

NOTE: This feature screenplay is set during World War II. Pacing is crucial in a screenplay, and we wanted the reader to get to know the characters (especially the protagonist) while revealing all the necessary information as quickly as possible. The sample ends with 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 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 Henry.

HENRY

Next time, I'll make the front page!

Henry waves as he drives on. He rides past the

ROYAL PALACE

ROYAL GUARDS pace beneath a poster of KING PETER II, just 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 placed 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
Damn Nazis better continue the
cease-fire.

MAN IN CROWD #2
They will. 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

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

INT. LIBRARY BUILDING HALLS - CONTINUOUS

Henry walks past a few LIBRARY PATRONS until he arrives at a
SIDE STAIRWELL

He hustles down the steps.

INT. LIBRARY COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry emerges from the stairwell. Disgust crosses his face as
he notices several Nazi logos and banners covering the walls
of the courtyard.

NAZI OFFICERS intermingle with middle-aged MEN in suits. They
stare towards a podium where a LARGE NAZI OFFICER addresses
the group.

Henry stands in the back, trying to remain unnoticed.

LARGE NAZI OFFICER
There is no need 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.

The officer 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
I had to wrap up another story.
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 closer.

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

Henry frowns at George's refusal.

Some Nazi Officers and men in the room stare at Henry and George.

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

HENRY
Noon tomorrow -- and 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 precisely three o'clock.

HENRY

Shit.

He punches the throttle and speeds away.

INT. NEWS OFFICE - NIGHT

It's bustling with activity. Henry enters. WORKERS are on the phones, COPY BOYS run back and forth, and 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

Ran into a bit of trouble downtown.

SHEILA

You'd better get in there; they've started already.

Henry quickly walks into the

CONFERENCE ROOM

BILL is in the middle of addressing the STAFF. Henry sits on a nearby desk, 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 return to the streets and tear up some leather.

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

BILL (CONT'D)

You have to be willing to risk everything for your story.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

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 the end of
the day.

The staff disperses as Bill approaches Henry.

BILL (CONT'D)

Nice of you to join us.

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

BILL (CONT'D)

(looking up)

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

Could be a set-up.

HENRY

Doubtful. He's a politician; he
knows 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)

Everyone get in here for a quick photo.

The staff huddles together as the photographer gets in place -
- a photo SNAPS to white.

INT. NEWS OFFICE - HALLWAY - LATER

Henry walks past Shelia's desk.

SHEILA

Oh, I almost forgot.

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, sitting at a table in the corner. Henry approaches, leans over, and kisses her.

HENRY

Got your note.

KRISTINA

Just wanted to make sure you remembered.

Henry smiles.

HENRY

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

KRISTINA
 Still preparing for the worst.
 They're setting up a bomb shelter
 under the Main Street 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 I'll bring 'em over
 right after.

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

HENRY
 Don't worry; he's a harmless
 bureaucrat. And I only met with one
 source in an alley, and it was for
 good reason.

The band starts a new SLOWER SONG.

Henry gets up and extends his hand. Kristina can't help but smile as she reluctantly gets up and takes his hand. They head to the

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
 No one can tame that recklessness
 in you.

HENRY

This coming from the most stubborn woman I've ever met.

Henry dips her.

KRISTINA

I should find a man that will listen to me.

HENRY

But then you wouldn't have any fun.

KRISTINA

At least I won't worry all day that he's going to end up dead.

Henry caresses her face.

HENRY

Don't worry; everything is going to be 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 and flips on a light switch. Family photos, a typewriter, a soccer ball, and books illuminate the room. The books include biographies of world leaders, war strategies, modern warships, and planes.

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

Henry sifts through his mail scattered on the table. One letter states "NOTICE: URGENT" in large red letters. Henry opens it and reads.

INSERT - LETTER

"YOU ARE HEREBY 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, finally stopping at his fireplace mantle. He finds an old Bible among several dusty books.

He takes it with him to his bed and lies down. He opens the Bible, and a photo falls out of the back.

The photo is of him and over a DOZEN MEN AND WOMEN of various ages.

He places the Bible on his chest and looks closer 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.

He awakens and jumps out of bed, still in his clothes from the night before. He gets to the window and looks 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 into the bright sky.

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

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 and dives to the other side of the bed. His window breaks open, and he is blown back against the wall as glass shards rain on him.

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

The same family that waved to him the night before in the building across the street are scrambling to leave their flat.

Their building EXPLODES. They are engulfed in flames.

EXT. STREETS OF BELGRADE - EXT

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