
to elect new leaders.*

Armed rebels are waiting for them. Pombo is among the group.

As the broadcast fades, another voice - through a LOUDSPEAKER - draws us forward.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (V.O.)
To the soldiers in the Placetas
barracks...

INT. ARMY BARRACKS - PLACETAS - DAY

We PAN PAST the faces of a number of tired, nervous BATISTA SOLDIERS, intently listening to the voice.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)
I was a lieutenant in your army,
and I stand before you by my own
free will.

One WOUNDED SOLDIER whispers to another.

WOUNDED SOLDIER #1
I hear they've got a thousand men
out there.

WOUNDED SOLDIER #2
At least.

EXT. BARRACKS - PLACETAS - DAY

Rebel forces have surrounded the barracks at Placetas. A number of CIVILIAN ONLOOKERS are here as well.

Che stands by a jeep. His left arm is in a short cast.

Standing beside him is the commander from the Fomento garrison. The young lieutenant is now holding the loudspeaker and talking to his former comrades.

FOMENTO LIEUTENANT

Surrender your arms, and none of
you will be harmed. The rebel army
is not what you think it is.

A long, tense moment of silence. Then a white flag emerges from a barracks window.

The surrounding rebels and civilians let out a ROAR.

EXT. ROAD TO SUGAR MILL - YAGUAJAY - DAY

A rebel drives a red, Toyota jeep down a dirt road. Pombo sits beside him. Che sits in back - his arm still in a cast.

The road is lined on both sides with CAMPESINOS, who are loudly CHEERING as Che passes. Many are waving rebel flags.

Pombo pulls the jeep into a rebel GUARDED sugar mill. As the guards keep back the crowd, Pombo drives up to the mill and pulls to a halt.

Che hops out of the jeep and stops. Camilo and a handful of his men are standing before the mill.

Among the faces is a young rebel named BENIGNO.

EXT. NARCISA SUGAR MILL - DAY

Camilo and Che are standing beneath a large tree. Camilo is staring out at the large crowd of campesinos, gathered by the front gate.

CAMILO

I just spoke to Fidel.

CHE

And?

CAMILO

Santiago is nearly surrounded.
Santa Clara is the only thing
standing between us and Havana.

Che nods.

CAMILO

Maybe we should wait. Once I've
taken Yaguajay, we can enter the
city together.

CHE

I don't think so.

CAMILO

There's an armored train - coming
from Havana. Batista's throwing
everything he's got into that
place.

CHE

The more time they've got to dig
in, the harder this thing is going
to get.

CAMILO

What about your men? They haven't
slept in days.

CHE

They'll be ready for *this*.

CAMILO

Do they even have any bullets?

CHE

(smiling)

Some. Not too many. Enough.

CAMILO

I guess it's only fair I let you
share in the glory now and then.

The two men start back toward the mill.

CAMILO

How'd you hurt your arm?

CHE

Jumping from a roof. I tripped over
a TV antenna.

Camilo places a hand on his friend's shoulder.

CAMILO

I know what I'm doing when we win this thing. Put you in a cage, tour the country, and charge admission. I'll make a fortune!

EXT. TRAIN STATION - SANTA CLARA - DAY

SUPERTITLE: *SANTA CLARA DECEMBER 27, 1958*

A DAUNTING ARMORED TRAIN pulls into the train station at Santa Clara.

As the train squeals to a halt, scores of BATISTA SOLDIERS file out of the train and gather themselves into formations.

Toward the front of the train, we see two feet step off of a car. They belong to Colonel Casillas. The rebels' nemesis from the Sierra has been promoted.

Walking just behind the Colonel is his operations chief FERNANDEZ SUERO.

The two men approach another entourage of waiting officers. At its head is COLONEL HERNANDEZ, the highest ranking officer in the city.

The two colonels shake hands.

COLONEL HERNANDEZ

It's good to have you in Santa Clara, Colonel. The city's defenses are at your disposal.

Casillas nods.

EXT. HOTEL ROOM - PLACETAS - EVENING

In a private room of a run-down hotel, Che meets with his two deputies, Ramiro and Cubela.

Present as well is a geographer from Santa Clara, ANTONIO NUNEZ JIMENEZ. A map of Santa Clara is laid out on a table before them. Aleida stands off to the side.

Since there is no electricity, the room is lit by a paraffin lamp. Jimenez points to the map as he speaks to Che.

JIMINEZ

Casillas has gathered the bulk of his forces at the Vidal barracks. The soldiers from the armored train are here, in the Capiro Hills. The police station is also heavily defended.

RAMIRO

They've got cannons, mortars, tanks, and planes. We have one bazooka and no shells.

CHE

If we keep the fighting to the residential streets, the tanks will lose their effectiveness. I want you and Bordon to put a noose around this place. No reinforcements get into the city.

Ramiro nods. Then Che looks to Cubela.

CHE

Rolando, you have to take the barracks. If you can't take it on your own, then at least hold them back until I finish off the rest of the city.

Cubela nods.

CHE

Now how do we get into this place without being seen?

EXT. QUIET STREET - PLACETAS - NIGHT

Che walks with Aleida down a quiet street. He is smoking a cigar.

Aleida removes a black scarf from around her neck and holds it out to Che.

ALEIDA

For your arm.

CHE

Thank you.

A beat.

CHE

So you grew up near here?

ALEIDA

On a tenant farm - just south of the city.

CHE

What made you join the Movement?

ALEIDA

I was in college when Fidel attacked the Moncada barracks. When I read "History Will Absolve Me," I knew he was the only one who could take down Batista.

Che nods.

ALEIDA

You're different then I imagined.

CHE

What did you imagine?

ALEIDA

They said you were a communist.

CHE

And what does a communist look like?

ALEIDA

Not like you.

A beat.

ALEIDA

Do you plan to stay in Cuba? If we win?

CHE

If?

ALEIDA

When.

CHE

I'd like to go back to Argentina. Bring the revolution to Latin America. But it could be awhile.

EXT. ROAD TO SANTA CLARA - JUST BEFORE DAWN

In the dark just before dawn, a column of rebels march down a dirt road.

Che's Toyota jeep is moving past the column. Pombo is sitting next to the driver. Che is in back with Aleida.

INT. JEEP - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The jeep is lit by the dashboard lights. Che is now using Aleida's scarf as a sling.

Aleida is struggling to lift the lid off of a can of peaches without spilling the contents. A bump in the road causes some to spill.

CHE

Careful.

ALEIDA

I'm trying.

Aleida fishes out a slice of peach and hands it to Che.

The rebel leader takes the peach and puts it in his mouth. The taste suddenly causes him to pause.

ALEIDA

(concerned)

What is it?

CHE

I can't remember a peach tasting so good.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - SANTA CLARA - DAWN

Che's jeep arrives at the university just as the sun rises.

Not far off, a group of CITIZENS watch Che and his entourage get out of the jeep.

The rest of the rebel column is also beginning to arrive.

One INCREDULOUS CITIZEN shakes his head at the sight of the rebel forces - young, dirty, and long-haired.

INCREDULOUS CITIZEN
These are the men taking the
 barracks? There can't be more than
 three hundred of them.

Then a young, WEARY REBEL approaches the CITIZEN'S DAUGHTER.

WEARY REBEL
 How many soldiers are in the city?

CITIZEN'S DAUGHTER
 About four thousand.

The weary rebel nods.

WEARY REBEL
 Good.

EXT. PEDAGOGY BUILDING - MORNING

Dr. Fernandez Mell emerges from the University's pedagogy building and approaches Che.

FERNANDEZ MELL
 We'll treat the most serious cases
 here. The rest we can take to
 Camajuini.

Che nods his head, then turns to his two waiting captains, Guile and the Little Cowboy. Che looks to Guile.

CHE
 The soldiers from the train are up
 in those hills.
 (gesturing with his hand)
 As long as they control the high
 ground, we'll never take this city.

Guile nods, determined. Nothing more needs to be said. Then Che turns to the Little Cowboy.

CHE
 They've got four hundred armed men
 in the police station, and probably
 a few tanks.

LITTLE COWBOY
 Sounds like fun.

INT. VIDAL BARRACKS - DAY

Casillas is being updated by his operations chief, Suero. Colonel Hernandez and his staff stand off to the side.

SUERO

The rebels are entering the city, sir.

CASILLAS

How many?

SUERO

Our latest estimates put them at three thousand - maybe more.

CASILLAS

Tell the nearby garrisons to send reinforcements.

Suero nods.

CASILLAS

In the meantime, I want air strikes for all outlying neighborhoods.

Then the ROAR OF A PLANE draws us forward...

EXT. HIGH OVER THE MANICARAGUA HIGHWAY - DAY

A F-47 is zooming toward a column of trucks and cars, making their way along the highway.

As the F-47 OPENS FIRE, the rebels inside the trucks abandon their vehicles and run for cover.

A few rebels are shot down as they flee.

EXT. JUST OFF THE HIGHWAY - DAY

The leader of the rebel troops, Directorio commander, Rolando Cubela, watches the F-47 thunder past.

EXT. MATERNITY HOSPITAL - DAY

As we listen to the roar of another approaching plane, a number of PATIENTS and MEDICAL STAFF run for cover.

A B-26 whips past overhead, unloading bombs as it goes.

As the civilians throw themselves to the ground, a number of the surrounding houses are BLOWN TO PIECES.

One terrified, YOUNG CHILD cries out, desperately searching for his parents. His face is streaming with blood.

As we consider the horrifying scene, we hear Che's voice over a radio.

CHE (V.O.)
*To the people of Santa Clara, this
 is Commandant Che Guevara...*

INT. CAFE - DAY

Nervous residents are gathered around a radio, listening to the words of Che.

CHE (O.S.)
*The enemy would have us live in
 fear. But it is they who should be
 afraid. Because the power of the
 people is irresistible.*

EXT. NARROW STREET - DAY

An abandoned car is parked across the narrow street. Determined citizens are tossing large objects onto the vehicle.

They are building a barricade. From an overhead balcony, two other residents toss an old mattress onto the growing pile.

CHE (O.S.)
*Blockade the streets. Open your
 homes to rebel soldiers. And if you
 have a gun, pick it up.*

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Che is inside a radio booth, speaking into a microphone. A few TECHNICIANS are in the booth. So are Pombo and Aleida.

CHE
*If there was ever a time to fight
 for your liberty, that time is now.*

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Che's driver is driving the commander's red jeep along the railroad tracks.

Che is the front seat, scanning the tracks. Aleida sits in back with Pombo. Suddenly, Che spots something.

CHE

Stop!

The driver slows to a halt, and Che jumps out of the jeep.

As Che makes his way to the tracks, he is followed by his companions. An intent Che studies the rail and nods.

He looks back to his comrades.

CHE

Anybody know how to drive a tractor?

EXT. HILLSIDE - CAPIRO HILLS - DAY

Guile and his rebels are crawling up the side of a very steep hill.

From the top of the hill, intense enemy FIRE is flying over their heads.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A battle is underway at the Santa Clara police station. Hidden among a large public square, rebels are taking shots at the station. On the top floor of the building, a large machine gun keeps most of them at bay.

A police tank is also prowling the street in front of the station.

Hidden behind a stone wall on the far side of the square, the Little Cowboy and Urbano stare out at the discouraging situation.

URBANO

That tank's got us fucked. There's a machine gun on the top floor of the station. We can't get close enough to take it out.

The Little Cowboy nods his head and considers the square. Opposite the station is a Carmelite church. It's a bit higher than the station and is also defended by ARMED OFFICERS.

LITTLE COWBOY

If we took that church, we could take the station.

A dubious Urbano considers the church. It's at the end of a long row of identical houses, pressed up against each other.

URBANO

Take the church? We can't even get to it.

EXT. ACROSS FROM THE VIDAL BARRACKS - DAY

A LOCAL GUIDE leads Cubela to a narrow street across from the Vidal barracks.

Hidden among the shadows, Cubela considers the well-defended building.

CUBELA

Is that the barracks?

INT. VIDAL BARRACKS - DAY

Casillas is updated by Suero.

SUERO

Our tanks can't make their way past the blockades.

CASILLAS

What about reinforcements?

SUERO

The rebels have sealed off the city.

Casillas nods, frustrated.

CASILLAS

Get Havana on the phone. Tell them to airlift men from Cienfuegos.

Suero nods. Then Casillas turns to Colonel Hernandez.

CASILLAS

Get your troops ready, Colonel.
We're going to secure this city one
neighborhood at a time.

EXT. PEDAGOGY BUILDING - DAY

WOUNDED REBELS AND CIVILIANS are waiting to receive medical attention outside the university building.

Women, men, the old, and the young. Many are covered in blood. Some are moaning uncontrollably.

Che walks past the wounded with a harried Fernandez Mell.

FERNANDEZ MELL

I need more help.

Fernandez Mell shakes his head, unable to finish his thought.

CHE

There's another doctor, in town.
I'll send him your way.

EXT. HILLSIDE - CAPIRO HILLS - DAY

Still taking fire from the hilltop, Guile and his rebels are hunkered down against the side of the hill. Guile is holding a grenade in one of his hands.

Then Guile looks questioningly to his comrades. They nod back, ready for action.

Guile counts out three beats with his fingers. When he hits three, Guile and a handful of other rebels stand up, pull the pins out of their grenades, and lob them toward the hilltop.

As the grenades EXPLODE in one massive blast, the rebels scramble toward the top of the hill.

EXT. GARAGE - SANTA CLARA AGRONOMY DEPARTMENT - DAY

A gray-haired CITY RESIDENT leads Pombo to a large garage. A REBEL FARMER follows closely.

The gray-haired resident slides open the garage door.

Inside are a number of large farm vehicles.

Pombo considers the vehicles and nods.

EXT. HILLTOP - CAPIRO HILLS - DAY

At the top of the hill, a number of dead soldiers lie the ground.

Guile and his rebels are overrunning the hilltop, firing at any remaining soldiers.

The rest of Batista's men are already running down the far side of the hill.

Guile waves his men after them.

GUILLE
KEEP ON THEM! LET'S GO!

As his men chase after the fleeing soldiers, ONE OF GUILLE'S OFFICERS comes up beside him.

REBEL OFFICER
Where do you think they're going?

INT. HOUSE NEAR POLICE STATION - DAY

A sledgehammer pounds into a wall, opening up a large hole.

The Little Cowboy is swinging the sledgehammer. Urbano and another rebel are here as well. So is the FAMILY who owns this home.

By the time the Little Cowboy is through, the exhausted rebel pauses to catch his breath and looks to Urbano.

Urbano approaches the hole and peers inside. It goes to the next residence. On the far wall of that residence, there is a second large hole.

INT. RESIDENCES - VARIOUS

The Little Cowboy and his companions are ducking through one hole after another - marching from one residence to the next.

In each home they pass through, a FAMILY gazes at them and nods.

INT. HOUSE NEAR CHURCH - DAY

The Little Cowboy enters the final residence and stops before the far wall. This one doesn't have a hole in it.

Urbano and the other rebel approach the wall and look to the Little Cowboy.

LITTLE COWBOY
This is the back wall of the church. Make them think we're attacking from the roof, and send in a squad right here.

The Little Cowboy pats the wall. Urbano nods as he considers the plan. He smiles slightly.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The armored train is pulling out of the station.

Batista soldiers are running toward the train. Some are helped on board by other soldiers.

Others aren't quick enough to reach the train. A few fall to rebel fire.

Over by the station, Guile and his rebels slow to a halt. They consider the train as it quickly picks up speed.

EXT. ROOF - NEAR POLICE STATION - DAY

A nearby BURST OF GUNFIRE sends Urbano and another rebel ducking behind a wall.

As the gunfire continues, Urbano looks up to find that the Little Cowboy is standing on top of the wall, trying to locate the source of the shooting.

URBANO
Get down!

Finally, the Little Cowboy jumps off the wall, crouches beside Urbano, and cracks a cocky smile.

LITTLE COWBOY
They say you never hear the one that gets you.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

The rebel farmer is on top of a large tractor - barrelling toward some train tracks at top speed.

In the distance, the armored train is heading his way.

The farmer lowers the front shovel on the tractor and crashes into the tracks. The rails twist and turn, but the farmer is unable to sever them.

With the approaching train BLARING ITS HORN, the farmer backs up the tractor - and again smashes into the tracks. Though the tractor manages to sever the rail, it comes to a halt with its back end still hanging over the track.

The farmer has no time for a third try. With the train nearly upon him, he abandons the tractor and leaps for safety.

As the farmer rolls to the ground, Pombo helps him to safety. Both men manage to look up just in time to see the action.

THE ARMORED TRAIN SMASHES INTO THE BACK END OF THE TRACTOR - SLIDES RIGHT OFF THE RAIL - AND CRASHES ONTO ITS SIDE.

The two rebels stare amazed as the train smashes through a parking garage and careens to a slow, screeching halt.

Then it is quiet.

EXT. VIDAL BARRACKS - DAY

A battle is underway outside the main barracks. Three tanks are pushing their way down the street.

Their machine guns are keeping a number of Directorio forces at bay.

From behind one corner, Cubela gazes out at the fight.

Then a sudden burst of gunfire causes him to CRY OUT.

As Cubela clutches his arm, another rebel quickly approaches. He considers the bloody arm of his commander.

DIRECTORIO REBEL
You'd better see the doctor.

But Cubela grits his teeth and shakes his head.

CUBELA
Not till we drive back these tanks.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

He is sitting with his back against some large construction vehicle. Aleida sits nearby.

A sniper is taking shots at them.

CHE
Where the fuck is he?

Che looks to a rebel officer named PACHO, who is hiding with his men behind a nearby building.

PACHO
Can't get a look.

Then Aleida spots a surveyor's scope, sitting nearby on a tripod. She glances at Che.

ALEIDA
Keep him shooting.

CHE
Be careful.

As Aleida carefully crawls to the tripod, Pacho places a helmet on the end of his gun and holds it up for the sniper.

Che watches Aleida with concern. She reaches the scope and peers through it.

As Pacho attracts the sniper's fire, Aleida finds the BLACK HELMETED SNIPER. He and few other HELMETED FIGURES are on the roof of a nearby building.

ALEIDA
It's the SIM - on the roof of the hotel.

CHE
Who are they?

ALEIDA
Batista thugs. They burned my cousin.

Che takes this in and turns to Pacho.

CHE
See what you can do.

Pacho nods his head and sneaks off with his men.

As Aleida returns to Che's side, the commander sees a REBEL MESSENGER running his way.

REBEL MESSENGER
It's the Little Cowboy!

EXT. NEARBY STREET - DAY

Che, Aleida, and the messenger are dashing forward.

Urbano is approaching from the other direction. Two other rebels are carrying a limp body.

Che rushes toward the approaching rebels. As the Little Cowboy is lowered to the ground, Che sees the bullet wound in the young man's head. He knows it's fatal.

CHE

I've lost a hundred men.

A long, heavy moment as Aleida, Urbano, and the other rebels silently consider their commander. Finally, Che turns his eyes to Urbano.

CHE

Take that station.

EXT. ARMORED TRAIN - DAY

A fierce gun battle is raging at the wrecked train. Army troops defend themselves against encroaching rebels.

One group of rebels is chased off by a machine gun. They run for cover behind a nearby building.

As Guile hurries their way, the GROUP LEADER shakes his head.

GROUP LEADER

They've got an arsenal in there.

Guile nods, frustrated.

REBEL OFFICER (O.S.)

Hey!

Guile's officer is approaching with a wood crate, covered by a towel. A small group of CHILDREN trail behind. As the officer puts down the crate, Guile eyes the kids.

GUILE

What the hell are *they* doing here?

By way of a response, the rebel officer removes the towel from the crate to reveal rows and rows of bottles. Guile pulls out one of them. It's a Molotov cocktail.

INT. HOUSE NEAR CHURCH - DAY

A rebel swings a sledgehammer into a wall, opening up a large hole.

Urbano stands nearby, with a squad of rebels.

As the rebel with the sledgehammer steps out of the way, Urbano urges one rebel after another through the hole.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

As a noisy battle rages somewhere overhead, the squad of rebels bursts into the church with their guns raised.

A number of Police officers whirl in that direction. So surprised by the sudden appearance of rebel troops, most of the officers quickly drop their arms and raise their hands.

EXT. ARMORED TRAIN - DAY

Isolated cars of the armored train are engulfed in a RAGING FIRE.

Army troops flee from the flames with their hands in the air.

The surrendering soldiers are surrounded by rebels - who stand with their guns raised.

Guile stands in front of the rebels.

Finally, COMMANDER GOMEZ emerges from the wreckage. The proud man slowly approaches Guile.

COMMANDER GOMEZ
I won't negotiate with a subordinate.

MOMENTS LATER

Che approaches and plants himself in front of Gomez.

COMMANDER GOMEZ
I told your man I wouldn't negotiate with a subordinate.

CHE
That's okay, this isn't a negotiation.

COMMANDER GOMEZ

Commandante, I give you my word of honor that if you let us return to Havana, we won't fire another shot.

CHE

I believe in your word of honor, but I can't let those bullets kill more Cubans, here or there.

Gomez nods.

CHE

If your men put down their weapons, I promise you no prisoners will be harmed. And in time, most will be set free.

COMMANDER GOMEZ

I accept.

CHE

It's more than your army ever gave us.

POMBO (O.S.)

Hey, Che!

Che turns to find Pombo standing near one of the unburned, overturned, train cars. He's surrounded by a handful of rebels.

POMBO

Take a look at this.

Che walks over and considers the contents of the overturned car. It is, in fact, an arsenal - machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, flamethrowers, and much more.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A momentary truce. The field is littered with the dead and dying.

As rebels and police officers carry their wounded comrades to safety, Urbano approaches POLICE COLONEL ROJAS, standing in front of the station.

URBANO

I suggest a surrender.

COLONEL ROJAS
Not on your life.

Urbano nods. This is as he expected. Instead of talking, the young rebel Captain continues toward the police station.

COLONEL ROJAS
Where do you think you're going?

But Urbano keeps right on walking.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Just inside the station, Urbano slows to a halt and considers the haggard armed officers.

URBANO
Your commander wants to fight to the death. Anyone who's got a problem with that can put down their gun and line up outside.

But before anyone can respond, Rojas enters with his pistol raised in the air.

COLONEL ROJAS
Anyone who walks out that door will be shot for desertion.

A long, tense moment. Then one officer steps forward. He looks Rojas in the eye and continue forward.

The Colonel aims his gun...but doesn't shoot. Then, one by one, a number of other officers defy their colonel and head outside.

As the rest of Rojas's men leave the station, Urbano looks the Colonel straight in the eye.

INT. VIDAL BARRACKS - DAY

A rattled Casillas gets one more update from Suero.

CASILLAS
Any word from Havana?

Suero shakes his head.

SUERO
I don't think we can hold the city much longer.

INT. SIDE DOOR - VIDAL BARRACKS - ONE HOUR LATER

Casillas is dressed in a checkered shirt and straw hat. Suero is similarly disguised.

Casillas is taking a moment with Colonel Hernandez. A few JUNIOR OFFICERS stand in the wings.

CASILLAS

I'll be back with reenforcements,
Colonel. Keep up the resistance
until I return.

As Hernandez nods, Casillas and Suero exit through a side door.

JUNIOR OFFICER

Fucking coward.

COLONEL HERNANDEZ

See what sort of terms the rebels
are offering.

EXT. HOTEL SQUARE - DAY

Che is walking through a public square. Aleida quickly approaches, updated Che as they walk.

ALEIDA

Camilo just took Yaguajay. He and
his troops are heading this way.

Che reaches the rebel named Pacho, who is standing beside the tank from the police station.

CHE

How's it going?

Pacho gestures toward the top floor of a nearby hotel.

PACHO

We've got them pinned down. Any
time they show their faces, we pump
the hotel full of lead.

CHE

(nodding)

Then tell your guys to sit tight.
As long as they can't hurt anyone,
we'll let them sweat it out.

Pacho nods his head and heads off.

Che turns to Aleida. Since the fighting started, it's the first time they've had a moment to catch their breath.

CHE

Thanks.

ALEIDA

For what?

CHE

You're a very good guide.

As Aleida smiles, Che realizes that a number of armed, CIVILIAN OPERATIVES are gathering around them.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is it true?

CHE

What?

YOUNG MAN

The report - on the radio.

OLD MAN

Batista fled the country.

YOUNG MAN

They say he boarded a plane and flew to the Dominican Republic.

CHE

(to Aleida)

I need to talk to Fidel.

EXT. PUBLIC WORKS BUILDING - SANTA CLARA - DAY

Inside the public building, we can see Che talking to Fidel on a short-wave radio.

When Che finishes the conversation, he nods to a RADIO OPERATOR and heads this way.

Che exits the building and slows to a halt.

Standing before him is a large, silent crowd of rebels and civilians. Che's close comrades are among the faces. So is Aleida, Ramiro, Cubela, and Bordon. They are all anxiously waiting Che's words.

CHE

Looks like we're going to Havana.

An immediate ROAR from the crowd. The people come together in a spontaneous moment of celebration - embracing one another and laughing.

Che himself is overwhelmed by his loyal comrades: Pombo, Guile, Urbano. He pats them all on the shoulder.

CHE

You're all coming with me.

Ramiro also approaches. He smiles at Che.

RAMIRO

Does this mean we've won the revolution?

CHE

We may have won the war. But the revolution begins now.

Standing among the surrounding faces, a young rebel named TUMA breaks into song, loudly singing the CUBAN NATIONAL ANTHEM.

The surrounding people smile. And soon, the rest of the crowd joins in.

Among the singing faces, Che spots Aleida. A moment as they consider each other, then Che approaches her through the crowd.

CHE

Have you been to Havana?

ALEIDA

Why do you ask?

CHE

I could use a guide.

EXT. ROAD TO HAVANA - DAY

SUPERTITLE: ROAD TO HAVANA JANUARY 2, 1959

Che's convoy of jeeps, trucks and cars makes its way toward Havana.

INT. TOYOTA JEEP - DAY

Che's driver and are up front. Che and Aleida are in back.

They are suddenly passed by a beautiful, Chrysler convertible. Three celebratory rebels are smoking cigars and listening to music.

Che nods as he considers this.

CHE

Pull over.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - DAY

Che's convoy of vehicles are parked next to an orange grove. The rebels have gathered around Che. He stands near his jeep, lecturing his sheepish men.

CHE

I don't care if they were left behind by Casillas himself. I want everyone who took a car to get inside, turn around, and head right back to Santa Clara. We're a revolutionary army - and I'd rather *walk* to Havana than get there in a stolen car! Let's go!

As Che waves them on, his chastened men climb into their newly acquired transportation and make their way back to Santa Clara. Che climbs into his jeep.

CHE

Unbelievable.

THE END