

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

The Zorro of Harlem

Written by

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Based on, The Mark of Zorro
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Draft

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TEXT Crawls across a **BLACK SCREEN**

Superimpose: "After decades of operating in separate worlds, black and Latino gangs have begun to clash over turf and drugs, sparking a series of violent interracial battles that authorities say signals an ominous turn in the region's gang warfare."

Opening Montage Comprised of - Documentary Footage showing THE MANY GANGS OF HARLEM across different housing projects in Harlem. The gangs are all labeled by **TEXT** that comes up on the screen. **1040, 20 BLOCK, EAST ARMY, BROAD DAY SHOOTERS, HILLTOP, TRUE MONEY GANG,** etc,.

CUT TO:

EXT. LENOX LOUNGE - MALCOM X BOULEVARD - HARLEM - DAY

DONNIE, 21, black, athletically built, is standing outside of the Lenox Lounge nightclub. The bar is not open, lights are off, doors open. Donnie looks as though he were waiting.

MANAGER of the nightclub, 48, younger than he looks, comes stumbling out, looking shaky and uneven. He closes the door and locks up the place behind him, keys shaking while he does so.

DONNIE

Look, I can't keep being here when they show. You're gonna have to face them on your own sometimes. I can't be everywhere at once.

MANAGER

Donnie, I need you here tonight! Your the only security I can afford now. Every gang in Harlem shows up, selling their dope and starting fights every night. I can't keep this place open if there's no bouncer.

DONNIE

Well, sorry but if that's the case, then get yourself a new bouncer.

MANAGER

Kid, you gotta work tonight! They're gonna show up! I know it!

DONNIE

Fox, I love this place. I really do, but you can't pay me enough to be the Lenox Lounges personal vigilante.

(MORE)

DONNIE (cont'd)

This is a nice place, Fox. Lot of jazz legends came through and got there start here. As a jazz man, I can appreciate that, but if this place has become nothing more than headquarters for criminals and no one can chill? Then it's not the gig for me, anymore.

MANAGER

You're fucking me over here, Donnie. This place needs you.

DONNIE

Not my problem.

Donnie walks off coldly, leaving the manager looking feeble in front of the charismatic looking night club.

He turns around the corner and smiles, knowingly. Out of ear shot, Donnie talks to himself.

DONNIE (cont'd)

I'll be there tonight, old friend. If only you knew.

Superimpose Title: **THE ZORRO OF HARLEM**

CUT TO:

INT. DONNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Inside of the dark studio apartment, Donnie is seen putting on a black getup, a black Zorro like mask and a black fedora instead of the traditional Zorro hat. He picks up a TRUMPET CASE and heads for the door.

EXT. HARLEM - NIGHT

ZORRO walks the streets. Passer byes wave to him and laugh. He goes down Malcom X blvd towards the Lenox Lounge.

ZORRO gets to the front entrance. Crowded around the entrance way is a bunch of WHITE HIPSTERS.

DONNIE (V.O.)

Well, so much for his fear of gang activity tonight. Looks like the gentrification has wormed it's way to Lenox Lounge.

INT. LENOX LOUNGE - NIGHT

Zorro walks into the Lenox Lounge, slipping by the large BOUNCER the manager has found to replace Donnie for the evening.

Zorro leaps up on the stage of the nightclub. Zorro opens up the trumpet case, takes it out and starts playing. He's fantastic and all the white people in the club seem to get a kick out of "Zorro" performing.

CUT TO:

INT. LENOX LOUNGE - NIGHT

The nightclub is closing down and the all white crowd leaves. The manager seems weary however of Zorro. Manager commiserates with the bouncer.

MANAGER

What's he doing here? Did this guy come in like that? Who is he?

BOUNCER

He must have put the costume on after he got inside because I didn't see him come in.

Zorro over hears them and smiles. He walks off the stage. He walks over to the two of them and takes off his mask.

MANAGER

Donnie! You son of a bitch! That was you the whole time!

DONNIE

I'm insulted you don't recognize my playing by now.

He laughs at him.

DONNIE (cont'd)

See, I told you everything is fine. You had no idea I was gonna pull my little stunt and the place didn't get gang banged.

MANAGER

Yeah, that's right Donnie!

Donnie laughs again and starts to leave.

DONNIE

Don't worry so much, boss man! I'll see you later.

Donnie walks out the door. The tone in the room seems to shift to an ominous confusion.

BOUNCER

You didn't do too bad tonight.

MANAGER

Look, I need to keep everything that I earned from tonight.

BOUNCER

Is that so? Let me just call my boys, see what they think on that.

The manager tries to go towards the door. He's swiftly followed by his bouncer.

CUT TO:

We get a sense of time having passed, as Bouncer has the manager seated and isn't letting him leave. GANG MEMBERS show up at the club to aid the bouncer in extorting the manager.

GANG MEMBER

So what do we have to do? Bleed the money out of him.

BOUNCER

I already got him to give me the money. Now it's just a matter of the time this man has cost us, this evening.

The bouncer and his gang proceed to brutally gang stomp this old manager in his club. They horribly beat him to the point where he's paralyzed. Then one of the gang members proceeds to cut up his face.

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM HOSPITAL - DAY

The manager has been made a quadriplegic. He is conscious as Donnie walks into the room. The mute manager seems to light up slightly at his presence and motions with his eyes to signal Donnie towards a small box on the dresser. Donnie understandingly goes over to it and opens it up. It's a harmonica.

The manager is signaling Donnie to put the harmonica in his mouth for him. Donnie raises it to managers lips. Manager plays a song on harmonica for Donnie. Donnie cries.

CUT TO:

INT. LENOX LOUNGE - NIGHT

Superimpose: **1 YEAR LATER**

Donnie, in a white suit, is overlooking the club as it's new manager. He looks at the crowd having a good time. The BARTENDER gets Donnie's attention.

BARTENDER

Hey, boss. I saw that bouncer you were asking about. He was in here earlier tonight, talking about you. Said you were the one that fired him.

DONNIE

Not exactly. Didn't fire him but he'll never work in this place again.

BARTENDER

Why's that? He seemed pissed off by that.

DONNIE

Because I suspect that bouncer had something to do with the old manager Fox's attack a year ago, that left him paralyzed.

BARTENDER

What makes you think that?

DONNIE

The bouncer was here that night.

BARTENDER

So?

DONNIE

All the security cameras were shut off for some reason.

BARTENDER

Oh. So really, there's no proof of anything?

DONNIE

We'll see what proof there is. What did this bouncer have to say tonight?

BARTENDER

All kinds of shit about you, the place and Fox. He said he knows you're the one who use to dress up and perform as Zorro in this place, exposing your identity to the patrons of the bar.

Donnie starts to form an idea.

DONNIE

What if it turned out someone else was Zorro?

The bartender looks confused.

BARTENDER

What? You mean like multiple Zorro's?

DONNIE

Exactly. I gotta go take care of some things. You make sure that former bouncer is watched closely if he's anywhere near here. I'll be back.

CUT TO:

INT. TAEKWONDO STUDIO - DAY

Donnie is practicing martial arts alongside his TAEKWONDO INSTRUCTOR.

TAEKWONDO INSTRUCTOR

You've been improving a lot, Donnie. I would like to introduce you to my new pupil, Robert.

An athletic looking white guy, ROBERT, 21, walks up to the two of them.

TAEKWONDO INSTRUCTOR (cont'd)

I have trained this man to the same capacity that I have you. I think you two are equals at this point.

ROBERT

It's nice to meet you, Donnie. I've heard much about you.

DONNIE

Is that so?

Donnie looks to his Taekwondo instructor, skeptically.

DONNIE (cont'd)

Would you be willing to dress up and act as a sort of spy for a night?

ROBERT

What the fuck?

DONNIE

I need you to do a good thing. For a man I care very much about.

ROBERT

You need me?

TAEKWONDO INSTRUCTOR

Donnie, it's about time someone took on the scum in this rotting city. Harlem needs a soul who's strong enough to take on the mantel of a guardian.

DONNIE

That's exactly what I'm gonna do, but I need you too, Robert.

ROBERT

So is this like, something you guys do on the regular, or?

CUT TO:

EXT. LENOX LOUNGE - NIGHT

Robert is dressed up as Zorro standing next to a car outside of the club. Inside the car is Donnie.

ROBERT

Why am I dressed as the Dread Pirate Roberts from Princess Bride?

Donnie looks disturbed that Robert isn't familiar with Zorro's iconic costume.

DONNIE

You're not. You're dressed as Zorro, aka The Fox.

Robert rolls his eyes with slight amusement.

ROBERT

Well, I'd like think of it as Dread Pirate Roberts, especially since it has my name. I think that aligns more with my principles. I like what that character stood for.

DONNIE

That's a different character. Dread Pirate Roberts is distinct from Zorro.

Robert looks himself over and the outfit that he finds himself in.

ROBERT

Their costumes are not at all distinct from each other. What am I doing this for, Donnie?

DONNIE

I already told you and you just said it yourself, a moment ago. Principles.

ROBERT

That doesn't explain why the costume.

DONNIE

Because you're now the protector of this place. You need to keep your identity hidden from those that threaten the livelihood of it and the kindly souls who frequently patron this - this institution. This piece of history. History of; art, jazz, the very history of Harlem itself. It all can be found in these walls.

ROBERT

Okay, Donnie. Hey, I think I see that fun crowd you were telling me to look out for.

The bouncer and his own gang of ENFORCERS and DRUG DEALERS come piling out of a Cadillac Escalade.

DONNIE

Yeah, they're here. You tail there every move. I'll be close by. Don't do anything 'till I give you the word. Just stay on them no matter what.

ROBERT

I'm so nervous, Donnie. I've never done anything like this-

Donnie hands him a small radio headpiece. Robert puts it in his ear.

DONNIE

Now move out, young man.

ROBERT

We're the same damn age.

Donnie just points unnoticeably straight ahead at their targets, the gang members.

DONNIE

Go make like a fly, guy. Like a fly circling a pile of shit.

CUT TO:

EXT. LENOX LOUNGE - NIGHT

The bouncer and his crew are harassing people, cat calling women and then verbally abusing anyone who says anything, backing up there bravado with threat of violence that distinctly feels very real and imminent, rather than just tough talk. We don't really here the specifics however as Robert is listening in out of ear shot but closely watching the gangs behavior, prepared to do anything needed in retaliation.

We go from Robert's distanced perspective, to right up against the club with the former bouncer and his group of goons.

BOUNCER

Fuck this tailgating, bullshit. Let's go back in and reclaim our spot. Once and for all.

DRUG DEALER

You sure, G? It's harder for them to kick us off the property when we're slanging out here-

BOUNCER

'Fuck you mean, bro? This our spot. This is our hood! You with me or what?

Back to Roberts perspective the bouncer has rallied his gang and are now headed for the doors of the lenox lounge.

ROBERT
(over radio)
Donnie, they went inside.

DONNIE (O.S.) (O.C.)
Well, then I suppose you better
follow. Just don't get caught.

INT. LENOX LOUNGE - NIGHT

Bouncer and his crew fill up a section of the club and immediately proceed to start smoking, pushing other guests and staff around and pretty much every undesirable thing you can imagine.

ZORRO (ROBERT) walks in. The gang immediately notices him and laughs. He tries to hide. The gang members follow him.

BOUNCER
What do you want, Zorro? I seen you
hear before.

The gang starts to surround Robert. He takes several of them down with his taekwondo but is eventually overwhelmed by knives and is stabbed to death in the club.

The Bartender tries to interfere.

BARTENDER
Hey, stop!

The bartender is also inevitably stabbed to death by the gang.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The gang has fled, running down the alley way. Donnie shows up, still in his white suit.

DONNIE
Hey, stop Mother fucker!

Bouncer stops dead in his tracks

BOUNCER
Luckily, you showed up. Now it can
all play out in my favor.

Bouncers gun goes off, accidentally shooting himself in the leg.

BOUNCER (cont'd)
Fuck! My fuckin' leeg!

Bouncer runs off.

DONNIE
You killed my friends, you
mothefucker! You're not gonna get
away with this!

Bouncer manages to escape.

CUT TO:

EXT. LENOX LOUNGE - DAYS LATER

Donnie is shutting down the Lenox Lounge, days later.

The former bouncer shows up.

BOUNCER
I merced those fools and there's
nothing you can do about it.

Donnie looks angry beyond the point of reason but still some
how remains composure.

DONNIE
At least you'll never be able to
destroy this place again. Even if we
have to close for now.

Bouncer smiles.

DONNIE (cont'd)
And believe me, it is just for now.
You can't stay up this way. It's all
gonna come crashing down. Believe
it.

Bouncer scoffs and walks off.

BOUNCER
If you were gonna do anything about
it by now, you already would have,
Donnie.

Bouncer walks off and laughs. Donnie remains to close up the place.