

*This feature screenplay takes place during World War II. Pacing is crucial in a screenplay, and we wanted you get to know the characters (especially the protagonist) while revealing all the information that's necessary in the fastest way possible. The sample ends at the "inciting incident."*

EXT. STREETS - DAY

SUPER: "BELGRADE, APRIL, 1941"

HENRY RADICK, mid 20s, rugged, worn leather jacket, rides his Triumph motorcycle down the street.

Henry notices war weary CITIZENS with strained faces lining the sidewalks. A group of SOLDIERS run to catch a train.

A NEWSBOY runs along the sidewalk, trying to keep up with Henry's motorcycle.

NEWSBOY

Henry! You're on page three!

The newsboy grins as he opens the paper to show him.

HENRY

Next time I'll make the front page!

Henry waves as he drives on. He rides past the

ROYAL PALACE

Some ROYAL GUARDS are in the middle of performing their rotation beneath a poster of KING PETER II, a teenager decorated in a war uniform.

Henry quickly cuts across the busy street.

EXT. STOREFRONT - DAY

Henry approaches a group of citizens huddled outside a store window, listening to a large radio that is for sale inside.

Henry gets closer.

DRAGIŠA CVETKOVIĆ (V.O.)

(through the radio  
speakers)

I call upon every citizen to defend  
his own home at its threshold.

MAN IN CROWD #1

I hope the Nazis continue the cease  
fire.

MAN IN CROWD #2

Of course they will, we're a  
neutral country. Why would they  
risk war with us?

Henry crosses the street.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Henry gets near the entrance. He notices two ARMED GUARDS and  
several GESTAPO AGENTS blocking the doorway.

Henry ducks into an

ALLEY

Henry finds a nearby garbage bin. He steps onto it. He opens  
the second story window and climbs through it.

INT. LIBRARY BUILDING HALLS - CONTINUOUS

Henry walks past a few LIBRARY PATRONS. He arrives at a side  
STAIRWELL

Henry hustles down the steps.

INT. LIBRARY COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry emerges from the stairwell. He is clearly disgusted by  
all the Nazi insignias and banners that cover the walls of  
the courtyard.

NAZI OFFICERS stand intermingled with middle aged MEN in  
suits. They stare towards the lectern, where a LARGE NAZI  
OFFICER addresses the group.

Henry stands in the back, trying to remain unnoticed.

LARGE NAZI OFFICER

There is nothing to fear. This  
alliance will preserve your city  
and spare you the pains of war. The  
German army is ready to protect  
you. Heil Hitler.

He gives the Nazi salute at the podium. The Germans in the room salute back. The men in suits follow along as a formality.

Henry doesn't salute. Some notice his refusal.

GEORGE, 40s, well dressed, approaches Henry.

GEORGE  
You're late.

HENRY  
Another story got in the way.

GEORGE  
I don't abide tardiness.

HENRY  
Don't be a hypocrite. You politicians are late to everything... what do you have for me?

GEORGE  
We can't talk here.

HENRY  
You've got to give me something.

GEORGE  
Come by my office at noon tomorrow, we can talk then.

HENRY  
At least tell me if we're making a deal with the Russians.

George gets in closer.

GEORGE  
These walls have ears my friend. I will tell you all you want to know tomorrow.

Some of the Nazi Officers and men in the room stare at Henry as they chat amongst themselves.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I think you've worn out your welcome.

HENRY  
Noon tomorrow - you'd better have something for me.

Henry goes back up the stairs.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Henry returns to his motorcycle. He notices the church bell TOLL at exactly three o'clock.

HENRY

Shit.

Henry punches the throttle and speeds away.

INT. NEWS OFFICE - NIGHT

Henry enters. It's bustling with activity. WORKERS are on the phones. COPY BOYS run back and forth as READERS helm the wireless services.

The walls hang with maps detailing troop positions and various pictures of politicians.

Henry passes by SHEILA, mid 40s, rigid, sitting behind a small desk.

SHEILA

You're late.

HENRY

I ran into a little trouble downtown.

SHEILA

You'd better get in there, they've stared already.

Henry quickly walks into the

CONFERENCE ROOM

BILL is in the middle of addressing his STAFF. Henry sits on a nearby desk, his arms folded.

BILL

We must maintain the highest standards. If that means re-checking all your sources, so be it; I don't care how long it takes. Don't be afraid to get back on the streets and tear up some leather. I've notices some of you getting passive with your stories. Stop...

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)  
we don't get passive Alvana - we  
get active.

Henry smirks as he watches looks of inspiration on the faces  
of his co-workers.

BILL (CONT'D)  
You have to be willing to risk  
everything for your story. Never  
quit, never give up. And above all -  
always protect your sources.

Bill notices Henry.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Okay, back to work everyone. I want  
copy on my desk by end of day.

The staff disperses as Bill approaches Henry.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Nice of you to join us.

Henry takes out a few crumpled pieces of paper out of his  
inner coat pocket and hands them to Bill. Bill glances at  
them. He reads intently, clearly intrigued. Bill looks up.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Is this what I think it is?

Henry nods.

HENRY  
The Prince is gone, but the Nazis  
are still holding secret meetings  
around town. I just got back from  
one.

BILL  
And?

HENRY  
My source froze. But I'm supposed  
to meet him tomorrow.

BILL  
It could be a set-up.

HENRY  
Doubtful. He's a politician.  
There's something in it for him.

BILL  
Just watch yourself.

A young PHOTOGRAPHER approaches Bill and Henry.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Chief, you want a staff photo?

BILL  
Sure.  
(to his staff)  
Come on everyone, get in here for a  
quick photo.

The staff quickly huddles together as the photographer gets in place.

The photographer snaps a photo.

INT. NEWS OFFICE - HALLWAY - LATER

Henry walks past Shelia's desk.

SHEILA  
Oh, I almost forgot to give you  
this.

Sheila hands Henry a piece of paper. He opens it. Henry smiles to himself as he reads it.

A PLANE ENGINE can be heard in the distance. Henry walks over to a nearby

WINDOW

The outline of a plane cuts through the twilight sky. It circles over the large city.

As the plane glides through the air, the day's last remaining beam of sunlight enhances a black and white "SWASTIKA" on its tailfin.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Henry enters. LOCAL MUSICIANS in the corner start playing.

He notices KRISTINA, mid 20s, attractive brunette, sitting at a table in the corner.

Henry approaches. He leans over and gives her a kiss.

HENRY  
Got your note.

KRISTINA  
Just wanted to make sure you  
remembered.

Henry smiles.

HENRY  
I wouldn't miss this for the  
world... any updates?

KRISTINA  
Still preparing for the worst.  
They're setting up a bomb shelter  
under the Mainstreet Bridge.

A WAITER comes by. Henry hands him the menus back.

HENRY  
Two of the usual, Peter.

Peter nods as he leaves.

KRISTINA  
I need those church supplies I  
asked you for.

HENRY  
I've got an important meeting  
tomorrow, but after that I promise  
I'll bring 'em right over.

KRISTINA  
I don't like you meeting in back  
alleys with shady characters.

HENRY  
Don't worry, he's just a  
bureaucratic looking for some extra  
dough. And only met one source in  
an alley; and it was for good  
reason.

Kristina can't help but smile.

The band starts a new SONG.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
(referring to the song)  
One of your favorites, isn't it?

Henry gets up, extends his hand. Kristina reluctantly gets up  
and takes it. They head to a small

DANCE FLOOR

Henry leads as they begin to sway to the tune.

KRISTINA

I suppose me telling you to be careful wouldn't change anything.

HENRY

I'm always careful.

Kristina scoffs.

KRISTINA

You've got a recklessness in you. Lord knows I've tried to tame it.

Henry caresses her face.

HENRY

Don't worry, everything is going to be just fine.

Henry kisses her.

She wraps her arms around him as they continue to dance.

EXT. HENRY'S FLAT - NIGHT

Henry arrives at his modest dwelling. He flips on a light switch. Family photos, a typewriter, a soccer ball and books are illuminated. The books consist of biographies of world leaders, war strategies, modern warships and planes.

Henry notices a FAMILY OF FIVE, a couple with three kids, in the building across the alley. They glance up from their meal at the dinner table and wave at Henry.

Henry waves back. He starts to sift through his mail on the table. One letter states "NOTICE: URGENT" in large red letters. Henry opens it and begins reading it.

INSERT - LETTER

"YOU ARE HEARBY SUMMONED TO REPORT FOR DUTY AT THE NAVAL STATION AT KUMBOR. SINCERELY, THE NAVAL MINISTRY."

BACK TO SCENE

HENRY

Shit.

Henry throws the letter onto the ground. He paces around his flat. Henry finally stops at his fireplace mantle. He finds an old Bible among several dusty books.

Henry takes it with him to his bed as he lies down. He opens the Bible. A photo falls out from the back.

The photo is of him and over a DOZEN PEOPLE of all ages.

Henry places the bible on his chest as he takes a closer look at the photo.

MONTAGE - THE PEOPLE STARTING THEIR DAY IN BELGRADE

-- Citizens hustling to work.

-- A BAKER turns his sign around to state "open."

-- The PAPERBOY delivers his papers to businesses on a bike.

-- A FOOD VENDOR pushes his cart across the sidewalk.

INT. HENRY'S FLAT - DAY

Henry is asleep, the Bible next to him on his bed. The building begins to shake. SCREAMING PLANES outside.

Henry awakens at once. He jumps out of bed, still in his clothes from the night before.

Henry gets to the window. He look out at the early morning sky. The floor begins to shake violently.

In the distance, an orange bloom of fire, followed by a distant explosion.

Henry recoils.

HENRY

My God!

A shrieking WHISTLE. Henry looks up to the sky.

It's filled with Nazi Stuka planes diving down on bombing runs. They swarm the sky like locusts, SHRIEKING loudly.

BOOM!

A distant explosion flashes fire, followed by black smoke. At once, dozens of bombs begin to hit buildings.

Henry turns away from the window. He dives to the other side of the bed. His window breaks as shrapnel flies into his room. Henry is blown back against the wall as glass shards rain over him.

Henry gets to his feet, unsteady. He's got a few cuts, but seems to be okay. Henry grabs his ears as he looks out the broken window.

He sees his the same family that waved to him the night before in the building across the street. They are scrambling to get out.

Their building explodes. They are engulfed in flames.

EXT. STREETS OF BELGRAD - CONTINUOUS

All across the city, more buildings disappear into plumes of orange flame.