



WALK TOWARD THE RISING SUN

a feature film



Inspired by an extraordinary true-life story, **Walk Toward the Rising Sun** chronicles the life of a man from South Sudan, from the childhood he had snatched away in the midst of a brutal civil war to his unlikely success story as a famous model and actor in Hollywood through to his eventual return to his country as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations, and all the characters he inspires along the way.

Walk Toward the Rising Sun “Beat Sheet”

ACT 1

GER introduced. He’s on a flight from Newark to Heathrow. The flight is delayed. An impatient young businessman sitting beside Ger, TOM, starts making small talk, asking Ger if he’s a basketball player and guessing where in Africa he is from. As he listens to this guy display his own ignorance about what’s up on the continent, Ger sets the record straight, launching into the story of his past as a child soldier in Sudan’s second civil war.

Flashback to Ger’s childhood in Liet, Sudan. BALAT introduced, Ger’s friend and soon-to-be-love interest. His MOTHER and FATHER introduced, as well as the setting. Sudan is an Africa at war, wild, beautiful, chaotic and violent.



Ger’s father is a general in the SPLA fighting Sudan’s second civil war. Ger wants to fight too, but he sees the toll the war has taken on his mother. His mom quizzes him on what to do in case of an attack/ should he ever find himself alone. He answers he will walk toward the rising sun until he reaches safety.

Not long after the enemy does attack, separating Ger from his family. Before he flees across the river he steals a box of bullets. Hopeless and with nowhere to go, Ger begins his walk east toward the rising sun with a donkey he’s found and his bullets.

Ger meets AIRBORNE BOY on the road. Airborne Boy takes him to his leader: Captain John Noor, who offers Ger a place in the civilian defense force group known as White Army in exchange for his bullets. He promises to keep Ger’s donkey safe.





White Army camp introduced. White Army activities include ambushing Northern Troops, celebrating their victories, and patrolling villages and the local countryside. Ger loses himself for a time in the adrenaline rush of being a (child) soldier.

Airborne Boy steps on a landmine during a routine patrol. The battalion leader John Noor abandons him. Ger refuses to leave and rescues his friend, making him a hero with the other soldiers and causing John Noor to admire and envy young Ger. This incident, combined with the fact he finds his donkey has been slaughtered, makes Ger certain he needs to escape White Army.

Ger's opportunity comes when the enemy attacks White Army's camp. John Noor is killed, but not before giving Ger and Airborne Boy the keys to a truck so they can escape. Airborne Boy is wounded as they flee.

The truck breaks down in the middle of nowhere. Ger continues his long walk to the east, this time helping a wounded Airborne Boy every step of the way, countless miles. They collapse in the road starving, on the verge of death.

Cut back to the plane, where Tom isn't believing this story. Ger can tell so cuts it short, wrapping it up with an "anyways, tales for another time." The pilot announces the flight has been canceled and passengers will need to deplane. As they reenter the terminal, Ger tells Tom he's going to have a coffee, and would he like to join.



ACT 2

Ger tells of his arrival at a refugee camp. Reunited with his old friend Balat, Ger discovers she has a new best friend: KUTEY. Kutey and Ger have a friendly rivalry. Kutey watches American movies, enters their names for the U.N. resettlement program with dreams of escaping Africa.

Meanwhile Airborne Boy has decided to leave the camp and return to the military, introducing Ger to the idea of leaving.

Ger waits everyday to see his mother. DR. JOSH GARLAND introduced as an ally, hoping to help Ger reconnect with his family.



Balat hears from someone who has seen Ger's mother alive. Ger now feels he must leave the camp to look for her. Dr. Garland strongly advises against this.

Five years pass. Still separated from his family, TEENAGED GER decides to leave the camp. Dr. Garland feels responsible for Ger wasting so many years waiting, plans to join Ger in his search.

Before they can go, however, Ger gets news he's been approved to go to the United States. Dr. Garland implores him to go. "If you stay here, nobody can help you, not even me. If you go to the states, you can become anything. That's how you help," he tells Ger. Though he's heartbroken leaving Balat (Kutey also got approved) and holding to dreams of rejoining his family, Ger goes against his gut and takes the advice. Kutey and Ger leave without saying goodbye to Balat, who hides from them their final few days at the camp.



Ger and Kutey experience extreme culture shock in America. They end up in Iowa, living in a halfway house led by a pastor, MR LANDALE. They go to high school. NED JONES introduced, who wants to be Ger's guide into American lifestyle.

Ger gets into a fight defending Kutey and is suspended. During his suspension, Ger and Kutey start playing basketball at a park (this scene should involve the kids on the park being impressed with Ger's physique) introducing Ger's new passion/ coping mechanism. At night Ger writes letters and sends photographs to Dr. Garland, hoping they will reach his mother.



Another seven years pass. ADULT GER and ADULT KUTHEY now play basketball on a YMCA court and get spotted by the wife of the dean of a local university, who says her husband loves supporting athletes. Ger and Kutey try out for the university team and make the cut, earning themselves scholarships to go to school.

Ger moves into the WORUM household, and attends university. Ger becomes a basketball star and very popular guy around campus.

During a basketball game, an infamously racist team (Martinville) play dirty against some of Ger's teammates. Ger outcompetes them on the court, but of course they're sore losers and one pushes him to the floor when he isn't looking. Ger punches the guy/ breaks his own hand.

Waiting to heal from injury Ger takes long walks around his college town. This leads him into the campus theater, where he's involuntarily drafted into the cast of a play about a Nigerian King. Ger shocks everyone with an authentic Nuer battle cry. He gets a larger role in the play. The effusive praise Ger receives surprise and nourish him, making him think perhaps Dr. Garland was right all along about coming to the states.

Kutey transfers to a bigger school in New York state. Ger visits him in the city and they attend a fashion show where they reunite with Balat. She's been in the states for a few years, going to school and practicing modeling. Kutey plans to introduce her to a big agent he's connected to. Ger returns to school but promises to come see Balat again.





Back at university, Ger's theater troupe help him film an audition for a Hollywood film requesting Lost Boys of Sudan for a movie.

Ger graduates. At his graduation party he gets a call from Dr. Garland who tells him his mother has been located in Akobo, Sudan, where she's temporarily hospitalized. He finds out his baby sister died years earlier, but that his mom should be fine. Ger books a ticket to New York with plans to catch the first flight back to Sudan.

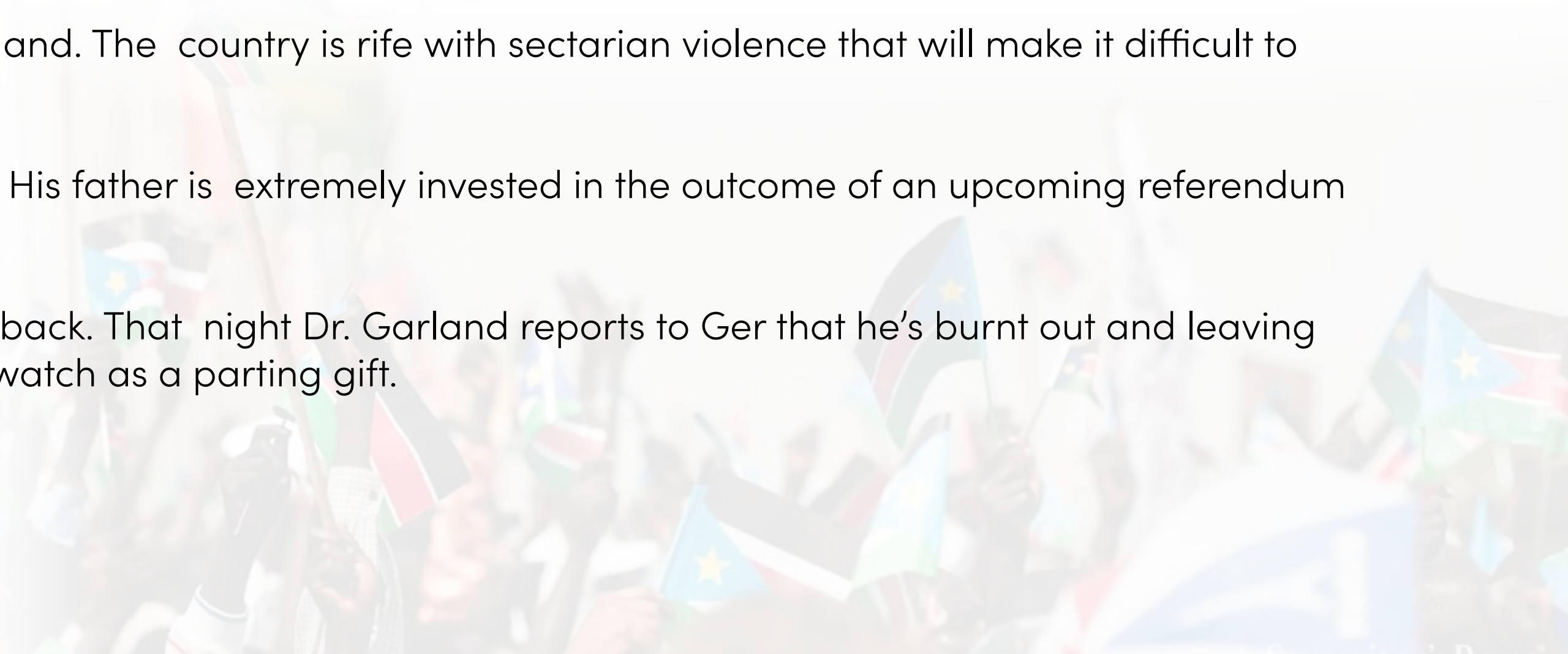
In the city, Ger goes to see Balat to tell her he's leaving and finds her in an expensive loft that her new boyfriend, the powerful agent FLORENCE SIMS, lets her use. While visiting her Ger gets a call from someone saying he's being asked to read for the part he auditioned for in Los Angeles. Ger isn't sure he will go — he needs to be in Sudan — but Balat tells him he has to. The moment turns to a kiss, and a kiss almost leads to more, except Flo Sims shows up unexpectedly and Balat makes Ger lie and say he's her cousin. Ger leaves.

In Los Angeles, Ger reads for David O. Russell. He gets the part, spends several months shooting the movie, becoming personal friends with his costars. Ger calls home for regular updates on his mother.

Completing his part in the film, Ger travels to Sudan and reunites with Dr. Garland. The country is rife with sectarian violence that will make it difficult to travel. He discovers his father has been imprisoned.

He goes to see his father, who is spending life in jail for killing one of his wives. His father is extremely invested in the outcome of an upcoming referendum to decide Sudan's fate.

Ger tries to visit his mom but gets stopped by soldiers. They are forced to turn back. That night Dr. Garland reports to Ger that he's burnt out and leaving Sudan. He tells Ger he should keep up the good fight and gives Ger his wrist watch as a parting gift.



Ger visits his old friend Airborne Boy, now living in poverty with PTSD. Airborne Boy says he knows another way that Ger could get to Akobo to see his mom.

Ger travels by small plane to Akobo with a smuggler. His mother is there in a hospital. They have an emotional reunion— she takes time to recognize him — he spends several days at her side until she tells him he should go back to his life. He promises to either come back with enough money to provide a good life in Sudan or bring her to the U.S.

— PROTAGONIST MIDPOINT (high) —

Ger joins up with Kutey, Balat and Flo Sims for fashion week in Milan. Ger attends events as a model, hoping to expand on his success to help afford his plan to bring his mother to U.S. Hanging out in a group raises Flo's suspicions about what Ger is to Balat. Tension rising for both Flo and Kutey, who is also very protective of Balat.

Kutey becomes jealous, gets drunk and has a meltdown, claiming Ger is a thief who stole his dreams. He bears all his darkest resentments, making the next morning awkward for him, while Ger quickly forgives and forgets.

Back in the States, Ger's acting and modeling career takeoff. While working on a second film he's approached by a U.N. representative who offers him a job as a Goodwill Ambassador. This could be the opportunity he's been waiting for to help his mother. Ger says as soon as he's done shooting the film he will come to New York to accept the position.

Ger's first movie is released. After watching himself in the film and the red carpet event,



Ger is mobbed by people wanting to know more about his story. He witnesses Flo mistreating Balat and loses his temper. Having a violent flashback, he almost assaults Flo. An uneasy exchange.

Later Balat shows up at his hotel and says Flo is leaving her. She informs Ger that Kutey now lives in Omaha, working at a meatpacking plant, prioritizing money for the time being. She tries to kiss Ger but he denies her, offended at the implication. They nonetheless share a sweet, true friendship moment.

Ger starts his work as a UN Goodwill Ambassador. He gets speech training.

Practices public speaking in the mirror at home or in his reflection on the subway. Later, he appears in congress speaking opposite a conservative Senator. He does a CNN appearance, and his mother tells him in a letter she saw him on the TV. He meets Larry King, who challenges Ger to explain his exact mission...

After a UN event, Ger is introduced to PRINCE AL-QAHTANI, who takes an interest in him, says he would love to begin making public appearances together. Confirming with his UN contact that his mother's resettlement case has been made a priority, in part due to his close relationship with the UNHCR, Ger agrees to another appearance with the guy.

Ger and Balat reunite in New York. She's quit modeling, now works full-time as a photographer while pursuing an architecture degree. Balat knows the prince Ger plans to speak alongside and tells Ger he's bad news, has ties to arms dealers and mercenary groups in Africa. Ger stays quiet on the issue. Their hangout turns to an extended date, living together in the city and sticking by each other's side, seemingly how it was always meant to be (if it could only last).

Their romance is interrupted by news about Kutey. He's stopped paying rent in Omaha. His boss at a meatpacking plant





where he's been working thinks he might be very sick.

Ger travels to Omaha and discovers Kutey is in the hospital, facing a cancer diagnosis. He stays with Kutey, pays off his landlord and gets him a new apartment. Balat promises Ger she'll visit, and Ger informs Kutey he has to go back to Africa, this time to finish his second feature film, but he will be back, hopefully with his mother.

After shooting his scenes in South Africa, Ger flies to Kenya. He's about to catch a connecting flight to Sudan to visit mom

and gets a call: Prince Al-Qahtani. The summit has been moved up and he's needed. He is about to tell the prince he can't make it when his contact at the U.N. calls and tells him it's important he go. He changes plans and flies to the middle east.

In a rich Persian Gulf city, Ger appears at a summit meant to raise awareness around women's rights. He witnesses things in the country that make him feel the prince he's presenting with is being hypocritical. Workers live in slave-like conditions in the shadow of gleaming abundance. When the prince requests he come to London to do a TV appearance, Ger still agrees.



Ger returns to Omaha. Kutey is still sick, but tells Ger that Balat has been coming every weekend to help him.



Ger looks at houses for his mother. One night Kutey tells the story of his past before meeting Balat. It explains why he never wanted to be someone else's servant, or be considered "less than." But now his life, dreams and ambitions have fallen apart. Ger tells his friend to save his energy, and leaves money for Kutey's rent and groceries.

Montage: Ger explains that between his duties for the U.N. he got to see all new parts of America and the world. He visits the Great Wall of China and Japanese gardens. He snaps a photo of the Golden Gate Bridge and gawks at the Northern Lights of Northern Europe. He looks at the watch on his wrist, wishing he could share these moments with his family and friends.

Ger returns to his apartment in New York and finds in a stack of mail: a wedding invitation. The



wedding? Kutey and Balat. Evidently they have fallen in love in his absence. Ger pockets the invite and unpacks, already preparing for the next work call. Perhaps in shock.

A few days later on his way to deliver as speech at the U.N. building in New York, Ger is told his mother's resettlement case has been approved. She can officially come to the United States. He calls to tell her his plans for them to get a house, but can't get through. Ger gives his speech.

In the airport on his way to London to appear with the prince, Ger gets word that his mother has passed away. Dr. Garland tells him he's so sorry, he knows how much he wanted to bring her to the U.S., but she died peacefully.

— PROTAGONIST CLIMAX (low) —

Ger can't bring himself to travel. He cancels on the prince, who offers him anything he wants to show up. Doesn't matter. Ger remains in the airport for days, not answering anyones' calls.

ACT 3

The story has caught up to the present moment. Tom realizes today is the day of Kutey and Balat's wedding. He points this out insistently. But Ger says it's too late, he's going back to Sudan to visit his father and see his mother's final resting place. Tom can't argue. It's announced that a new plane is ready to board. Finally! Everyone cheers. Everyone except Ger.

Once in the plane, Ger changes his mind as boarding ends and the doors close. To his surprise, Tom wants to join him. They rush out of the airport and Tom drives like a bat out of hell to get Ger to his friends' wedding in Prospect Park.

Just in time to catch the end of the ceremony, Tom meets Kutey, Balat, Dr. Garland, Ned Jones, Coach Mitchell and others. Older now, but real. He sees Ger in a whole new light.



Later, Tom dances with many of these characters and meets a model who seems to like him. Balat pulls Ger aside on the dance floor and apologizes to him for not communicating better with him over the past year as Kutey went into remission and they fell in love. Ger proposes a toast. She tells him she can't. She's pregnant. Beside himself, Ger congratulates her from the heart.

Outside the reception, Dr. Garland encourages Ger to continue his work for the U.N. Ger agrees, but mentions wanting to help his friend Airborne Boy come to the states.

Balat and Kutey insist that Ger and Tom join them for breakfast. Ger accepts but wants to walk while they take a cab. Arriving outside the diner at dawn, Ger glimpses his former selves watching over him, leading his donkey from childhood along the streets of NY. Ger enters the diner and we drift back for a view of the sun rising over planet Earth.



THE END

Characters





Ger Duany



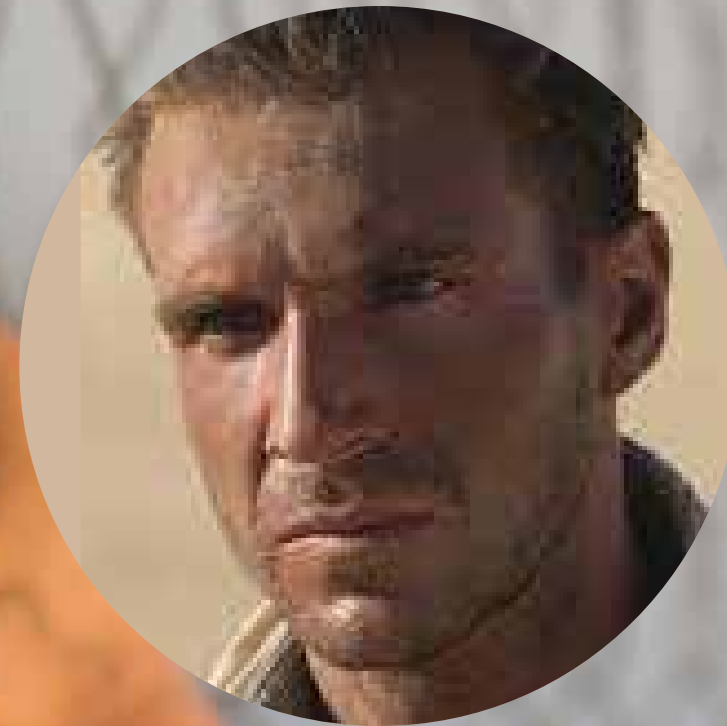
Tom



Balat



Dr Josh Garland



Airborne Boy



Thank you!

