

"Hitler's Script"  
Inspired by true events  
An original comedy  
(Note I said "inspired")  
by Dan Fiorella

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Hitler's Script

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FADE IN:

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM -- DAY

Present day. GRETA SOMMER, a woman in her 90s, dozes her rocking chair, a yellowed scrapbook in her lap. In the book, a yellowed photo of a young couple: GRETA STEINBERG and FRITZ SOMMER, standing in front of the Hollywood sign, circa. 1945.

The DOORBELL rings.

CHILD (O.S.)

Mom! There's some guys here to see great-granny!

A few moments later there's a light knock at the door.

MOM

Oma?

Greta Sommers wakes.

GRETA SOMMER

(soft German accent)

Yes, lieben?

MOM

Those men are here to talk to you.

GRETA SOMMER

Oh, my. Already? I was just looking over my scrapbook to refresh my memory.

MOM

Are you sure you want to go through with this?

GRETA SOMMER

Well, no, but they asked so nicely. Give me a few minutes to freshen up.

MOM

Oma, you don't have to. I mean, at your age, do you want to start up with this again?

GRETA SOMMER

It's not something I can turn off, dear. Even at my age.

MOM

Okay. I'll let them in.

INT. FOYER -- MORNING

Mom is at the front door. Two men, DOUG and MEL, barely out of grad film school, stand there with some carrying cases.

MOM

Look, gentlemen, I know my grandmother agreed to talk to you---

DOUG

She didn't change her mind?

MOM

No. But she's spoken to a lot of Jewish groups and civil rights groups about the war and her life over the years and I think she deserves some peace at this point in her life. I don't want you to upset her.

MEL

We don't want to upset her.

MOM

See to it. Now, which group are you with?

MEL

We're with the U.S. Film Institute.

MOM

I'm sorry, what?

DOUG

The U.S. Film Institute.

Mel struggles to produce some ID.

MOM

Film Institute? I don't understand.

MEL

Well, we recently uncovered film footage. Some long-lost footage.

DOUG

I mean, we've all heard about the movie but no one ever saw it.

MEL

And now we have. And that led us to Greta Sommer.

MOM

Well...my grandfather did write for the movies.

DOUG  
 (checking some notes)  
 Fritz Sommer.

MOM  
 He was involved?

GRETA SOMMER (O.S.)  
 Involved in what?

They turn to see Greta Sommer on the stairs.

DOUG  
 Mrs. Sommer?

GRETA SOMMER  
 Yes?

Mel & Doug hurry in with their stuff.

INT. STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

MEL  
 We're here to talk about "Entreiben  
 Sieg."

GRETA SOMMER  
 That's what you found?

DOUG  
 Directed by Max Schmidt.

GRETA SOMMER  
 Max. Oh, Max.

DOUG  
 And your husband wrote it.

GRETA SOMMER  
 Co-wrote it. I'm even in it.

MEL  
 It appears to be a...Nazi propaganda  
 film.

MOM  
 Oma??

GRETA SOMMER  
 That's the one.

MOM  
 Whoa, whoa, whoa. Oma, you were *in*  
 a Nazi propaganda film? Wait, Opa  
*wrote* a Nazi propaganda film??

GRETA SOMMER  
 Co-wrote.

MOM

How can---? No, this doesn't---. I can't believe this.

GRETA SOMMER

The footage, what there was of it, was lost and we just let it be.

MEL

We're looking to fill in historical facts, Mrs. Sommer, not make judgements.

MOM

Leave the judgements to me.

DOUG

I understand you may be ashamed---

GRETA SOMMER

Ashamed? Oh, no, my dear. Being part of that movie was the greatest thing that ever happened to me.

INT. DINING ROOM -- LATER

Mom assists Greta Sommer to a seat at the dining room table. The table is covered with some file folders and vintage photographs, including a young GRETA STERNBERG in costume.

Doug and Mel have a video camera trained on Greta Sommer, a tape recorder is running. Mel is taking notes as Greta Sommer looks over the pictures.

GRETA SOMMER

Mein Gott. Can it be, after all these years?

DOUG

(into the mike)

Greta Sommer, nee Steinberg, speaking about "Entreiben Sieg," a film directed by Max Schmidt, written by Fritz Sommer---

GRETA SOMMER

Co-written.

DOUG

Now, Mrs. Sommer, you were saying?

GRETA SOMMER

Well, it was 1945. The war was going badly for Germany. The end was near. Everyone felt it. Only the Nazis didn't want to admit it.

DISSOLVE TO:

MAP of Europe, circa 1945 (Ala "Casablanca"). Arrows show movement of the Allied Troops toward Germany.

We close in on the city of Berlin.

GRETA SOMMER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Allies were invading from the west. And the Russian troops were fighting hard to the east. Berlin itself was the target of Allied bombers. The people had to deal with food and supply shortages but the Nazi regime continued to pour its resources in the two industries which they felt would win the war: munitions and movies.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UFA STUDIOS -- DAY

Stock footage of the studio grounds, 1945.

GRETA GOLD (V.O.)

The UFA studios were the heart and soul of the German film industry. Now, as you know, the Nazis were masters of propaganda and were convinced that films properly made would keep the German people loyal to the Nazi Party. That's why when they first came to power, they put Joseph Goebbles in charge of UFA. The movies were the only industry still operating in Berlin. But just barely...

INT. GLAMOROUS BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Large, bright, frilly boudoir; the height of 1930 style.

SARAH, a stylish 1939 woman, enters and picks up a white telephone as she reclines on the bed.

SARAH

(soft German accent)

Ja, Ja, the General is so dreamy.

Just then, an evil looking American soldier, G.I. JOE, steps out of the curtains with his rifle raised. She drops the phone and screams.

SARAH (CONT'D)

No! Get out!

Suddenly, a good-looking version of HITLER enters, sees G.I. Joe and shoots him dead. Sarah runs to him.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Mein Führer! You saved me!

FÜHRER  
(with German accent)  
Yes, I saved you from this lowly barbarian but now I must return to headquarters so I can lead my country to save the whole world from these filthy American swine. And make the world safe for all true Aryans!

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
And cut!

Lo and behold, we are on the set of a movie. HENRICK, the director, has his seat nearby. LUKE, the blue collar-ish CAMERAMAN, is coming off his machine. A lowly writer, FRITZ SOMMER, a nebbish-type, is by the camera, watching. The G.I. Joe gets up and lights up a cigarette and goes off. The Führer takes off his moustache and turns out to be B-movie leading man and ham actor, RUDOLPH SELPIN.

(Note: Uniformed Germans will speak with an accent, everyone else speaks without.)

HENRICK  
Rudolph, Mimi, wonderful, just wonderful!

RUDOLPH  
Thanks. I hope you don't mind, me adding that "filthy American swine" line. I was really into the moment.

HENRICK  
No, it made the scene; It was a little flat.

FRITZ  
Flat? Flat? I had Hitler come in himself and shoot the American! That is the exact opposite of flat! It's bumpy! It's amazingly bumpy!

HENRICK  
Oh, settle down, Fritz. It's only a script.

FRITZ  
Only my script.

HENRICK  
We're all on the same team, Fritz.

FRITZ  
Right, right, same team. I'm sorry.

LUKE

Nice job. Thanks for stepping in for Schmidt. I don't want to think about what would have happened if we went out of production.

HENRICK

You know I like to keep busy. It's a shame about Max.

LUKE

Isn't it? He just hasn't been the same since the...accident.

FRITZ

Has anyone seen him?

Just then a closet door opens and MAX SCHMIDT, former wunderkind gone to seed, stumbles out. He has a limp and carries a flask.

MAX

Action!

Everyone stops and stares.

MAX (CONT'D)

What is this, a motion picture or a publicity still?

HENRICK

We're wrapped, Max.

MAX

Ah, then my work here is done. Excellent job, all. See you at the premiere!

Max pulls himself up and leaves smartly.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max walks in, followed by his high-strung secretary, MARTA, who is informing him of the day's schedule off the note pad she carries. She also carries a cup of coffee.

GRETA SOMMER (V.O.)

Now, Max Schmidt had been a wunderkind of German cinema before the war. Movies like "Farewell, Herr Professor" and "My Lovely Helga" were instant classics. But once the war began, things went badly for him.

MARTA

Herr Evanmeir has been calling. He wants to know where Hans Bruder is.



There are flowers in a vase. Max takes out the flowers, pours out some water into his hand and washes his face.

MAX

Am I my Bruder's keeper?

MARTA

Beg pardon?

MAX

I don't know where he is.

There's a large pile of scripts on his desk.

Max hangs up his coat. Takes out the flask and refills it from a bottle in his desk and adds some to the coffee Marta's still holding and sits.

MARTA

Mr. Schmidt!

MAX

Oh, please, Marta, you wouldn't want me to deal with this place sober, would you?

He looks at one script and tosses it out the window.

MARTA

Herr Evanmeir has been calling to see if you've decided on your next project.

MAX

So many awful scripts to choose from. Did all the good writers get sent to the front?

He tosses another out the window.

MARTA

I wouldn't know, sir.

MAX

And if they're any good, I'm not allowed to use them.

MARTA

What about that story, "Slow Boat to China?"

He grabs another script from his desk.

MAX

"Cannot set the film in China. Impossible in the context of the war." They won't let me set a film in any foreign country.

He tosses it. Then tosses each:

MAX (CONT'D)

What's the point of conquering the world if we're not allowed to set any movies there? And the others have an absurd number notes from the ministry; "Not heroic enough." "Too ambiguous." "Needs to be 20% more rousing."

MARTA

You had better pick something soon. I heard Herr Van Hauser's picture just finished and the crew just got ordered to battle.

MAX

They do that during wars. Occupational hazard.

MARTA

Herr Schmidt!

MAX

I didn't start the war.

MARTA

I didn't mean---

MAX

You know what? I'm going to need a bigger coffee mug. Go get me one, please.

MARTA

With rationing, there won't be enough coffee to fill it.

Max takes out the bottle.

MAX

Not a problem.

Marta leaves. Max goes to take a drink and pauses. A photo of a beautiful woman and daughter is on his desk. He places it face down, then drinks.

He looks at another script and tosses it, missing the window. He gets up, picks up the script and goes to the window and throws it. He looks out the window which oversees the street.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Rubble fills the street and a few weary People hustle along.

Max glances around. Across the street is a prisoner work group; a large GROUP OF JEWISH PRISONERS are working to clear

the streets of rubble. They work under the watchful eye of youthful PRISON GUARDS.

Max's gaze falls on GRETA STERNBERG, a young woman, with piercing eyes and a sad, noble beauty. She resembles the daughter in Max's photo.

She's found a potted flower under some rubble and picks it up. She's admiring it when some script pages flutter by. Startled, she looks around and then looks up to see Max at the window, staring.

Max is transfixed by the eye contact.

Suddenly, a Guard nudges Greta back to the business at hand, knocking the flower pot out of her hand, where it falls to the ground and shatters.

The moment is broken. Max is shaken by the encounter and ducks back in, hitting his head on the window frame.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

A doorway reads "Ministry of Propaganda." An Unseen Man approaches and listens at the door.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

A young and overly proper Gestapo Officer, OTTO VON HUMMOND, is at his desk with a very nervous-looking matinee idol, actor WILHELM RHINEBECH.

VON HUMMOND

It is a very straight forward question, Herr Rhinebech.

WILHELM

You say that but there's context. There's mood and setting. There's beer consumed. A lot of beer consumed.

VON HUMMOND

Enough to foster treason?

WILHELM

Treason?

VON HUMMOND

Did you or did you not tell a group of patrons at the beerhall that we needed to be true Aryans because "The perfect Nazi should be blonde  
(MORE)

VON HUMMOND (CONT'D)  
like Hitler, handsome like Goebbels,  
and fit like Goring." Just so we're  
clear, I'm quoting you here.

WILHELM  
It was something I heard.

VON HUMMOND  
From whom?

WILHELM  
I don't remember.

VON HUMMOND  
And you felt compelled to repeat it?

WILHELM  
It's funny. Because it's true.

VON HUMMOND  
Truth is not the issue.

WILHELM  
I was joking with some friends.

VON HUMMOND  
Our job here is to maintain morale  
for our fellow countrymen. How do  
you expect to make the public believe  
in a positive outcome to the war if  
they hear you slander Der Führer?

WILHELM  
I'm a good actor.

VON HUMMOND  
Not that good.

WILHELM  
Well, maybe if you guys could win a  
battle once in awhile you'd make it  
easier for us.

Von Hummond jots this down.

VON HUMMOND  
So you do question the judgment of  
your leaders?

WILHELM  
I didn't mean anything by it.

VON HUMMOND  
That is for our office to determine.  
We'll have a ruling shortly.

Phone rings.

VON HUMMOND (CONT'D)

Hello? One moment---

(to Wilhelm)

I must take this call. We will be  
in touch. Heil Hitler.

WILHELM

Ditto. I mean, Heil Hitler.

Wilhelm leaves.

VON HUMMOND

Yes? What? Yes, of course. I will  
be right over.

EXT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Turns out it's Rudolph Selpin listening at Von Hummond's  
door. Suddenly he quick steps away and turns to act like  
he's just coming down the hall as Wilhelm leaves the office.

He's not very good at acting surprised.

RUDOLPH

Wilhelm! What are you doing here?

WILHELM

Someone didn't care for that Aryan  
crack I made last night and reported  
me to the Ministry.

RUDOLPH

No!

WILHELM

It's absurd. I'm as loyal a German  
as they come. I remember when a  
drunken tirade didn't leave the  
beerhall! I'll tell you, Rudolph,  
watch what you say from now on.  
Someone is gunning for us.

RUDOLPH

Sounds like sound advice. So, hear  
of anything going into production?

WILHELM

No, nothing. I hope something comes  
up soon. We need some good luck  
around here.

RUDOLPH

You know what I say, you make your  
own luck.

WILHELM

Well, sure, if you don't have the  
talent! Ha! I'll see you.

Wilhelm leaves.

RUDOLPH

Perhaps.

INT. STUDIO COMMISSARY -- DAY

Max and OTHER PEOPLE stand in line to get the same ladleful of red cabbage stew from the LUNCH LADY behind the counter.

MAX

What's today's special?

LUNCH LADY

Red Cabbage Stew.

MAX

That's not very special. Okay, what's the regular bill of fare?

LUNCH LADY

Red Cabbage Stew.

MAX

Decisions, decisions. What do you recommend?

The Lunch Lady shoves a bowl of stew at him.

MAX (CONT'D)

Ah, the Red Cabbage Stew du jour.

He slips out his flask. He is about to pour some into the stew, reconsiders and just takes a sip. Fritz comes up behind him.

FRITZ

Hmm, it looks extra cabbage-y today.

MAX

You're joking, right?

FRITZ

Hey, I'm hungry and there's a war on.

MAX

Kind of hard to miss.

FRITZ

(leaning in)

So, you heard?

MAX

I hear everything then promptly forget it due to lack of interest.

FRITZ

Well, I heard Evanmeir is looking  
for you.

MAX

I'm really not that hard to find.

TWO EXECUTIVES jump to the front of the line, taking stew.

EXECUTIVE #1

---the grosses are down again.

EXECUTIVE #2

Of course they are. Every battle we  
lose is a market lost to us.

EXECUTIVE #1

I miss the grosses from France---

LUNCH LADY

(to Fritz)

Order?

FRITZ

I'll have the same.

LUNCH LADY

All out.

FRITZ

Oddly, I'm not that disappointed.

Lunch Lady closes down and the rest of the line breaks up.  
A Young Woman grabs a bag of crackers and dashes off.

Max and Fritz make for a table. Marta locates them.

MARTA

Herr Schmidt. Herr Evanmeir is  
looking for you.

FRITZ

See? I told you.

MAX

True but you are a very unreliable  
source.

Max gets up and leaves. Fritz takes his stew. Marta looks  
at him.

FRITZ

Finder's keepers.

INT. EVANMEIR'S OFFICE -- DAY

An office of corporate power, untouched by the sacrifices of  
war. MR. EVANMEIR, a slick corporate hocho, is at his desk.

Von Hummond stands in a back corner with an attaché case.  
An intercom buzzes.

SECRETARY (O.S.)  
Herr Schmidt is here.

EVANMEIR  
Send him in, Ingrid.

Max comes in.

EVANMEIR (CONT'D)  
Max! You're looking well.

MAX  
And by "well" you mean vertical.

EVANMEIR  
No chit-chat with you. Same as ever.

MAX  
That's why I get the big Reich marks.  
So, Wolf, what can I do for you?

EVANMEIR  
That's just it. It's what I can do  
for you. You've been a trusted member  
of the UFA family for a long time,  
Max. So when a special project comes  
along, I have to go to UFA's main  
asset. You.

MAX  
I'm honored and a bit surprised to  
hear you say that.

EVANMEIR  
What are you in pre-production with?

MAX  
Me? I'm working on a case of  
schnapps.

EVANMEIR  
I meant films.

MAX  
Just tossing around some scripts but  
nothing leaps out at me.

EVANMEIR  
Be prepared to be leapt at.

He signals Von Hummond forward, who takes out a script. He  
gives it to Evanmeir who presents it to Max.



MAX  
 "Snatching Victory?" By Adolf---  
 What?

Evanmeir nods.

MAX (CONT'D)  
 Wait, we have a writer with the same  
 name as Der Führer? What are the  
 odds?

EVANMEIR  
 There are no odds! It's written by  
 Adolf Hitler!

MAX  
 I'm about to ask "seriously?" Just  
 so you can properly frame your  
 response: Seriously?

EVANMEIR  
 Serious as a buzzbomb.

Von Hummond coughs.

VON HUMMOND  
 If I may...Herr Evanmeir, Herr  
 Schmidt, Der Führer is very much a  
 believer in the power of propaganda.  
 He is aware the morale of his people  
 is low---

MAX  
 Well, as long as he's aware.

VON HUMMOND  
 He has decided to pen this drama to  
 show the people of the Fatherland  
 how it often is darkest before the  
 storm.

MAX  
 Storm?

VON HUMMOND  
 What?

MAX  
 You said storm.

VON HUMMOND  
 I said dawn. Darkest before the  
 dawn. So, using a bit of our history,  
 he wants to show how our forefathers  
 won the hopeless battle of Kolberg.

MAX  
 Kolberg?

EVANMEIR

In 1866. During the Franco-Prussia War.

VON HUMMOND

It's one of Der Führer's favorite battles.

MAX

Yes, it's a good one. Not to second guess anyone but this sounds more like something for Henrick Grob.

VON HUMMOND

You'll be glad to hear that Herr Grob has taken up arms against our enemies to the East.

MAX

And why would I be glad to hear that? He owes me money.

EVANMEIR

May I have a moment alone with Herr Schmidt?

VON HUMMOND

Certainly.

Von Hummond goes back to his corner and turns around.

EVANMEIR

I meant...oh, never mind.

He walks Max to the opposite side of the room.

EVANMEIR (CONT'D)

Look, Max, you're a drunken bum. I understand completely.

MAX

What?

EVANMEIR

My two best directors have just been shipped off to battle. Even though you miss half your shoots, your films make money and there are glimpses of the old magic.

MAX

I'm sorry, is this a pep talk or a roast?

EVANMEIR

It's a last chance. I'm being told to make a movie.

(MORE)

EVANMEIR (CONT'D)

All you have to do is point the camera. And I score some points with the Reich. It's not like they're about to draft you and your bum leg into the service in the middle of production, so when I'm left with no choice, you're my director of choice.

MAX

As long as you're not choosy.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Lights are out. Max enters carrying the script. Marta is behind him, carrying a candle.

MAX

What is this? A blackout?

MARTA

The generators are out. They have no fuel left for today.

MAX

And they expect me to film a movie by candlelight? Ridiculous!

MARTA

There was a rumor you resigned.

MAX

What? And give up show business?

MARTA

Yes, Herr Schmidt, very amusing. Then it's true. Is that it...the script?

MAX

Yes, it is. Call Fritz. Give it to him. See if he can make something of it.

MARTA

You're going to re-write Der Führer?

MAX

I don't tell him how to run his war, he doesn't tell me how to make a movie.

Max fumbles around in his desk until he finds his bottle.

MAX (CONT'D)

That will be all.

MARTA

Yes, sir. Do you want me to leave  
the candle?

MAX

Don't bother.

She shrugs and leaves him sitting in the dark. After a moment he goes to the window. The street is deserted.

Suddenly he notices a group of people leaving through the front gate, carrying suitcases and boxes.

EXT. STUDIO GATE -- CONTINUOUS

POPS, the stern old security guard, takes their pass cards. Luke is among them, carrying his belongings in a box. Sadly, he turns to look back at his studio. He glances up and sees Max at his window. He gives a wave and leaves.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. WRITERS ROOM -- DAY

It's a large room with many metal desks and typewriters. Most of the desks are unoccupied. Fritz types away at his.

Just then some UNIFORMED GUARDS enter. They have a list. The LEADER points to several desks. The others grab the typewriters and carry them outside.

EXT. WRITERS ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A dumpster is set up, labeled "scrap metal." The Guards throw in the typewriters. A moment later a metal desk follows.

INT. WRITERS ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz looks worried. He opens a drawer where he has a copy of "Snatching Victory." He grabs it and exits.

INT. SCREENING ROOM -- DAY

Max is curled up in a chair sleeping as a German film plays. Fritz peaks in.

FRITZ

Max?

MAX

Gone fishing.

Fritz comes in with the script and sits next to him. The film shows all the classic images of Third Reich propaganda.

FRITZ

Have you read this thing?

MAX

Of course I read it. What kind of director doesn't read the script he's assigned? Just don't make me read it again.

FRITZ

We've got our work cut out for us.

MAX

Work? On what? It's giberish. The third act is a run-on sentence. I mean Prussians? Valkeryans? Life in Berlin? He had to go all the way back to 1866 to find a winning war for us? And the Franco-Prussian War? How did France get top billing? I mean, did he type this in one sitting? On page 92 he misspells "Führer."

FRITZ

So what are you saying? You don't want to do it?

MAX

Of course not. Good night, now. Be a good little scribe and turn off the projector on your way out. The daytime scenes are keeping me awake.

FRITZ

Max, you can't dismiss this out of hand. We have to do it. They'll ship us out if we don't.

MAX

Are you still here?

FRITZ

I've got no where else to go. Do you have any idea what's going on out there?

MAX

You think I drink for fun?

FRITZ

You need to crawl out of your bottle and take a look around.

MAX

Don't you dare bring that up. I know damn well what's going on. I've lost too much not to know.

FRITZ

And this is how you deal with it?

MAX

If you can't beat 'em, nap.

FRITZ

Fine. Ignore them. But all you have to do is what you do best. Make a movie. Just by getting this movie in production you'll be keeping dozens of people out of harm's way.

MAX

Very noble.

FRITZ

Not really. I'd be one of them.

MAX

Why would I ever make this? It's beyond propaganda. It's fraud. They could revoke my artistic license for this.

FRITZ

I'm thinking flashback. We show the Prussian battle as told by a grizzled old woman who was there as a child.

MAX

Making her what, 100 years old?

FRITZ

We fudge the dates. She tells the tale while the neighbors, the citizens of Berlin, war-weary and anxious for victory, get their hope back for a better tomorrow. The end.

MAX

They don't call it fiction for nothing.

FRITZ

Work's work.

MAX

It'll be the feel good movie of the war. Fine, we're back in the motion picture business. Call me when you finish the first draft.

He crawls back into his nap.

AIR RAID SIRENS sound. Fritz pulls Max up.

MAX (CONT'D)

Five more minutes.

Fritz pulls him out.

INT. BOMB SHELTER -- DAY

People huddle in a dark shelter, including Max, Fritz, Rudolph Selpin and another ACTOR. Bombs hit, shaking things up.

FRITZ

Is it me or do these things sound closer?

ACTOR

I'm no military expert but if Hitler is sitting on a wonder weapon that will win the war, now would seem like a good time to use it.

Rudolph jots a note down and makes his way to the exit.

FRITZ

(to Max)

Look, if they hand me the phone book and tell me to turn it into a musical, I'm doing it. It doesn't matter what's going on out there. This is my world. I'm not about to leave it. This studio is my reality.

MAX

Sure, outside there are no re-takes. It happens and you're stuck with it.

EXT. BOMB SHELTER -- DAY

As the people come out, suddenly 2 GESTAPO AGENTS show up and take away the Actor who remarked about the wonder bomb.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max and Fritz go through head shots.

MAX

Mitchler?

FRITZ

Hollywood.

MAX

Zwerling?

FRITZ

Hollywood.

MAX

Buchemier?

FRITZ

Russia.

MAX

Russia?

Fritz shrugs.

FRITZ

You really need to update your files.

MAX

I need grizzled. You know who did grizzled well?

FRITZ

Who?

MAX

Renate Held. We need to get her. She's been out of work so long she'll do anything.

FRITZ

She's been out of work because the Gestapo has her blacklisted.

MAX

What for?

FRITZ

For being married. Her husband is Jewish. They asked her to divorce him before the war. Even offered to send him to Switzerland or South America. They said they couldn't have Germany's biggest star in the company of a known Jew. She refused. They won't let her leave and they won't let her work.

MAX

I didn't know.

FRITZ

I know.

MAX

Is she still around?

FRITZ

Yes. The only reason she hasn't been banished completely is because Hitler is a huge fan and keeps over-riding Himmeler's orders.

MAX

You know what? Let's ask her. Hitler's favorite actress in Hitler's favorite script, what's not to love?



FRITZ

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Why do we want to do that?

MAX

Like you said, we can help some friends.

FRITZ

She's a friend?

MAX

Yes she is. A long lost friend.

EXT. BERLIN STREET -- DAY

Max and Fritz make their way through the rubble-strewn streets. A prison work crew passes by. Max stops to look, scanning the group for Greta. He sees her at the rear. Fritz watches Max watch her.

FRITZ

Are you all right?

MAX

Why? Don't I look all right?

FRITZ

Not really.

MAX

Who asked you?

Max heads off. Fritz holds back, trying to get the connection. He realizes Max has moved on and hustles to catch up.

EXT. RENATE'S HOUSE -- DAY

They come to a house. It was once a fine structure but it's now showing its age badly, with the front yard dug up and many windows boarded up. Max and Fritz head up and knock.

Suddenly a woman's arm grabs Max's coat and pulls him in.

INT. FOYER -- DAY

RENATE HELD, a grand dame who is maintaining her looks, but years of paranoia have taken their toll.

RENATE

Oh, Max! It's been too, too long.

MAX

My fault.

RENATE

Did they send you?

FRITZ  
Which "they?"

RENATE  
The party.

MAX  
No, no, Renate. The studio. I'm  
here from the studio.

RENATE  
Ah, good, good. Please, come in.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Max and Fritz are seated having some coffee, as Renate paces.

RENATE  
Oh, Max, you look---well.

MAX  
I know I don't.

RENATE  
How is Hilda?

Fritz cringes.

MAX  
I lost Hilda, Renate.

RENATE  
Oh, Max, I'm so sorry. Needless to  
say, I haven't been running in my  
usual social circles as of late.

There's an awkward pause.

The kindly looking DR. HELD comes in with a burlap bag.

RENATE (CONT'D)  
Ah, Lieben! Max, this is my husband,  
Gustave.

DR. HELD  
Ah, yes. It's been a long time, Mr.  
Schmidt.

MAX  
Too long. This is my associate,  
Fritz Sommer.

They bow. Dr. Held turns to Renate.

DR. HELD  
I got some very nice acorns, dear.

RENATE  
Excellent, love.

MAX  
What do you need acorns for?

RENATE  
That's how we make our coffee.

Fritz does a spit take.

DR. HELD  
I will leave you to your business.

Dr. Held bows and heads out.

RENATE  
Thank you. When did we last see you? Ah, yes, when Henrick smuggled me onto the set for a big masquerade scene. No one ever knew. When was that? '38? '39? I miss the studio.

MAX  
It misses you, Renate. And it's been too long. A remarkable bit of luck has befallen us and I'd like to use it to get you back in front of the cameras.

RENATE  
'Tisn't that I am unwilling---

MAX  
Can you see a Germany in despair?

FRITZ  
Want I should open a window?

RENATE  
No! No open windows!

MAX  
Hush! Now then, Germany in despair...their morale gone. Their energy sapped. Then a woman tells them a tale of a battle from long ago and their spirit is restored and they look with brightness to the future. You are that woman.

RENATE  
Not any more. My presence has been denied on screen. It's their lost but in the scheme of things, 'tis for the best, I confess. Dr. Held and I both agree a low profile is best maintained.

Fritz starts to get up.

FRITZ

Okay, thanks for the coffee.

Max pulls him down.

MAX

Renate, the times are not going to get easier. One movie is not going to make a difference. But if you had the chance to do something you love again, it could act as a salve on these difficulties.

RENATE

I suppose I should consult Dr. Held. You're not worried about the Gestapo?

MAX

Not at all.

Fritz does look worried.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Fritz and Max walk.

FRITZ

I don't think you should hire her.

MAX

Why not?

FRITZ

She'll attract the wrong kind of attention to the project. We'll have the Gestapo suddenly nosing around. It won't be good. Also, I think the part calls for a redhead.

MAX

We'll be working on Hitler's script. The Gestapo wouldn't dare.

FRITZ

All the more reason. Do you realize what would happen if they found an undesirable working on Adolph's pet project?

MAX

I hadn't considered it, but I imagine it wouldn't be pleasant for the poor hypothetical fellow.

FRITZ  
Max, listen to me. We can't afford  
to be found out. I can't---

MAX  
You can't? What? Are you spy?

Fritz pulls Max into a side alley.

INT. ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

MAX  
Easy, boy. You might break my flask.

FRITZ  
Listen to me...We must do this movie  
but we can't call attention to  
ourselves. I can not be put under a  
spotlight.

MAX  
Spotlight? You're the writer. There  
is no spotlight. There's barely a  
nightlight.

FRITZ  
All the better.

MAX  
Fritz, what are you saying?

FRITZ  
I'm...Jewish.

MAX  
What? What? What the hell are you  
doing here?

FRITZ  
My situation in a nutshell.

MAX  
Fritz, I mean...how?

FRITZ  
On my mother's side. I had to care  
for my mother. There was no one  
else. She was ill for a long time.  
When she passed, we were at war. I  
couldn't get out.

MAX  
Your father?

FRITZ  
My dad was Lutheran. No one ever  
looked to us.

(MORE)

FRITZ (CONT'D)

But in the eyes of the party, I'm Jewish. Even after my father died, no one ever made a move against us. What could I do but stay low and wait it out?

MAX

I cannot fathom this. You've been Jewish all this time?

FRITZ

It's not like a magazine subscription you let lapse.

MAX

And no one knows?

FRITZ

No one.

MAX

Let's just keep it that way.

They walk out of the alley. Max gives him a slap to the back of the head.

MAX (CONT'D)

What are you? Nuts?

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- DAY

Rudolph Selpin is seated as Max paces.

MAX

Sorry to keep you waiting but I was hoping Rhinebech would be joining us for this meeting.

RUDOLPH

I understand.

Intercom buzzes.

MAX

Yes, Marta?

Marta comes in.

MARTA

You called?

MAX

I just---where's Rhinebech?

MARTA

I just learned he's been arrested.

MAX

What?

MARTA

For disloyalty to the Reich.

MAX

That fool! Does he have to repeat every joke he reads in the toilet?

MARTA

Will there be anything else?

MAX

No, no, thank you. Wait, yes, a bigger mug. Much bigger. In fact, make it a tankard.

Marta leaves.

RUDOLPH

That's certainly a surprising bit of news.

MAX

Is this anyway to run a studio?

RUDOLPH

You were going to tell me something?

MAX

You something? Oh, yes. Well, I had cast Wilhelm as the second lead. But in light of circumstances I have to ask if you're willing to step into the part?

RUDOLPH

I'm honored.

Max hands him a script.

MAX

You're Benjamin Kubelsky, the town's banker. So you and this character, General Gneisenau, find yourself in the middle of a great war, attempting to get the King to lead the forces against the French.

RUDOLPH

Why?

MAX

Because they're French.

RUDOLPH

Who gets the girl?

MAX

Gneisenau.

RUDOLPH

I see.

MAX

Well, start learning your lines.  
And don't go telling any jokes. And  
stay out of public toilets!

He walks Rudolph out. He closes the door. He hears a cough. He opens the door. Marta is there with with two boys, LUTHER and CARL, ten and nine; cute and innocent. He closes the door, waits a beat and reopens it. They're still there.

MAX (CONT'D)

Did I buzz for you?

MARTA

No sir.

MAX

These are your boys? What are they  
doing here? Shouldn't they be in  
school or something?

MARTA

The school was bombed out.

MAX

Children today have it so easy.  
Back when I was a child no one would  
blow up any schools for us.

MARTA

It's just that---

MAX

Just what?

MARTA

Boys, could you wait by mother's  
desk, please?

Luther goes out. Carl waits a beat then kicks Max in the  
shins and dashes out.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Carl!

MAX

Ow.

MARTA

I'm sorry, Herr Schmidt. The  
Wehrmacht came to the house today.  
They want to take the school children.



MAX

To where? A field trip?

MARTA

No, to war. The party is demanding that every healthy school boy and senior report for duty to fight the invaders.

Max can only shake his head as he sits.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Can you help?

MAX

Me? Not only can't I help, I'd probably hinder your case.

MARTA

No, no, I was just hoping that maybe my boys could serve their country in another way.

MAX

What way? A cake sale?

MARTA

The movie, Hitler's script; it's being made, no?

MAX

Yes, and there's nothing I can do about it.

MARTA

You'll need crowd scene; extras. And children in the crowds.

MAX

What?

MARTA

If you could hire my boys to work in the movie perhaps the Wehrmacht will allow them to stay here.

MAX

That's so blatant. We'd never be able to justify it.

MARTA

I've worked for you for many years, Herr Schmidt. I've handled many of your personal "situations." And after Mrs. Schmidt passed---well, I covered for you many times.

(MORE)

MARTA (CONT'D)

And never have I asked for anything in return. Nothing for myself. Now I come to you. Not for myself but for my children. I've lost my husband to the war. And two brothers. I will not lose my boys.

She goes to the desk and sets the photo upright.

MARTA (CONT'D)

You know what it means to lose someone to this---conflict.

MAX

How dare you---

He puts the photo back down.

MARTA

They could be safe here, Herr Schmidt. And they would not be a bother. I'm here, after all. I'm at my wit's end. Please, Herr Schmidt, please.

MAX

What else can I do but submit to your emotional blackmail?

Suddenly she kisses him.

MARTA

I knew you would help. Thank you. Thank you.

She hurries out.

MAX

I'm still waiting for my big mug!

EXT. STUDIO GATE -- DAY

Renate and Dr. Held are at the gate. She is getting panicky with POPS who shoves a clipboard at her.

RENATE

Ah, you'd like my autograph. Always happy to oblige my fans.

POPS

No, your name.

RENATE

Why do you need my name?

POPS

I need to see if you're on my list.

RENATE

List? What list? There's a list?  
I wasn't told about a list!

DR. HELD

Please, lieblich, calm down.

Max comes limping up.

MAX

Renate! You've come.

RENATE

Max! Oh, thank heavens. This...storm  
trooper is insisting that I give him  
my name.

MAX

It's okay.

(to Pops)

Frau Held and Herr Doctor are now  
working on my picture. Please pass  
them through.

POPS

Yes, sir. Heil Hitler.

MAX

(with a feeble salute)

Who doesn't?

Max herds Renate and Dr. Held through the gate. Luke comes  
up to the gate, with his box of stuff. Max waves him in.

INT. STUDIO LOT -- CONTINUOUS

As they walk, Von Hummond comes up.

VON HUMMOND

Herr Director!

RENATE

Who is this?

MAX

The help. What is it, Captain  
Courageous?

VON HUMMOND

Colonel Von Hummond. I've been  
looking at the schedule. You haven't  
begun filming yet!

MAX

Colonel, we just don't start shooting.  
This isn't a war. There are lines  
to learn, costumes to make, sets to  
build.

VON HUMMOND

Much of the movie takes place in Berlin. Can't you just film outside?

MAX

No, Berlin isn't Berlin enough.

VON HUMMOND

But it's Berlin!

MAX

We just can't go traipsing around a war zone. We don't get combat pay. Look, the crew is starting work on the sets. As soon as the materials arrive---

VON HUMMOND

Materials? We have no materials?

MAX

War shortage. So, once we get the materials and the man power---

VON HUMMOND

Man power?

MAX

Labor shortage, my Tuetonic representative. Our staff has been seriously shorted.

VON HUMMOND

Labor shortage?

MAX

You keep deporting people, that's what happens. But once it's up, we start rolling.

VON HUMMOND

I will make a call to the Ministry.

MAX

Okay. We'll be sitting around waiting. Give them my best.

INT. BERLIN SET -- DAY

It's dressed as the war-weary streets of Berlin. A crew is lighting the set while extras, (including Luther and Carl) and actors mill about. Luke is working the camera, as an ASSISTANT preps the script.

Max surveys the scene as Fritz follows. Max carries a megaphone. Max stops by Renate, who is in old woman makeup. Dr. Held is seated nearby.

RENATE

How do I look, Max?

MAX

Grizzled, my dear.

(to Fritz)

It's like she wrote the book on grizzled. Take a seat, dear, we'll be starting shortly.

They head off set.

FRITZ

This set must have made a big dent in the budget.

MAX

Von Hummond commandeered a company of his soldiers to build it. They want this movie made.

FRITZ

Wait, they're pulling troops and supplies from the war effort for this? Is that allowed?

MAX

Do you want to point that out to them?

FRITZ

Not me. But once they figure it out, they're going to shut us down.

MAX

Then the trick is not to let them figure it out.

VIKTOR LEMMING, a rugged, good-looking leading man approaches. He's wearing 1860s style military uniform

VIKTOR

Herr Schmidt---

MAX

Yes, Viktor?

VIKTOR

What is my motivation for this scene?

MAX

You are a noble spectator of Germany's glorious past. You're a symbol. A presence. The gloss on our veneer.

VIKTOR

Sounds shallow. I can do shallow.

MAX

Better than any man I know.

Viktor struts off.

MAX (CONT'D)

Time to get this show on the road.

(through megaphone)

Attention, please. May I have the principles to the set, please?

Renate, Rudolph and others gather before the building stoop.

MAX (CONT'D)

Welcome to "Snatching Victory" people.

This is an epic moment for us all.

Thank you for being part of it.

Places now. Let's do this as we rehearsed.

The cast and crew take their places. Renate blows her husband a kiss as he stands off to the side.

MAX (CONT'D)

Quiet on the set.

ASSISTANT

Quiet on the set!

MAX

I said quiet!

ASSISTANT

He said quiet!

MAX

I meant you!

ASSISTANT

Never mind everyone! He meant me!

MAX

Camera ready?

LUKE

Ready!

MAX

Slate it.

SLATE BOY steps up.

SLATE BOY

"Snatching Victory," scene one, take one.

MAX

Lights! Camera! Act---!

The set goes dark.

MAX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
That's the opposite of "lights"  
people.

INT. STUDIO SET -- LATER

The Gaffers and Best Boys try to get the lights back on.  
Max and Fritz are at Max's chair with candles. Von Hummond  
approaches with papers.

VON HUMMOND  
Herr Schmidt.

MAX  
Ah, Colonel Von Hump, what can I do  
for you?

VON HUMMOND  
It is Von Hummond.

MAX  
Yes it is.

VON HUMMOND  
I could not help but notice that you  
have re-written the script.

MAX  
Yes, it's a much cleaner through-  
line now, don't you think?

VON HUMMOND  
But---

MAX  
It was simply a matter of raising  
the stakes, adding some 3rd act  
jeopardy---

FRITZ  
---And punching up the sub-text.

VON HUMMOND  
Sub text? What? In a U-boat?

MAX  
This movie will have the people on  
their feet.

FRITZ  
If not that, then the continuous  
blitzkrieg will.

VON HUMMOND  
But Der Führer---

MAX

---is in the most capable hands.

He pats Fritz on the shoulder. Fritz, frightened, turns to see who's behind him, then catches himself.

MAX (CONT'D)

Carry on, soldier.

VON HUMMOND

Be that as it may---

FRITZ

Are those notes?

MAX

Heaven save us from notes!

VON HUMMOND

You have Rudolph playing the role of the banker.

MAX

That's correct.

VON HUMMOND

There is no possible way the Ministry will allow an Aryan role model to sully himself playing a money changer.

FRITZ

But he was the key factor going into battle.

VON HUMMOND

The Minster will not allow it.

(to Fritz)

You will need to get someone more...Semitic for the role.

FRITZ

I will?

MAX

Well, that's a lovely casting decision but I can't help but notice that we are quite short on Semites at the moment. You wouldn't have any handy, would you?

VON HUMMOND

You have no one on the lot?

MAX

Don't think I'm going to fall for that trick question. We'll simply go forward as is.



VON HUMMOND

Nein! Nein! My superiors will not allow it. They would shut down production rather than proceed.

FRITZ

Nobody wants that, Max.

VON HUMMOND

Indeed! Completing this film would enhance my standing with my superiors.

MAX

Only if they're inferior superiors. May I see your papers?

He takes the notes.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's impossible, there is no one to play this part.

FRITZ

Max!

VON HUMMOND

No, wait. I may be able to obtain a money changer.

MAX

That would be quite helpful for all concerned.

VON HUMMOND

Come to my office. I will give you a letter of introduction to Commandant Klemper at das lager.

MAX

What? Now? Concentration camp?

VON HUMMOND

I see nothing here to keep you.

MAX

That's quite the point you make.

Max sees Rudolph and calls him over, sending Von Hummond on.

MAX (CONT'D)

Rudolph, I'm sorry. You're not Mandel any more.

RUDOLPH

What's the problem?

MAX

Not me. The order comes come above.

RUDOLPH  
Central casting?

MAX  
Higher.

RUDOLPH  
Hitler.

FRITZ  
Not that high.

MAX  
The ministry. They're re-casting  
the part. They want someone  
more...ethnic.

RUDOLPH  
I can do ethnic.

MAX  
Not if you're smart.

RUDOLPH  
That hardly seems fair. I've been  
doing all sorts of research for this  
role. I've loaned money to everyone.

MAX  
Sorry.

RUDOLPH  
Do you know how much change I've  
been walking around with?

MAX  
It's out of my hands.

Fritz leaves, Max hurries off to catch up to Von Hummond.

A Crew Member approaches Rudolph.

CREW MEMBER  
Could I borrow five marks?

RUDOLPH  
Not now.

The Crew Member walks off.

Rudolph turns and looks at the candle-lit group. He sees Viktor in his costume holding his candle. Rudolph is not happy. Then A MALE ACTOR comes up to Viktor, blows out his candle and gives him a very familiar hug and squeeze. Rudolph's eyes light up.

EXT. LAGER -- MORNING

Max approaches the formidable concentration camp. Behind the barb wire fences are the prisoners used for local work; the gypsies, homosexuals and Jews that have been locked away.

With a gulp, Max approaches the guardhouse. He shows the GUARD the letter and is permitted inside.

EXT. PRISON YARD -- MORNING

Max is in the company of COLONEL KLEMPER, the harried commandant of the camp.

KLEMPER

What a war. So, you need a Jew for your movie. Let's see what we have in stock.

They enter the barracks, Klemper banging on the door frame.

INT. BARRACK -- CONTINUOUS

You've seen the movies, you know what it looks like. The prisoners sit up in their beds as Klemper leads Max in.

KLEMPER

Raus! Raus! We're going to make one of you a movie star.

The prisoners blink, uncomprehending. Klemper and Max walk down a row of prisoners when suddenly Max halts.

KLEMPER (CONT'D)

You see something you like?

Max stops to look at an older man with a proud carriage, SHELDON BIRNBAUM.

MAX

Sheldon Birnbaum?

SHELDON

Yes? Do I know you?

MAX

I'm sorry, no, we've never met. But I know you. Your career.

SHELDON

I haven't had a career for quite some time.

MAX

Colonel, this is Sheldon Birnbaum, one of our greatest stage actors. He's exactly who we're looking for.

KLEMPER

Are you sure? We have plenty to choose from.

MAX

I'm sure. Mr. Birnbaum, I'm Max Schmidt. I'm with UFA. I'm here to hire you for a part in my latest movie, written by Adolf Hitler.

SHELDON

Are you kidding me?

MAX

Is this the face of a kidder?

SHELDON

What? And you want to see if I'm available?

MAX

Yes.

SHELDON

Let me ask my agent. Hey, Sid!

SID, the man in the upper bunk, peaks out.

SID

What?

SHELDON

Man here wants me to make a movie for UFA. What do you think?

SID

Take it. Make sure I get my 10%.

EXT. BARRACK -- MORNING

Klemper and Max walk a shaky Sheldon out of the barracks.

KLEMPER

He's to be brought back here promptly at 18:00 hours.

MAX

What's that in real time?

KLEMPER

(counting on fingers)  
Six p.m.

MAX

Of course.

KLEMPER

I can have an armed guard assigned to him.

SHELDON

Me escape? Are you kidding? You know how long I've been trying to get into pictures?

A group of female prisoners enter the compound which includes Greta. Max sees her and suddenly dashes to her.

MAX

Wait! Stop! Halt!

Sheldon, without Max's support, drops. GUARDS blocked Max.

MAX (CONT'D)

Colonel, please. Stop them.

Klemper signals the Guards to stand down as he gets Sheldon up.

KLEMPER

Herr Schmidt, please don't try my patience. What is it?

MAX

That girl there. I can use her.

KLEMPER

These are enemies of the Fatherland, not a casting call.

MAX

No, my star, Renate Held, you know her?

Klemper nods.

MAX (CONT'D)

Her's is a very taxing role and we're in search of a double for her. This woman looks just like Renate Held.

KLEMPER

You expect me to release another prisoner to you? The letter stated one.

MAX

The letter says to give me any and all assistance. You don't want to create a Führer over this, do you?

KLEMPER

And this is for your...movie.

MAX

Yes, for my---hey, wait a minute. I don't appreciate the insinuation. I'm a big-time movie director. I can trick any number of actresses into having sex with me.

KLEMPER

Don't get your lederhosen in a knot. One more or less isn't gong to break me. She's due back the same time.

Max claims Greta, who looks very confused.

MAX

Thank you. You've been most helpful.

INT. STUDIO COMMISSARY -- MORNING

The breakfast crowd is there when in comes Max with Sheldon and Greta. The crowd stops and gapes. They walk passed Fritz, who is amazed.

Max directs them to a table, where a hearty breakfast awaits. He sits them down. They look: at the food, at each other, at Max. He urges them on. They both devour the food.

Fritz comes over and pulls Max to the side.

FRITZ

What have you done?

MAX

I got us a banker.

FRITZ

And what, a teller to boot? What's up with the girl? Wait a second, isn't she---

MAX

What? I need a stand-in for Renate. Lighting. Can't expect a big star like Renate Held to stand for her own lighting.

FRITZ

Max, this is nuts. What is Von Hummond going to say? You can't start bringing Jews onto the set no matter how attractive they may be.

MAX

You think she's attractive?

FRITZ

Well, certainly she's---that's not the point!

MAX

It may not be the point but it's not  
a bad thing, you know.

INT. TAVERN SET -- DAY

We're in a period piece; 1863, a tavern. Sheldon is in  
costume, getting ready for a scene with Viktor, as Gneisenau.

VIKTOR

Can you do shallow?

SHELDON

What am I, a wading pool?

The crew is ready. Rudolph, in street clothes, is watching.

Greta, in costume, stands by the door while a CREW MEMBER  
measures the light on her.

Dr. Held is off camera watching with Renate, who is in the  
same costume and now made-up younger. Rudolph is quite  
disgusted by Greta's and Held's presence. Fritz comes up,  
staring at Greta.

RUDOLPH

Jews on my set. I can't believe  
it's come to this.

FRITZ

You and me, both.

MAX

(on megaphone)  
Principals, please!

Renate comes out. Greta looks a bit confused, so Fritz  
hurries over and escorts her off camera.

MAX (CONT'D)

Okay, quiet on the set. Lights.

Everyone looks up.

MAX (CONT'D)

Good. Camera. And...action!

Just then, Von Hummond comes marching in with SEVERAL NAZI  
SOLDIERS. They go straight to Viktor.

VON HUMMOND

Herr Viktor Lemming?

VIKTOR

Yes, are we improvising? I'm a little  
out of practice---

VON HUMMOND

You are under arrest for moral  
turpitude against the Third Reich.  
Please come quietly.

MAX

What are you doing!

They march Viktor off. Viktor's Friend starts to go forward,  
but another ACTRESS holds him back.

MAX (CONT'D)

You just arrested my lead! Are you  
serious? What turpitude?

VON HUMMOND

Specifically?

MAX

Yes.

VON HUMMOND

(whispering)  
Homosexuality.

MAX

You realize this is show business, right?

VON HUMMOND

We can not allow a person such as  
that to appear in a German production  
representing the German ideal.

MAX

You keep telling me how important it  
is that this movie gets made, then  
you do everything in your power to  
derail us. Are you sure you aren't  
working for the allies?

VON HUMMOND

What??

MAX

Saboteur!

VON HUMMOND

My orders are clear, Herr Director.  
We are sorry for any inconvenience  
but there are many pressing matters  
that must be dealt with to keep Reich  
strong.

He leaves.



MAX

No wonder Viktor always asked me his motivation for love scenes. What am I supposed to do for a lead now?

Rudolph steps up.

RUDOLPH

Herr Director, I've been rehearsing with Viktor. I know the role.

MAX

You know the role?

RUDOLPH

I'm not in the next few scenes. I can step in for Viktor and you have some time to re-cast my role. My smaller role.

MAX

You know the role. Well? What are you waiting for? Get into costume now!

Rudolph hurries off. Fritz comes over.

FRITZ

What do we do now?

MAX

Oh, I re-cast Selpin in the part.

FRITZ

Quick thinking.

MAX

Just doing my job.

INT. TAVERN SET -- LATER

Rudolph is in for Viktor.

MAX

Okay, people! Lights, camera---

Air raid sirens sound. Max throws down his megaphone. Pops comes rushing in.

POPS

Air raid! Everyone to the shelter!  
Last one in is a dirty Yankee!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. COMMISSARY -- DAY

Fritz is dining with Greta, who is plowing through her meal.

FRITZ

This isn't a race, you know.

GRETA

I know but I'm afraid I'll wake up before I finish. I've been hungry for so long. Herr Schmidt has turned my nightmare into a dream. Why would he do that?

FRITZ

Herr Schmidt is a very deep and complex man. I don't know.

GRETA

I haven't had much kindness shown to me by your kind.

FRITZ

My kind?

GRETA

Gentiles. May I get more of this stew?

FRITZ

Take mine, please.

GRETA

Thank you.

FRITZ

You're lovely.

GRETA

What?

FRITZ

(covering)

Welcome, you're welcome. I said you're welcome.

INT. 1863 VILLAGE SET -- DAY

Cast and crew in the middle of a scene, with Rudolph hamming it up.

RUDOLPH

My people, we must band together for only as a band can we hope to defeat our enemies.

FRITZ

He's ad-libbing again! I'm going to walk off this picture.

MAX

And straight to the Russian front.

FRITZ

Point taken.

MAX

And...cut!

EXT. STUDIO 5 -- DAY

Von Hummond is waiting at the door as the "Flashing Light" flashes, meaning he can't come in. He's got his attaché case. The light goes off and he enters.

INT. 1863 VILLAGE SET -- CONTINUOUS

Von Hummond comes in, taking out pages.

VON HUMMOND

Herr Schmidt.

MAX

Oh, Herr Colonel, I'm so un-surprised to see you here. Again.

VON HUMMOND

These pages just arrived for you.

MAX

I am blessed to have you here to go through my mail and bring it to me. Pages? Pages of what?

VON HUMMOND

The Ministry has taken note of your re-casting the role of the banker.

MAX

Which they demanded.

VON HUMMOND

They now feel he is portrayed in too favorable a light.

FRITZ

He supplied the money used to raise the militia and beat back the French.

VON HUMMOND

The ministry wants him seen as a hindrance to be overcome. As some one who stood in the way of victory.

MAX

A bit 180-ish.

VON HUMMOND

Goebbels himself authored these pages.

MAX

And we appreciate his taking time out from the war to do my writer's job. Fine, distribute the pages.

(megaphone)

Take five, everyone!

Fritz goes off to meet up with Greta on set. The Assistant comes over and takes the pages.

VON HUMMOND

What are you doing? Taking a break?

MAX

The actors have these new lines to learn. We'll stop, let them learn their lines and re-start.

VON HUMMOND

We lost so much time due to the air raids. It is so late in the day.

MAX

True, it is late in the day.

(through megaphone)

That's a wrap for today, people.

Pick up new pages and we'll see you tomorrow, 7 am call.

The set clears out. An ACTRESS passes by Max.

VON HUMMOND

You are stopping?

MAX

As you said; the air raids.

Max grabs the Actress by the face, squeezing her cheeks.

MAX (CONT'D)

Look at my actresses. The sparkle has been terrorized out of them. All you can see is the fear in their eyes. Not hope, we need to see hope in their eyes. And make-up can only do so much. Best to let them rest and start fresh tomorrow. Thank you and good night.

The confused Actress leaves.

VON HUMMOND

But we're beginning to fall behind schedule.

MAX

(patting camera)

That's that beauty of editing in the camera, you make up lost time in post-production.

VON HUMMOND

That's good?

MAX

Oh, yes.

(beat)

What's bad is when we have to film the scenes in the King's castle. That set is nowhere near complete. Plus, we really don't have a studio big enough to capture the grandeur of the king's throne room and the huge undertaking it is for Gneisenau to approach the Prussian king.

VON HUMMOND

What do you mean?

MAX

The studio is too low to accommodate the set we designed. It's a shame. It could ruin the picture.

VON HUMMOND

What can we do?

MAX

We've discussed this and we think we need to raise studio seven's roof about 20 feet.

VON HUMMOND

What?

MAX

Or lower the floor 20 feet. I don't want to lock anyone in.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

He's on the phone.

VON HUMMOND

I am in need of supplies. Lumber, steel beams, electrical wiring. And personnel to build. Very serious. What division?

(MORE)

VON HUMMOND (CONT'D)

I am at UFA Studios, Ministry of Propaganda. I'm am trying to inform our brave soldiers what they are fighting for...Besides their lives... Well, I suggest you get the supplies however you can and direct them here immediately. I have a release date to maintain!

EXT. STUDIO SEVEN -- DAY

Max and Fritz watch as a battalion of German soldiers work on raising the roof of the soundstage. Many of the soldiers are former studio workers. They wave to Max.

FRITZ

So, let me get this straight; on your say-so, Von Hummond diverts a military division and vast supplies from battle to rebuild our studio. Now.

MAX

I love show business.

FRITZ

How many of these soldiers used to work here?

MAX

Less than all. Makes you wonder what else we could get away with.

FRITZ

Don't push our luck.

MAX

Maybe I should hit them up for a raise.

FRITZ

Why not put in some vouchers for petty cash?

MAX

Request that camera crane I always wanted.

FRITZ

I need a new typewriter ribbon.

MAX

Or maybe---wait a second. Fritz...we have the scene where the General rallies the crowd, right?

FRITZ

Yes.

MAX

We need a crowd.

Max walks off thinking. Fritz looks again at the workers, amazed.

FRITZ

On his say-so.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

Von Hummond is going over papers. There's a knock.

VON HUMMOND

Enter.

Max walks in with a lovely-looking BERTHA in a fetching peasant dress.

MAX

Colonel, my Colonel.

VON HUMMOND

Yes, Herr Schmidt.

MAX

I just wanted to get your approval on our new hire. Fräulein Bertha Wender. She's going to play a townsfolk.

VON HUMMOND

Fräulein. A pleasure.

Max nudges her and she gets flirty with Von Hummond. He's eating it up.

BERTHA

Danke. You are most kind, Herr General.

VON HUMMOND

Nein, nein. I am but a colonel.

BERTHA

So young to be so essential to the Reich.

MAX

You approve?

VON HUMMOND

Ja, ja.

MAX

Good. Now, I've been going over our shooting script---

VON HUMMOND

Yes?

MAX

We have a crowd scene that's not very crowded.

VON HUMMOND

I don't understand.

MAX

Here we are making a film to stir the masses but the audience won't be stirred unless they see masses being stirred on screen. We are attempting a picture of epic proportions. We must be epic, not tepid!

VON HUMMOND

We are lucky to maintain the cast we have.

MAX

Luck? You say luck? It's our mandate to have these good people toiling for us. And we don't need actors, merely extras. People to fill the frame.

VON HUMMOND

I do not see how.

MAX

I heard that Roosevelt gave Frank Capra an entire city for one of his movies.

VON HUMMOND

Roosevelt!

Von Hummond pulls out his stationary and begins writing.

VON HUMMOND (CONT'D)

Let's see what we can do about that.

INT. COL. KLEMPER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max presents the letter to Klemper.

EXT. LAGER -- MORNING

Several trucks drive out with scores of Prisoners on board.

Max is in the lead truck.

INT. TRUCK CAB -- CONTINUOUS

Max turns to the DRIVER, who looks like Gary Cooper.



MAX

Anyone ever tell you that you look  
like Gary Cooper?

DRIVER

"Sergeant York!" Ja! "Pride of the  
Yankees."

EXT. STUDIO -- MORNING

The trucks are unloading the Prisoners into the commissary.

As Max oversees, Von Hummond enters, with Bertha on his arm.

VON HUMMOND

Such a raggedy looking bunch.

MAX

Once we get them in costume, they'll  
look fine.

VON HUMMOND

Costumes?

MAX

Of course, it's the 1860s! We can't  
have them walking around like this.  
They'll give the 19th century a bad name.

VON HUMMOND

Do we have enough---

MAX

I'd sure hate to shut down production  
over a few dozen peasant dresses.

BERTHA

(pouty face)

I won't get my big break?

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- DAY

Von Hummond oversees loading of bolts of material into a  
truck.

INT. KLEMPER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max hands Klemper a letter.

INT. STUDIO COSTUME DEPT. -- DAY

Prisoners are at the sewing machines with the material making  
period costumes.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

There's a knock. Two important looking SS soldiers enter:  
COLONEL UMLLOT and FIELD MARSHALL RENNING.

UMLOT  
Col. Von Hummond?

VON HUMMOND  
(leaping up and  
saluting)  
Ja. Heil Hitler.

UMLOT  
I am Col. Umlot, aide-de-camp to  
Field Marshall Renning. As you may  
be aware, the Field Marshall is  
overseeing the defense of Berlin as  
well as its destruction.

VON HUMMOND  
I see. Wait, what?

UMLOT  
The Nero Decree. Der Führer has  
made it quite clear that should the  
enemy attempt to invade the Fatherland  
we are to leave them with nothing to  
make use of. "No ear of German corn  
will nourish our enemies---"

VON HUMMOND  
"No German tongue give them  
information." Yes, I heard.

RENNING  
Plans are being made.

VON HUMMOND  
Scorched earth.  
(to himself)  
And film stock is very flammable.

UMLOT  
We are in the process of rounding up  
all unessential personnel from all  
industries to defend the city.

VON HUMMOND  
Of course. So, why are you here?

UMLOT  
You are joking, no?

VON HUMMOND  
What do you mean?

UMLOT  
Are there any employees here that  
can be put to better use?

VON HUMMOND

Hardly. We are all hard at work fulfilling Der Führer's mandate. The one where we don't burn things.

UMLOT

Yes, of course. Your moving pictures.

VON HUMMOND

Sanctioned and overseen by Goebbels himself.

(pulls out script)

He even did a polish on the script. It's a great read.

RENNING

I will have Colonel Umlot stopping by to check on these productions to see who can be freed up for more important duty.

VON HUMMOND

Yes, sir. Ja Wohl.

INT. BERLIN SET -- DAY

Umlot arrives as the crew sets up the shot for the day. Max goes over to Von Hummond.

MAX

Who's that? Your replacement?

VON HUMMOND

Nein. He is here checking on our work force. As soon as our people complete their jobs, they intend to transfer them to combat duty.

MAX

Good thing we're nowhere near complete.

VON HUMMOND

What?

MAX

I said, "Good to know"

(megaphone)

Okay, people let's take our positions!

Luke comes over to Max.

MAX (CONT'D)

I believe your position is behind that camera.

Max walks him back to the camera.

LUKE

Yes, I know. But you should be aware---

MAX

I'm the director. I'm aware of everything on my set!

LUKE

There's no film

MAX

I wasn't aware of that.

(excitedly)

No film!

(catching himself)

What happened?

LUKE

The stock room is empty. They think black marketeers. No idea when we'll be able to restock. Should we wrap?

MAX

Wrap? We stop shooting here and they'll have us shooting on the Russian Front.

LUKE

What do we do?

MAX

What do we do? What do we do? I don't know. Why did I even think we could pull this off?

LUKE

Max?

Max is lost in thought. He looks over and sees Umlot taking an interest in the inactivity. He turns. He sees Marta with her boys. They are in costume and having a sword fight using some clothes hangers. He sees Umlot, all stern and wary. Max blinks. The wheels are turning.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Max?

MAX

We pretend.

LUKE

We what?

MAX

Pretend. We fake it. We're in the imagination business. Let's imagine we have a camera full of film. And you point it where I tell you.

LUKE

Ja wohl!

Luke hurries to the camera.

MAX

Okay, people, places! Lights!  
Camera...

He looks over at Luke, who gets the camera running.

MAX (CONT'D)

Action!

INT. BERLIN SET -- LATER

The Slate Boy is up before the camera.

SLATE BOY

"Snatching Victory," scene twenty-  
One, take 34.

The actors begin strolling around the set, as Umlot watches.  
Von Hummond comes over to Max.

VON HUMMOND

What is going on?

MAX

Movie magic!

VON HUMMOND

Thirty four times to do this one  
scene?

MAX

We have to get it just right.

VON HUMMOND

I thought you edited in the camera.

MAX

Yes, but it was getting crowded in  
there. For the big stuff we have to  
do a lot of coverage.

VON HUMMOND

It is slowing us down! Aren't you  
wasting a lot of film?

MAX

We're not wasting a frame of film.  
That I guarantee. Oh, that reminds  
me---we need to talk about the banquet  
scene.

INT. STUDIO SET -- LATER

Fritz is talking with Greta in the rafters above the set.

FRITZ  
Your whole family?

GRETA  
Yes.

FRITZ  
I'm sorry.

GRETA  
I just have to survive best I can.  
That's what my parents would want.

FRITZ  
I don't know how you can stand it.

GRETA  
I try to focus on the small things.  
I saw some flowers push through on  
the compound and I thought that was  
miraculous. Sunrises. Sunsets.  
They are majestic.

FRITZ  
Those are the money shots.

GRETA  
It's my dream to see one again without  
having to look through barbed wire.

FRITZ  
You know what? I think I can help  
you out there. Come on.

GRETA  
Where?

FRITZ  
Just come with me.

INT. STUDIO 5 -- DAY

It's a dark set. Fritz leads Greta in and sits her down on  
some crates.

GRETA  
What are you doing?

FRITZ  
Patience.

GRETA  
But the guards---

FRITZ

Trust me.

Fritz goes over to the side where backdrop rigging is tied up and the lighting panel is. He lowers one backdrop; a sunset over a grassy field. It drops before Greta. A few prop trees drop into place. He throws a couple of light switches and the studio is bathed in the rich, golden glow of a sunset. Fritz goes over and sits beside Greta.

GRETA

It's beautiful.

FRITZ

That's why we're the dream factory.

GRETA

It's...it's---

She starts weeping and turns to Fritz, who comforts her.

FRITZ

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

GRETA

Why am I here to enjoy this?

FRITZ

I don't know, Greta. The whole world is meshuga.

GRETA

(suddenly aware)

What?

FRITZ

I said the whole world is crazy.

GRETA

No, no you didn't. You said "meshuga."

FRITZ

What? No. I'm sure I didn't---

GRETA

Fritz, are you Jewish?

FRITZ

What? Me? Yes. What? How could I be? No. Oy, what a putz.

GRETA

You are! How? How are you here?

FRITZ

It's a long story, but I've been passing. My family is gone. I was alone. Nobody noticed me.

GRETA

My God, right under their noses!

FRITZ

I know, I know. Sorry.

GRETA

For what? You did what you had to do to survive. We have to survive. We have to bear witness to this.

FRITZ

I hope so. I really want to now.

As they gaze into the sunset, Rudolph is up in the rafters, just finishing shooting up some cocaine solution. He looks down, rubbing his arm and smiling.

INT. SHOWERS -- DAY

Communal showers at work. Fritz is rinsing off. He wraps a towel around his waist and goes to the locker room.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz goes to a locker and pulls out his clothes. Rudolph enters. Fritz suddenly halts, leaving his towel in place.

RUDOLPH

Gutten tag, Fritz.

FRITZ

Oh, Rudolph. Hello. What brings you down to the showers? Max have you breaking an early sweat?

RUDOLPH

No, actually, I was looking for you.

FRITZ

Me? For what?

RUDOLPH

Well, I'm looking over the scene of the siege.

FRITZ

The siege scene you say?

RUDOLPH

It reads a little flat.



FRITZ  
Flat? How flat?

RUDOLPH  
I'm about to lead them into battle.  
I think I need to be more colorful.  
Maybe a clever catch-phrase. Maybe  
the part read okay with Viktor but I  
carry a certain flair which the part  
needs to reflect. Plus I noticed  
the other actors have a lot of lines  
that distract from me.

FRITZ  
Interesting critique. But this is  
something you need to run by the  
director.

RUDOLPH  
Perhaps. But obviously, we need to  
start at the source, the real power  
behind the film. The writer.

FRITZ  
Well, I'm flattered.

RUDOLPH  
I think we can work something out  
that might make everyone happy.

FRITZ  
If there's anything I've learned  
about this business is that you can't  
make everyone happy.

RUDOLPH  
So let's settle for making me happy.

FRITZ  
You? I don't think so.

Rudolph whips away Fritz's towel and points triumphantly at  
Fritz's manhood.

RUDOLPH  
Juden!

FRITZ  
What?? This? A tailoring accident. I  
was getting fitted for these pants---

RUDOLPH  
Look, Jew, I know your little secret.

FRITZ  
What are you going to do? Turn me in?

He grabs his towel back.

RUDOLPH

Not while I need you to beef up my part!

FRITZ

Beef it up? You're the lead!

RUDOLPH

I want to make this the role of my life. And you're exactly the one to do it.

FRITZ

Well, then you can't turn me in.

RUDOLPH

No, but I can make sure your little girlfriend is re-located.

FRITZ

Girlfriend? You think she likes me like that?

RUDOLPH

Oh, sure, you can tell from the way she looks at yoo---never mind that! Just make sure I see some new pages in the morning.

FRITZ

Morning---?

Rudolph points at the Fritz bits again.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Bright and early.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

Von Hummond gives Max a letter.

INT. KLEMPER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max gives the letter to Klemper.

EXT. LAGER -- MORNING

More trucks drive out with more PRISONERS.

INT. HEADQUARTERS -- EVENING

Field Marshall Renning sits at a fine dining room table, neatly set. An ORDERLY brings out a large covered serving platter. He places the platter before Renning and removes the cover. It's a bowl of red cabbage stew.

RENNING

What is this?

ORDERLY

Red cabbage stew.

RENNING

I thought we were having mutton!

ORDERLY

Some soldiers were here this morning. They confiscated the food saying if was needed for an important military operation.

RENNING

My mutton was needed for an important military operation? Did that sound remotely logical when they said it?

INT. ROYAL BANQUET HALL SET -- DAY

A beautiful plate of mutton is the centerpiece of a long banquet table, brimming with a feast fit for a king, for a couple of dozen kings, in fact. The extras are seated around the table in their 1863 garb.

The crew is in place to film. Max takes out his megaphone to address the group.

MAX

All right people. Here we are, the king enjoying himself as the kingdom faces war...

An EXTRA tries to nibble on a carrot, which a WOMAN slaps away. She then grabs a chicken drumstick and pockets it.

MAX (CONT'D)

...You're celebrating this feast to mark the king's anniversary on the throne. General Gneisenau will enter...

Rudolph, in full military regalia, pokes out from a doorway giving a "thumbs up".

MAX (CONT'D)

...he will look aghast and state his disgust and leave. We'll then set up the scene where the king and his aides discuss the General's outrage. All right; lights, camera and action!

Before the Slate Boy can set up, the extras tear into the food.

SLATE BOY

Scene 30, take 1.

MAX

Roll 'em!

Rudolph enters. He stands next to a large gong. Aghast at the feast, he grabs his sword and hits the gong with the hilt of the weapon. The crowd all stops to look.

Max looks surprised at this action.

MAX (CONT'D)

Where'd that gong come from?

He shrugs and lets the scene continue.

RUDOLPH

My country men! I am ashamed for us. At this moment my forces face an uprising in the west. The French are rattling their sabers, gentlemen, and rattling them wildly.

Max is now checking the script to find this speech.

Meanwhile, Umlot is inspecting the studio. He sees SEVERAL CREW MEMBERS in a corner playing dice. He shakes his head and snaps his fingers. Out of nowhere, a GROUP OF SOLDIERS appear and carry off the Crew Members.

RUDOLPH (CONT'D)

How can you good folk remain oblivious to the queer fortune that fate has led toward us? Our country, our nation, our people, are now to face the darkening war clouds that encircle us!

Max calls Fritz over. They huddle while Rudolph continues.

MAX

How many pages does this go on for?

FRITZ

Just a couple.

MAX

Why?

FRITZ

He found out about my...creed. He's blackmailing me to expand his role.

MAX

He's the lead.

FRITZ

You don't think I mentioned that?

RUDOLPH

I will face them alone if I must but know that if I do, it will be to do

(MORE)

RUDOLPH (CONT'D)  
 the king's errand which he himself  
 will not acknowledge!

Rudolph pulls himself up dramatically and exits.

Max leans over to Luke.

MAX  
 We're still working without film,  
 right?

LUKE  
 Yeah.

MAX  
 That's fine.  
 (megaphone)  
 And cut!

Rudolph approaches Fritz.

RUDOLPH  
 Nicely done, Sommer.

FRITZ  
 Thank you.

RUDOLPH  
 Tomorrow I'll expect inner-monologues  
 and plenty of them.

Air raid sirens go off. Pops enters.

POPS  
 To the shelters! Come on! Let's  
 move! Last one is a Mussolini!

INT. KLEMPER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Klemper is at his desk. His ASSISTANT hands him a message.  
 He reads it. He doesn't look happy.

EXT. LAGER -- EVENING

As the prisoners are trucked back in, Max waits at the gate.  
 Klemper approaches.

KLEMPER  
 How did it go, Herr Director?

MAX  
 Very well, very well. Some masterful  
 scenes, if I do say so myself. And  
 you can quote me.

KLEMPER

How much longer do you see this taking?

MAX

Hard to say. We're facing many delays and shortages. There's a war on.

KLEMPER

For the time being. I've gotten orders. The camp is to close. The prisoners are to be shipped north. My command is being dispatched to the front.

MAX

I'm sorry to hear that.

KLEMPER

(a beat)

As am I.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max abruptly enters.

MAX

You wanted to see me?

Max realizes he's caught Von Hummond at his desk with Bertha seated on his lap taking dictation. She jumps up.

VON HUMMOND

Thank you, Bertha, that will be all.

She hurries out.

MAX

Sorry, Colonel, but you did call me.

VON HUMMOND

Two days ago.

MAX

Has it been two days already?

VON HUMMOND

I received a call from the Ministry---

MAX

How are all the ministers? Did they ask for me?

VON HUMMOND

They are well. They are very excited about the project. And they are anxious to see the footage.

MAX

The footage?

VON HUMMOND

I must confess, I too am curious to see how this all looks on film.

MAX

Every pfenning of what we're doing is in the can. And in some of the actors.

VON HUMMOND

Wonderful! When might we see?

MAX

Would you ask Beethoven to play the 5th Symphony while he was still composing it? Would you ask Van Gogh for a peek of the Starry Night while he was still sketching it? Would you---

VON HUMMOND

Ja, we would.

MAX

Of course you would. We've been trying to conserve on chemicals, so we haven't been developing dailies. But on your say-so, I'll develop every reel.

VON HUMMOND

I say so.

Max winces.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max is pacing. Marta peeks in.

MARTA

Mr. Sommer is here.

MAX

Send him in!

Fritz walks in and Marta closes the door.

INT. MARTA'S OUTER OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

She sits at her desk and resumes typing. Her boys are seated and reading books, when suddenly:

FRITZ (O.S.)

NO FILM???

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Max is trying to calm Fritz, holding him in a head lock covering his mouth.

MAX

Are you calm now?

Fritz shakes his head. They wait a moment.

MAX (CONT'D)

Now?

Fritz nods.

MAX (CONT'D)

And we're going to speak in hushed tones?

Fritz nods. Max loosens up.

MAX (CONT'D)

So, now what?

FRITZ

Why are you asking me?

MAX

You're the scenario guy. Create a scenario where they can't see the footage that doesn't exist.

FRITZ

It was stolen! Right after we shot it.

MAX

Too on the nose. And we'd have the authorities here trying to capture the black marketers.

FRITZ

This is impossible. Weeks of exposed film can't just disappear. How did I not think that this whole thing wasn't going to blow up in our faces?

MAX

Blow up! Fritz, you genius!

He runs to the door.

MAX (CONT'D)

Marta!

Marta's voice comes over the intercom.

MARTA (O.S.)

Yes, Herr Schmidt?



Max runs back to the intercom.

MAX  
Get Sigmund from Special Effects  
over here.

EXT. STUDIO GROUNDS -- DAY

Max leads Von Hummond, Rudolph & Umlot out on the back lot.

MAX  
Well, it took some doing but we  
managed to get the footage developed.

RUDOLPH  
Thank you for inviting me along,  
Max. I want you to know I'm relishing  
the role of Gneisenau.

MAX  
I'm glad it worked out for you.

RUDOLPH  
I'd like to think I'm bringing  
something extra to the role.

MAX  
Yes, I know you'd like to think that.  
Now, then, we just need to pick up  
the reels from the...developing shack  
out back here.

UMLOT  
Shack?

MAX  
Well, the chemicals are dangerous so  
we store them and the film away from  
the buildings proper.  
(Sotto voce)  
Wow, that actually sounds like a  
valid reason.

They turn a corner and see a large wooden structure a hundred  
yards or so away. There are railroad tracks along this area.  
Suddenly an air siren sounds.

RUDOLPH  
Air raid!

UMLOT  
Where are the shelters?

VON HUMMOND  
Back that way!

EXT. STUDIO ROOF TOP -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz, Luke and SIGMUND, a crazed scientist-type, are on the roof. Luke cranks an air raid siren as Fritz watches Max and the others scramble. Sigmund mans an electric detonator. Fritz blows a slide whistle, a down-slide scale. Sigmund hits the switch.

EXT. STUDIO GROUNDS -- CONTINUOUS

VON HUMMOND  
I do not see any planes!

The shack suddenly explodes knocking the group to the ground.

EXT. STUDIO ROOF TOP -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz, Luke and Sigmund get up, the blast having knocked them off their feet. Debris falls. Fritz gives Sigmund a smack to the back of his head. Luke starts cranking the siren again, then lets it wind down. Then he smacks Sigmund.

EXT. STUDIO GROUNDS -- DAY

The others pick up their heads as debris continues to fall.

RUDOLPH  
That was a close one.

MAX  
Yes, it was. I'll have to talk to him.

UMLLOT  
Talk to whom?

MAX  
That American President once we march into Washington! Seig Heil!

Umlot jumps to attention then catches himself.

UMLLOT  
Seig he---

VON HUMMOND  
The shack!

RUDOLPH  
My footage!

Max shakes his fist at the sky.

MAX  
Damn you Yankee doodle dandies!

VON HUMMOND  
The film?

MAX

Alas, all there. Every frame.

Umlot takes some notes. Seeing this, Von Hummond takes Max aside.

VON HUMMOND

This is a disaster! What can we do?

MAX

Well, the sets are still standing.  
If we can get a new shipment of film---

VON HUMMOND

I don't know---

MAX

I understand. What size Panzer tank  
do you wear?

VON HUMMOND

I will make some calls.

INT. RENATE'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

While Renate gets in costume, Dr. Held reads. There's a knock at the door. Umlot and SEVERAL GESTAPO AGENTS enter.

UMLOT

Dr. Held? Gustave Held?

DR. HELD

Yes?

RENATE

What are you doing here? This is my  
private dressing room!

UMLOT

Come with us.

DR. HELD

For what reason?

RENATE

Begone you odious cretins! Begone!

An Agent shoves her aside. The others grab Dr. Held and drag him out.

RENATE (CONT'D)

Stop! Stop!

DR. HELD

Be brave, my darling. Please. Be  
brave!

They shove her back in and slam the door, locking it. She bangs against the door.

RENATE

Bring him back, you Visagoths!

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max is there waiting as Von Hummond gets off the phone.

MAX

Well, Otto, what's the word?

VON HUMMOND

There is the belief in some circles that the war is not going...as planned.

MAX

Yeah, that's what I'm hearing; this Reich doesn't have legs.

VON HUMMOND

Goebbels is now even more anxious to see this movie completed. He is convinced the people will hear the words of Der Führer and rally behind him still.

MAX

Okay, let's run with that premise.

VON HUMMOND

I've been authorized to do anything I can to aid you.

MAX

That's good. Good for all of us.

VON HUMMOND

Herr Schmidt?

MAX

Yes?

VON HUMMOND

Can it be done?

MAX

Happy endings are my specialty.

INT. BERLIN SET -- DAY

Max enters. Greta, in costume, runs over to him, upset.

GRETA

Mr. Schmidt, it's Frau Held! She won't leave her dressing room. The Gestapo---they came---

MAX

Greta, get the crew on set, hurry.

Max hurries off.

INT. RENATE'S DRESSING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The room is a shambles. Renate is curled up in a corner, sobbing. Max knocks and eases the door open.

MAX

Renate?

A vase is thrown.

RENATE

Get out you vandals! You barbarians!

MAX

Renate, it's Max. Max Schmidt.

RENATE

Enter if you must.

Max comes in. Seeing no where else to sit, he sits next to her on the floor.

MAX

I heard.

RENATE

I once performed before heads of state. I was desired by the crowns of Europe. This is what I am reduced to. I don't understand. My Gustave never bothered anyone. He was a doctor. He helped people. When did that stop counting for anything?

MAX

It was a recent development.

RENATE

Bismark used to say the Jews brought a "champagne sparkle" to Berlin's cultural life.

MAX

Well, put a cork in that, it's done.

RENATE

Where's he been taken?

MAX

I don't know. I'll have a friend...my friend...look into it.

RENATE

I'm lost without him. He is my anchor.  
My safe harbor. He sacrificed everything  
to allow me my career. How pointless  
that all turned out to be.

MAX

Renate. Renate. Listen to me. I'm  
about to say something that should  
get my face slapped. We have to get  
back to work.

She slaps him.

MAX (CONT'D)

Good, you're listening.

RENATE

How can you even think of continuing  
this Aryan nightmare? You, you,  
lost your own true love because of  
this hateful war. I've since learned  
what happened to you after your family  
was killed. And you dare pronounce  
to me that the show must go on?

MAX

Leave them out of this.

RENATE

They killed them, Max, they killed  
your family. Their stupid misguided  
rocket landed on your house and killed  
them. Did the show go on for you?

MAX

I should have been with them. Where  
was I? At some sneak preview of my  
latest epic. I shouldn't be here.  
I shouldn't be alive.

RENATE

But you are.

Renate takes his hand.

MAX

It is a very deep wound you've opened.  
My heart stopped along with her's.

RENATE

I know, Max.

MAX

(collecting himself)  
But now, now we have many lives  
depending on us, Renate.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

If we stop working, everyone on this movie is lost. Everyone.

RENATE

How can I go on?

MAX

You must. We must. I'll find out what I can. I will do what I can. But you must carry on. And carry us all.

Renate breaks down. Max is prompted to comfort her and surrenders to it.

INT. BERLIN SET -- LATER

Max leads Renate out.

MAX

Places, please.

Max leads Renate to Greta then takes his place.

GRETA

I am so sorry.

RENATE

I killed him. I did.

GRETA

You must not say that. You did not do it. They did it. And they will pay for it.

RENATE

You believe that?

GRETA

How can I not? Countries from all over the world are fighting their way here to stop them.

INT. WRITER'S ROOM -- EVENING

Fritz is at his typewriter, weary. Rudolph is reading pages.

RUDOLPH

This is wonderful. Wonderful. With your words, I'm truly making this part my own.

FRITZ

What every writer wants to hear.

RUDOLPH

I'll be nominated for a National Film Award easily. Poor you.

FRITZ

Why poor me?

RUDOLPH

You're not going to get any credit.  
You can't be nominated.

FRITZ

A job well done is its own award.

RUDOLPH

I can't believe we've managed to put  
one over on Schmidt. Pages of changes  
and not the least bit of suspicion  
on his part. What's that word here?

He points to a page.

FRITZ

(reading)

Oswego.

RUDOLPH

Everyone knows he's lost his grip on  
set. And it's getting worse.

FRITZ

You really don't get it, do you?

RUDOLPH

Get what?

FRITZ

Max isn't fooled. He just doesn't  
care. Nothing gets by him unless he  
wants it to.

RUDOLPH

Oh, please, I've seen entire  
productions get by him.

FRITZ

After his family was killed. I knew  
him before that. Max Schmidt can  
direct circles around any man alive.

RUDOLPH

I'm sure he was fine back in his  
day. Now, he couldn't direct traffic  
on a one way street.

FRITZ

He's just not wasting his energy on  
this or you.

RUDOLPH

What are you talking about?



FRITZ

You self-absorbed ninny. There's not going to be any movie. Look around you. It's all coming apart. This film is never going to see the light of a projector.

UMLOT (O.S.)

You sound quite certain.

They turn to see Umlot standing at the door. Fritz grabs the pages Rudolph has been holding.

FRITZ

Then you say, "You treasonous wench! How dare you undermine the glory of the Fatherland!"

UMLOT

That sounds like a great scene.

RUDOLPH

Doesn't it?

Fritz gulps. Rudolph takes the pages, looking for the lines. Soldiers appear.

UMLOT

(to Fritz)

You will come with me.

FRITZ

I've done nothing wrong.

UMLOT

(reading notes)

You wrote "Hansel and Gretel: Return to the Forest?"

FRITZ

Yes.

UMLOT

Take him away!

The Soldiers take him away.

FRITZ

Everyone's a critic.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

Max bursts in as Von Hummond sits, eyes closed, at his desk.

MAX

Von Hummond!

VON HUMMOND  
 (snapping to)  
 What? Schmidt? What do you want?

MAX  
 Your friend Umlot just took my writer.

VON HUMMOND  
 He took Hitler?

MAX  
 No, he took Fritz. Fritz! He's my  
 left hand!

VON HUMMOND  
 You mean right hand.

MAX  
 I'm lefty! How am I supposed to  
 work without my left hand? How will  
 I eat? How will I wave good-bye?  
 We're going to get to the bottom of  
 this!

Von Hummond gets up reluctantly and follows Max out. A beat  
 later, Bertha comes out from under the desk and sneaks out.

EXT. ROAD -- EVENING

Greta and prisoners are driving to the prison.

INT. TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Greta is seated next to a FEMALE PRISONER.

FEMALE PRISONER  
 I got a line today. I got to say  
 "Boy, are these dumplings good!"  
 The director said I'm a natural!

GRETA  
 That is wonderful.

EXT. LAGER -- EVENING

The prisoners leave the trucks and go into the barracks.

As Greta stands to get up, she sees TWO SOLDIERS escorting  
 Fritz to a prison cell block to the rear of the compound.  
 She gasps but is herded forward.

INT. 1863 VILLAGE SET -- DAY

Max walks some actors around their marks. Von Hummond enters.

VON HUMMOND  
 Herr Schmidt.

MAX

Herr Colonel.

VON HUMMOND

I've been handed some distressing news.

MAX

Yeah, well, who hasn't?

VON HUMMOND

The Bolsheviks are making rapid headway toward Berlin. Field Marshall Renning means to carry out Operation Nero. Destroy Berlin. All of it.

MAX

Including the studio.

VON HUMMOND

Including the studio.

MAX

That could hamper our production schedule.

VON HUMMOND

What do we do?

MAX

Take five, everybody!

The cast and crew disassemble. Max goes back to his chair and slumps into it, waving his Assistant off. Von Hummond hovers nearby for a moment, then dismayed, walks off. When Max seems alone, he pulls out a flask. He ponders it, sloshing it around. Just then Greta steps up behind him.

GRETA

Herr Director.

Startled, Max pockets the flask and turns to greet her.

MAX

My dear, can I help you?

GRETA

You are looking for Mr. Sommer, yes?

MAX

Yes.

GRETA

I have seen him.

MAX

What?

GRETA

They are holding him at our lager.

MAX

He's still in Berlin?

GRETA

Can you help him?

MAX

Fraulien, I'm at the end of my rope and there's a noose there.

GRETA

You've helped so many. You've helped me. Is there no way to help Fritz?

MAX

Fritz. So you and Mr. Sommer hit it off.

GRETA

Yes. He is a good man, sir. I could not bear to lose him as well. I am sorry to burden you further after all you have done.

MAX

It's already my burden. Fritz is my friend also.

GRETA

Many dear ones have been lost in this war.

MAX

Many.

GRETA

Mr. Schmidt, can you save yourself?

MAX

Well, yes, I can.

GRETA

Then that is what you must do. You must watch out for yourself now and survive.

MAX

I've been surviving for a long time, my dear. I've recently come to the conclusion that it's time to start living again. I need to work on my timing.

He takes her hand and pats it.

GRETA

What do we do?

MAX

Do? So much to do. They've taken my family, my friends, now my livelihood.

GRETA

I don't understand.

MAX

(indicting the studio)

This will all be gone soon. I've spent my adult life here. I met my wife here. In this very studio. UFA has been my life even when I didn't deserve a life. I've been here every day for years. The only time I wasn't here was when I was at---  
(light bulb goes off)  
Von Hummond! Get over here!

Max hurries over to the wall, Greta follows. Von Hummond reaches the spot but they are gone. He realizes they're by a map of Germany on the wall, marking UFA's various studios. Von Hummond goes over. Far south of Berlin is a marker.

Von Hummond looks at the map, then at Greta, then map to the map.

MAX (CONT'D)

Of course! The south studio in Neubabelsberg!

VON HUMMOND

Neubabelsberg?

GRETA

Neubabelsberg.

MAX

We have a facility there. It's out in the country.

GRETA

Far from here?

MAX

Far enough.

VON HUMMOND

So?

MAX

We have to film the big battle scenes. We must leave Berlin now and go to the open fields to film the battle.

VON HUMMOND  
The Battle of Kolberg.

MAX  
The very same. The glorious climax  
we've been working toward, Colonel.  
We're so nearly there.

VON HUMMOND  
We are?

MAX  
So close and we only have to travel  
a 100 kilometers to finish.

GRETA  
Then you can proudly walk into  
headquarters with your head held  
high and your film under your arm.  
Your film.

VON HUMMOND  
My film. I can see it now.

MAX  
You can? She gets it from me.

VON HUMMOND  
So, we can wrap in just a few weeks.

MAX  
Or the end of the war, which ever  
comes first.

He herds the two of them off.

INT. VON HUMMOND'S OFFICE -- DAY

Bertha hands the last letter to Von Hummond who signs and  
passes it to Max, who already holds a number of letters.

EXT. TRAIN YARD -- DAY

Max is speaking to a GRIZZLED TRAIN MASTER. He hands him a  
letter. Max motions he needs a long, long train.

INT. STUDIO COMMISSARY -- DAY

Max speaks to the Lunch Lady rattling off a list of needs as  
The Lunch Lady writes it on a clip board. A fly lands on  
some food and she hits it with the clipboard.

EXT. STUDIO -- DAY

Max leads some WORKERS as they open the old gate where train  
tracks enter the studio grounds.

EXT. BERLIN BRIDGE -- DAY

A COMPANY OF SOLDIERS run explosives along a bridge. Max comes up and hands a letter to the CAPTAIN. Very official.

The Captain gives the "Heil" salute as Max goes to shake his hand. As the Captain goes to shake his hand, Max switches to the salute. They switch again, then Max gives him a high five in return.

The Captain barks orders to the soldiers who remove the explosives and re-load the truck as Max shows him a map.

INT. MAX'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Max packs a bag. He picks up the photo from his desk and places it upright. He traces his finger along their faces before packing it.

INT. BEERHALL -- NIGHT

Max sits at a table, nursing a stein. It's a sad, weary Crowd with a ONE-MAN OOMPAH BAND playing. Max wears a red carnation. Col. Klemper quietly enters, wearing civilian clothes. He scans the room, spots Max and heads over. Max now holds up his red carnation.

KLEMPER

Was the red carnation really necessary?

MAX

I've always wanted to do that.

KLEMPER

So, Herr Director, why the subterfuge?

MAX

We each have a situation. I have a possible solution. I wish to unofficially ask you something before I proceed to request it officially.

KLEMPER

Go on.

MAX

You're interested?

KLEMPER

No, I am confused. I'm hoping that if you continue I might be able to figure out what you are talking about.

The One-man band wanders over to serenade them. They can't hear each other. Max pulls out some money and hands it to the Man and shoos him away.

MAX

I'm about to stage the climax to our movie. A huge battle. I will need your prisoners. All of them.

KLEMPER

Well, if you do it in the next two weeks. The Lager shuts down and will be dismantled.

MAX

Noted. We would be filming in Neubabelsberg.

KLEMPER

You must be joking.

MAX

No, because when I joke I go like this:

Max raises his eyebrows.

KLEMPER

You could never move all the prisoners and keep watch over them.

MAX

Exactly right! I figure I need professional prison guards. I mean, after all, they are prisoners and they need guarding.

KLEMPER

Why are you asking in this manner?

MAX

As you know, this production has a certain amount of sway on military decisions as of late. If I were to request you and your command to accompany us, would you consider it or not? And if not, this meeting never took place.

KLEMPER

Well, as you know, I live to serve the Fatherland.

MAX

Of course, of course. Who doesn't?

KLEMPER

And to give my life in the defense of Der Führer is a high honor.

MAX

Without question. It's a given. I'm embarrassed I can only do it once.



KLEMPER

But, as a practical matter---

MAX

Yes?

KLEMPER

There are many ways to serve my country. And if I am ordered to assist in the production of this most glorious film, why would I start questioning orders now?

MAX

Following orders, it's what we do. So, we'll need every last prisoner.

KLEMPER

You have trucks?

MAX

I have a train.

KLEMPER

Remarkable.

MAX

One other thing.

KLEMPER

Yes?

MAX

When I say every prisoner, I mean every prisoner. I believe Col. Umlot is keeping some of my personnel under your lock and key.

KLEMPER

That may be more difficult. Unless you have any other tricks up your sleeves.

Max peeks in his sleeves.

MAX

That's why I never wear short-sleeve shirts.

INT. RENNING'S OFFICE -- DAY

Renning is pacing, dictating orders to Umlot. He keeps referring to a wall map of Berlin.

RENNING

We will need to shore up our Eastern border.

(MORE)

RENNING (CONT'D)

The Russians are cutting through our lines like a hot knife through Hasenpfeffer.

UMLOT

Ja wohl.

RENNING

Now, we've wired the Reichstag, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute and the Neues Museum with explosives, nein?

UMLOT

Nein.

RENNING

Nein?

UMLOT

Ja, nein.

RENNING

Colonel, explain.

UMLOT

The munitions workers were re-assigned. To some place called Neubabelsberg.

RENNING

Who ordered that?

UMLOT

They say Hitler himself.

RENNING

That's impossible! No one is in contact with Hitler!

UMLOT

What?

RENNING

---Other than a few key officers.

UMLOT

Of course, Field Marshal.

RENNING

We're going to need Machenwald's troops to bring in additional barricades.

UMLOT

Sir?

RENNING

What?

UMLOT

Machenwald's troops were re-deployed to UFA studios.

RENNING

You can not be serious.

UMLOT

The Führer's script is being filmed and the troops were directed to assist the studio with some project.

RENNING

That blasted movie? What is wrong with these people? We have workers on a 72 hour work week. The troops are busy fighting. The rest of the civilian population is fleeing. Who do they think is going to see this movie? We're fighting for our lives and this group is making matinee fodder! This is absurd! Is someone actively trying to screw up this war for me? Track down Machenwald and get him back. And get those munitions back!

Phone rings, Umlot gets it.

UMLOT

Yes? Yes? Are you certain? Yes, I will relay the message. Heil Hitler.

RENNING

What is it?

UMLOT

Colonel Rheinolt is reporting that the transport of the concentration camp has been interrupted.

RENNING

Why?

UMLOT

It seems one of their trains is missing.

EXT. STUDIO GROUNDS -- DAY

The studio spur line has a train sitting on it made up of a long line of passenger cars and box cars.

Crew members are loading up movie equipment assisted by a large number of German soldiers. Max is seated on a camera crane, overseeing the operations, megaphone in hand.

The cast members stand by, awaiting instructions.

MAX

Where are my principals? Car one.  
Make sure you have all your belongings  
on board. Move along, move along.

He sees a couple of Bruisers loading cameras onto the train.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hey, you gorillas, easy with that!  
Cameras! Fragile!

Von Hummond comes over and calls up to Max.

VON HUMMOND

Herr Schmidt!

MAX

Hello, Otto!

VON HUMMOND

What is going on?

MAX

We're packing up the company.  
Everyone, everything.

VON HUMMOND

Taking all this? You think it wise?

MAX

Leave it behind to burn? Or for the  
Russians? I shudder to think what  
kind of movies those Bolsheviks would  
make with our equipment. Besides,  
we might need this stuff someday.  
And by "we" I mean "me."

Umlot comes over.

UMLOT

Von Hummond!

VON HUMMOND

Yes?

UMLOT

What is going on here?

MAX

Can you take this conversation  
elsewhere? You're in the way. Okay,  
boys, let's roll!

A couple of crew members appear and start pushing the crane  
away. Von Hummond turns sheepishly to Umlot.

VON HUMMOND

There's no business like show business.

UMLOT

Where is Capt. Machenwald?

VON HUMMOND

I believe he's over in make-up.

UMLOT

Do not mock me, Colonel. I will have you demoted to gypsy.

VON HUMMOND

No, no, packing and moving. The film is almost complete. We simply have to film the glorious battle of Kolberg. The Führer loves the rushes so far.

UMLOT

Just where are you filming this?

VON HUMMOND

Neubabelsberg.

Umlot pulls out his notepad.

UMLOT

Our munitions team! You diverted our munitions team for this movie?

VON HUMMOND

Herr Schmidt is looking for realistic explosions. He says movies with well made explosions are very successful.

UMLOT

We were planning to destroy Berlin with those munitions.

VON HUMMOND

Really? Reich Minister Albert Speer seemed happy to allow their transfer to Neubabelsberg.

UMLOT

This can not stand.

VON HUMMOND

I have my orders.

UMLOT

And I have mine. Marshall Renning will not be ignored.

VON HUMMOND

My orders come from Der Führer.

UMLOT

Hitler? He has lost his mind! Nobody takes orders from him!

With that, everyone in earshot freezes and looks.

VON HUMMOND

Guards!

Soldiers rush over.

VON HUMMOND (CONT'D)

Arrest Col. Umlot. For treason to the Reich and undermining the German war effort!

UMLOT

Me? Arrest Col. Von Hummond for undermining the German war effort!

VON HUMMOND

The guards who take Umlot under custody will get a speaking role.

The guards surround Umlot with guns out and lead Umlot off.

UMLOT

I'll have your insignias for this! Do you hear me? And then your head! And then some more insignias!

EXT. LAGER CELL BLOCK -- DAY

The row of cells where Fritz is locked up. The Guards lead Umlot into a cell and slam the door shut. He comes to the door's opening.

UMLOT

You'll be court martialed! Every one of you! I have a long memory. You will feel the full force of the new Reich!

Fritz comes up to his cell door.

FRITZ

Hey, neighbor. What are you in for?

UMLOT

Treason.

FRITZ

Hey, me, too. Small war.

EXT. STUDIO LOT -- MORNING

The cast and crew continue to load the train. Max is on a phone while talking to Von Hummond.

MAX

You had him arrested? Colonel, I didn't know you had it in you.

VON HUMMOND

He was trying to shut us down. I couldn't let that happen. Not when we are so close.

MAX

I'll see you get on-screen credit for this. You may win a Golden Kaiser!

Train whistle blows.

MAX (CONT'D)

(on phone)

So, do we have clearance? Excellent, we're rolling out now.

Max's Assistant comes over.

ASSISTANT

Everything and everyone on board.

MAX

Not quite everyone. We still have a stop to make.

(on megaphone)

All aboard!

Max runs up and jumps into the locomotive.

INT. LOCOMOTIVE CAB - CONTINUOUS

Max pulls on the train whistle while the Engineer and FIREMAN stoke the boiler.

MAX

Okay, Casey, let's get up a full head of steam.

EXT. BERLIN -- MORNING

The train makes its way through the city, passing the bombed out remains of buildings. Troops of youngsters and old men march along the streets.

EXT. LAGER -- MORNING

The train approaches the prison camp and stops. The train whistle blows three times as a Guard comes over. Max hands him a paper and the Guard signals for the doors to open.

INT. BARRACKS -- MORNING

Guards proceed through the barracks, banging on beds and poking the prisoners.

GUARD A

Raus! Raus! Everyone up and dress,  
Mach schell!

Confused, the prisoners get up and put on their meager belongings.

GUARD A (CONT'D)

Outside everyone, now!

EXT. BARRACKS -- CONTINUOUS

The prisoners step outside. They see the train with the empty boxcars, doors open, waiting for them.

SHELDON

Gott in himmel.

The prisoners, men and women, are herded from their respective camps toward the train. A woman starts crying hysterically and Greta is there to comfort her.

GRETA

There, there. It will all be over  
soon. Be brave, my dear.

We see Klemper with his staff, studying maps, looking very serious.

The Prisoners are grief stricken.

Then Max leans out the cab window and blows the train whistle; "shave and a haircut, two bits." People stop and look. Greta sees Max wave and her eyes light up. She hurries forward, coaxing the others onboard.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Everyone, please, hurry get on! Get  
on board!

She runs up the gangplank.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Hurry, hurry.

She helps them up and in. Sheldon sees her. She signals back with the "Charades" sign for "motion picture:" fist over eye with a cranking motion. He realizes what's going on and starts urging his group forward.

Two Guards watch as the train loads.

GUARD B

Wow. I wish they would all be this  
cooperative.



Electronic beeping is heard.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Doug plugs the electric cord back into the video camera, its "Low Power" beeping sounding. Once in, the beeping stops. Mel, Mom and now SEVERAL OTHERS; DAD, MAILMAN, PIZZA GUY, etc., now stand around the room, staring at Greta Sommer, mouths agape.

GRETA SOMMER

What? I never told you this story?

Everyone shakes their heads.

DOUG

Sorry about that. Please continue.  
You board the train...

GRETA GOLD

Oh, yes, the train. Well, Max was not about to leave any of his friends behind. So as we boarded the train, Max headed back to the cell blocks...

CUT TO:

EXT. CELL BLOCK -- MORNING

Klemper and Max come up to the cell doors. Max knocks on Fritz's door.

MAX

This is your wake-up call, Mr. Sommer.

FRITZ

I didn't leave a---

Fritz comes to the cell door.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Cheese and crackers! What are you doing here? Did they get you too?

MAX

Hardly. I am not one to get got.

KLEMPER

We have orders to transfer the prisoners.

Umlot comes to his cell door.

UMLOT

What?

Klemper opens up Fritz's door and he staggers out.

FRITZ  
Really? Transfer? To where?

MAX  
The South Studio. We need some rewrites.

FRITZ  
It never ends with you, does it?  
The script is fine.

MAX  
You want to stay?

FRITZ  
Okay, maybe one final pass.

They head off.

UMLOT  
Wait! You're not releasing me?

KLEMPER  
No orders for military prisoners,  
only civilians.

UMLOT  
This is an outrage!

FRITZ  
Better luck next Reich, Colonel.

Train whistle.

MAX  
Come on, they're ready to go.

FRITZ  
Who is?

EXT. LAGER COMPOUND -- CONTINUOUS

They round a corner to see the train.

FRITZ  
Wow. This is going to be the greatest  
movie ever.

They hustle over to the train and board. The train whistle blows again. The train pulls out of the lager. Guards close the gates and then board some military transport vehicles and drive off. A beat. Then a small lone voice is heard:

UMLOT  
You're all going on report!

INT. PASSENGER CAR -- DAY

The cast is seated. A sad, lonely Renate sits at a window, mindlessly watching the scenery go by. The seat beside her is empty. After a moment:

DR. HELD (O.S.)

Excuse me, is this seat taken?

She turns suddenly and sees Dr. Held and Max standing there. She is overwhelmed and then leaps up to hold onto Held for dear life. Max stands there, awaiting his due. And awaiting a bit longer. Apparently no due is coming his way, so he coughs and quietly slides out.

Behind him we see Viktor's Boyfriend seated and Viktor comes up behind him as well, for a big reunion.

INT. BOX CAR -- DAY

The Prisoners are packed in pretty tight but make due.

WOMAN

Where are we headed?

MAN

Anywhere away from there is fine.

The overhead hatch opens. Fritz pokes his head in.

FRITZ

Greta?

MAN

Who?

FRITZ

Greta Sternberg. I'm looking for Greta Sternberg.

GRETA

Fritz? Fritz, is that you? Here!  
I am here!

Fritz lowers himself down and the crowd supports him so he crowd surfs to Greta and then they drop him with a thud.

FRITZ

Thanks.

Greta and Fritz embrace.

GRETA

You're here! Max got you, too!

FRITZ

Of course he did. Why would you think he wouldn't?

GRETA

You're just the writer, dear.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

The train chugs along.

EXT. TRAIN -- LATER

Rudolph is standing between cars just finishing shooting up. Just then, Fritz comes out from the box car.

RUDOLPH

Sommer! What are you doing here? I thought they shipped you out with the other Jews.

FRITZ

No, they locked me up with the traitors. They didn't find out about the whole Jewish thing.

RUDOLPH

What is going on? If the movie isn't being released, why all this hustle to get it done? Why move all these prisoners to---oh, mein Gott! We're escaping.

FRITZ

I don't know what you're talking about.

RUDOLPH

This is some giant Jewish conspiracy to escape! Oh, no! If I'm on this train, they'll assume I was part of it! This could destroy my career! I can't be on this train!

FRITZ

You're right, you can't be.

Fritz pushes Rudolph off balance and he falls off the train, tumbles down the embankment---

EXT. FIELD IRRIGATION DITCH -- CONTINUOUS

Rudolph lands in an irrigation ditch filled with mud. Blankly he looks up as the train hurries by.

INT. PASSENGER CAR -- DAY

Max is seated, reading. Von Hummond is reading a script.

VON HUMMOND

This one is very good. Perhaps your next project?

Two of Klemper's Guards pass as Fritz enters. They give Fritz the once over.

MAX

He's with me.

Fritz sits with Max.

FRITZ

You'll have to shoot around Rudolph Selpin.

EXT. SOUTH STUDIO -- DAY

A rustic looking version of a movie studio; wooden fence around a compound of small buildings, living quarters, a watertower and sits on the edge of a wide open field. The train pulls up into the small studio terminal.

Max goes by the front gate and meets POPS 2, and identical twin to Pops the security guard up north.

POPS 2

I can't believe it! We haven't had anyone down here in months!

MAX

Pops!

POPS 2

Everyone calls me Schultz.

MAX

Why?

POPS 2

That's my name.  
(pulls out clipboard)  
And you are---?

MAX

Max Schmidt.

POPS 2

(checking)  
Schmidt...Schmidt...Ah! Welcome, Herr Schmidt. My brother told me you'd be on your way down.

MAX

Of course! Pops the security guard is your brother!

POPS 2

No, Wolfgang in sound engineering.

EXT. LAGER -- DAY

The camp is deserted except for LOOTERS carrying off everything that isn't nailed down but a couple of them brought hammers, just in case.

EXT. CELL BLOCK -- DAY

TWO LOOTERS take the cell doors off their hinges and are gone. After a quiet beat, Umlot shuffles by the door, stretching as if he just woke up, unkempt and has two days worth of chin stubble. He wanders by the door. Stops. Looks again. Mystified, he steps out and looks around. He spies some LOOTERS carrying off a latrine.

UMLOT  
You there! Halt!

They scatter.

INT. KLEMPER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Umlot barges in. The office is deserted but looks okay. Umlot goes to the phone.

UMLOT  
Hello, get me headquarters.

He realizes after a moment the phone line isn't connected to anything. He throws down the receiver. He sees a paper stating they've been transferred to Neubabelsberg.

Suddenly a few gun shots are heard.

EXT. KLEMPER'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Umlot dashes out. TWO SOLDIERS have pulled up in a Kuebelwagen, a German military car. They shoot into the air scattering the looters. Umlot runs up to them.

UMLOT  
You there! I'm commandeering this vehicle!

SOLDIER 1  
Vas?

Umlot jumps into the car and drives off.

SOLDIER 1 (CONT'D)  
He just stole our car!

SOLDIER 2  
Don't worry, I got the license plate number.

EXT. FIELD -- DAY

Troops, prisoners, workers dig trenches as Max supervises.

MAX

I need them at least 5 feet deep.  
Bring the camera here. Throw some  
period hats on them and let's film  
the digging of the Kolberg trenches.

Max walks over to Sigmund who is working with the Demolition  
Troops laying out explosive charges.

MAX (CONT'D)

How's it coming?

SIGMUND

Very well. We have nearly 30 charges  
in place. Once they are all set,  
you'll be able to control the blasts  
with this.

He shows Max a small control panel with an array of toggle  
switches.

MAX

Terrific. Luke!

Luke comes over.

LUKE

Yes, Max.

MAX

I want to get a master shot. Any  
ideas?

LUKE

You could put a second camera on the  
watertower. That's pretty high.

MAX

That seems dangerous.

LUKE

Who's going to run a second camera?

MAX

Oh, Otto!

Von Hummond comes trotting over.

Off to the side of all the activity, Fritz and Greta sit  
under a tree.

GRETA

I cannot believe we are away from  
that place.

FRITZ  
You and me both.

GRETA  
How much more before the movie is done?

FRITZ  
If I tell you something can you keep  
it a secret?

GRETA  
I know you're Jewish.

FRITZ  
No, no, about the movie.

GRETA  
What about it?

FRITZ  
There's not going to be a movie.

GRETA  
You mean this won't be my big break?

FRITZ  
I'm afraid not.

GRETA  
I'm very disappointed.

FRITZ  
Sorry.

GRETA  
On the other hand, I'm alive. That  
is good.

FRITZ  
Absolutely.

GRETA  
Anything else I should know?

FRITZ  
Like what?

GRETA  
I don't know; are you really a writer?

FRITZ  
Of course I'm a writer. I wrote  
"Herr Lembeck's Holiday."

GRETA  
You wrote that?



FRITZ

Yes.

GRETA

We can't see each other any more.

FRITZ

Everyone's a critic.

Greta takes his face and kisses him.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Some less harsh than others---

EXT. KOLBERG BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

The trenches are dug. The "troops" are dressed in period uniforms, including women with fake beards and mustaches. There's Marta putting mustaches on her two boys. The Guards watch over them, more than a little confused.

ASSISTANT

We're out of pants!

MAX

Just put jackets on them and put them in the trenches. We'll only film them up to here---

He indicates waist. Luke comes over with a walkie-talkie.

LUKE

I got Von Hommond on the watertower.

They look into the distance and see Von Hummond waving.

LUKE (CONT'D)

(indicating walkie-talkie)

You can talk to him with this.

MAX

(into walkie-talkie)

Otto?

VON HUMMOND (O.S.)

Up here!

MAX

Very good. When I call action, I want you to film the whole battle from up there, understand?

VON HUMMOND

Ja wohl--I mean, you got it!

LUKE

Should we use film?

MAX

Sure, let's try that for a change.

Renate comes up in a man's outfit while Dr. Held comes up dressed in Rudolph Selpin's costume.

RENATE

Max! What is this?

MAX

You make it work, Renate!

DR. HELD

Herr Director, please explain this to me again.

MAX

Herr Doctor, please. We need you to double as the General. Our lead actor has quit---

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Deserted. Rudolph, covered in muck, stands there with his thumb out. Just then Umlot pulls up. They are both baffled.

BACK TO:

EXT. KOLBERG BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

DR. HELD

Why did he quit?

MAX

Creative differences.

RENATE

I never found him creative.

MAX

Hence the differences.

ASSISTANT

We've run out of army jackets!

MAX

Give them hats, put them in the deeper trenches and we'll only film them from here up---

He indicates neck. Klemper comes over.

KLEMPER

How are we doing?

MAX

Well, frankly, your troops are in the master shot. You'll have to move them far back.

KLEMPER

I cannot do that, Herr Schmidt.

MAX

Then your boys will be in the movie. Yes, that's it! You lead your men across the battle field---

KLEMPER

Dressed like this? I thought it was a period piece.

Fritz wanders over with the script.

MAX

It is but at this point we are blurring the lines between the past and present, showing how this ancient battle directly effects us in the here and now, and working together you beat back the enemy!

He looks over to Fritz, who shrugs. Klemper looks over and Fritz starts nodding enthusiastically.

KLEMPER

I see, mise-en-scène. Yes, I will bring my people over.

MAX

Make sure they unload their weapons. I don't want anyone getting really shot in the heat of a fake battle.

Klemper hurries off.

FRITZ

How long can we stall out here?

MAX

Everyone's saying Berlin is under siege now. The bear is at the door.

FRITZ

Not a good time to be a Führer.

MAX

Please, I have my own problems.

EXT. KOLBERG BATTLEFIELD -- LATER

The battle field is set. The French and Prussian armies are set up.

Max has several cameras in place, including a crane shot. He's on the crane with his megaphone and walkie-talkie.

MAX

All right, people. This is it. The moment we've been working toward. We bring to life the stirring piece of history that is the battle of Kolberg. This is where we see the citizenry rise up to follow their chosen leader to fight back the invading hordes. This is where we bring the moral of our tale to life. So, ready on the set?

Assistant doesn't respond.

MAX (CONT'D)

I said, "ready???"

ASSISTANT

Oh, me? Ready!

MAX

Lights! Camera! Action!

They mime fighting. Dr. Held gets up to raise his sword. The troops cheer. He leads a charge.

Just then, Umlot pulls up with Rudolph driving. Umlot has his pistol drawn.

UMLOT

Stop! Halt! Cut!

He fires into the air. Everyone freezes. Max is down in a flash and confronts him.

MAX

No one yells cut except me!

UMLOT

I outrank you!

MAX

Not on this set, you don't.

UMLOT

You are all under arrest. You are all to raise your hands.

MAX

All of us?

He swings his gun to Max.

UMLOT

No, but you'll do. You have been a thorn in my side long enough, Schmidt. You, there--!

(to Klemper)

Round up these people!

MAX

Colonel, baby, sweetheart, with the whole Reich crumbling around you---

Umlot cocks the weapon.

UMLOT

I will hear no more of your shenanigans, Herr Director. You have subverted the cause. You have betrayed your country! For what? A few feet of exposed film?

MAX

Well, I was getting my name above the title.

Greta, in the crowd, looks at Rudolph, who still has the Kuebelwagen in gear and is merely keeping his foot on the brake.

MAX (CONT'D)

Oh, I get it, you still think---oh, silly, silly Colonel. This is bigger than a film. This is about humanity. You took it away from your people--- Yes, colonel, these are your people. All good noble Germans. I watched as you de-humanized my friends and co-workers. Maybe I could recognize it because I was already de-humanized myself. Sure, I did it to myself and to the point where I finally realized how wrong it is. So I was able to help myself. And them.

Max backs up to the denotation panel. Umlot prepares to pull the trigger on Max. Greta whispers to the people next to her. She then pulls out a sheet of paper and a pen. The extras all start screaming Rudolph's name. Greta runs up to Rudolph with the pad and paper.

GRETA

Excuse me, aren't you Rudolph Selpin?? Can I get your autograph?

RUDOLPH

Why, certainly, my dear.

Rudolph straightens his tie and steps out of the car, waves to his fans and takes the pen and paper.

The car, still in gear, lurches forward, throwing Umlot off balance as the gun goes off. The bullet hits the switchboard which begins shorting out. Explosions erupt all around them.

The crowds and extras run around in a panic. Rudolph flees.

RUDOLPH (CONT'D)

Air raid!

The car drives off as Umlot is getting his balance.

UMLOT

You dummkopf!

Chaos ensues. The extras are all loose; Soldiers without pants, people with wooden prop guns, kids, people running in circles, explosions, an out-of-control Kuebelwagen.

Luke is behind a ground camera taking it all in.

The Kuebelwagen careens wildly around the field, driverless and then into a trench, throwing Umlot onto a stack of tires, which explode, launching him upward.

Max runs over to Luke.

MAX

You getting this?

Luke nods.

LUKE

But for what?

MAX

Are you kidding? If we survive this, I'll write a movie around it!

POV: VIEW OF THE FIELD OF BATTLE THROUGH A PAIR OF BINOCULARS.

EXT. HILL TOP -- CONTINUOUS

An AMERICAN SCOUT is watching through his binoculars. He shakes his head. Then his BUDDY taps him on the shoulder to get a look. He passes the field glasses. The Buddy shakes his head.

EXT. BATTLE FIELD -- CONTINUOUS

As the battle of Kolberg continues, in the distance, over the hill come the Allied forces.

The players begin to notice the army soldiers coming over the ridge. They don't know what to make of it.

All the action slowly halts.

Luther stops the camera. Max nudges him to continue.

Finally, the armored vehicles come over, carrying the American flag.

The Prisoners all let out a cheer. Greta and Fritz hug and cry and cheer.

Renning and his men drop their weapons and raise their arms.

Umlot crawls out of a trench, the worse for wear.

Rudolph peaks up from a foxhole. Then ducks back down.

Max gets the walkie-talkie.

MAX

Otto?

VON HUMMOND (O.S.)

Ready when you are, Max!

Max shakes his head. As the American troops crest the ridge and approach the battlefield, Max, in the center of it all taps Luke on the shoulder and says:

MAX

And...cut.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Everyone is just stunned. Mom just goes up to Greta Sommer and hugs her.

MOM

How could I ever doubt you? Of course there was a good reason for Opa to write a Nazi movie.

GRETA SOMMER

Co-write.

DOUG

Max saved your life.

Looking at a photo, which shows Greta and Fritz but also Max and Von Hummond, gone Hollywood.

GRETA SOMMER

His finest Hollywood ending.

FADE TO BLACK.

The End