

WYLER

Written by

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EXT. ALLEY - LAUPHEIM, GERMANY - DUSK

Rapid footsteps pound the stone pavement.

A frail young BOY runs with desperation. Adrenaline. Terror. Panicked, frozen breath. Behind him, FOUR SS STORMTROOPERS in hot pursuit. Pistols drawn. Bloodthirsty.

STORMTROOPER 1

(in German)

Come back here, Jew!

They watch the Boy disappear around a corner. Then--

The crack of gunfire. A WOMAN shrieks. The troopers turn the corner to find TWO OTHER STORMTROOPERS standing over a bullet riddled dead body. We see the face -- an OLD MAN.

The troopers share a hearty laugh, admiring their work. Hiding in a shadowed doorway, the Boy watches in horror.

EXT. STREET LEVEL SHOPS - CONTINUOUS

The CRASHING of glass as NAZI THUGS heave bricks and rocks through the windows of Jewish-owned businesses. The SS arrest all JEWISH MEN and line them up into rows, savagely beating any who resist. Shooting a few for fun.

SUPERIMPOSE: Laupheim, Germany November 9, 1938

SUPERIMPOSE: Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass)

A school EXPLODES in a ball of fire. A group of TOWNSPEOPLE cheer the destruction. Local POLICE stand idly by.

EXT. TRAIN DEPOT - NIGHT

Nazi thugs herd terror-stricken Jewish men onto flatbed trucks. The SS sing cheerfully in the streets. The trucks leave the city -- driving past a synagogue, consumed by fire.

The Boy and his SISTER watch from a distance. Close on their shocked faces as the background behind them transforms into--

EXT. PORT OF HAMBURG - HAMBURG, GERMANY - DAY

The deck of a giant OCEAN LINER. The Boy and his Sister press against the rails, waving goodbye to FAMILY and FRIENDS. Imprinted on the ship in large letters: MS St. Louis Hamburg

Hundreds of frightened MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN pack the deck, waving with nervous uncertainty. A massive CROWD on shore waves back, behind a barricade of ropes.

Unmoved by emotion, DOCK MEN begin to unmoor the ship from the harbor. Working at a practiced, steady pace. Matching their rhythm, the opening drum beat of "Sing Sing Sing" by the Benny Goodman Band fills the soundtrack.

As the ship heads to sea, the crowd on land RUSHES the ropes, having to be held back by POLICE. Their screaming, crying faces fill the frame. They transform into:

An hysterical mob of frenzied TEENAGERS rushing a velvet rope, halfway around the world--

EXT. BILTMORE HOTEL - LOS ANGELES, CA - NIGHT

Search lights. Flashbulbs. Opulence and elegance.

SCREEN GODS and GODDESSES grace the red carpet of the colossal Renaissance hotel, hypnotizing the crowd with elegant waves and practiced sophistication. The hotel marquee reads: 11th Annual Academy Awards.

INT. BILTMORE BOWL BALLROOM (BILTMORE HOTEL) - CONTINUOUS

Magnificent baroque hand-carved marble, draped in red and gold fabric, radiates wealth, glamour, and self-importance.

HOLLYWOOD ROYALTY wine and dine at white linen dressed tables, accented with sterling flatware and ivory china.

In the center of the fray, WILLIAM "WILLY" WYLER (36, unconventionally handsome, French-German accent), anxiously pokes at his dinner. Next to him, MARGARET "TALLI" WYLER (24, smart, stunning) charms their table of nervous nominees.

On stage, the BIG BAND kicks into its opening number.

CUT TO:

JAMES ROOSEVELT II at the podium, opening an envelope. Wyler takes a deep breath, tensing with anticipation.

ROOSEVELT

And the Oscar for Best Direction in
a Motion Picture goes to--

The soundtrack goes silent as the winner is announced. Other ATTENDEES applaud, but the blood drains from Wyler's face. His fake clap and smile say it all.

A melodramatic voice enters the soundtrack--

OLIVIER (O.S.)
Strong enough to bring us both back
to life, Kathy. If you want to
live!

INT. GOLDWYN STUDIOS SOUND STAGE - DAY

Wyler sits in his director's chair, which displays: William Wyler -- Director -- Wuthering Heights. Lights hang from the rafters. His CREW hangs on him. But he's distracted. Distant.

He shoots a love scene with two young actors. The actress, MERLE OBERON (26, pretty but rigid) lays in bed, pretending to be sick. Her lover, LAWRENCE OLIVIER (32, English, perfect movie star good looks), kneels at her bedside, holding her.

Both actors are beyond over the top.

OBERON
Oh Heathcliff -- I want to die.

OLIVIER
Oh Kathy--
(buries head in her chest)
-- why did you kill yourself?!

Wyler grimaces at the overacting.

OBERON
Hold me -- just hold me.

OLIVIER
(bursting up with emotion)
No! I'll not comfort you! My tears
don't love you, Kathy. They blight
and curse and damn you!

Wyler can't take anymore.

WYLER
Cut! For Chrissake, Larry! Stop
trying to reach the third balcony
of the Manchester Opera House!

OLIVIER
(frustrated)
Now what do you want me to do?

WYLER
Be better.

OLIVIER

For God's sake, I did it standing up. I did it sitting down. I did it fast. I did it slow. I did it with a smile. I did it with a smirk. I did it scratching my ear. How do you want me to do it?

WYLER

Do it -- better.

OLIVIER

(exasperated)

I suppose this anemic little medium can't take great acting!

Wyler and the crew burst out laughing. Olivier turns crimson. BOBBY (16, studio page) approaches Wyler with a note.

BOBBY

From Mr. Goldwyn.

Wyler reads the message: *Come see me. Sam.*

He glares at the paper with weariness. Then looks off to the corner of the stage, where JOHN HUSTON (33, tall, lean, deep melodic voice), sits, scribbling on a pad and puffing on a large cigar. A gritty, dangerous look about him.

They exchange a glance. Huston smirks. No words necessary.

INT. GOLDWYN'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

SAMUEL "SAM" GOLDWYN (60, bald, Polish accent) dramatically paces and gestures with gusto. A proud man in an expensive suit and an aggressively terrible bow tie.

Wyler sits across from him, frustrated but calm. Huston is again off in a corner, plumes of smoke emanating from him.

GOLDWYN

Dammit, Willy! You can't keep doing take after take without explaining what must be redone!

WYLER

If I tell them what to do, it won't come from them. It won't be the same reality--

GOLDWYN

(ignoring him)

And you can't berate the actors!

(MORE)

GOLDWYN (CONT'D)
People don't respond to being
screamed at!

Before Wyler can interject, Goldwyn changes course.

GOLDWYN (CONT'D)
You know what, nevermind -- you're
right. Olivier's performance is
rotten! He's stagey. Look at him on
set yesterday. He's filthy!

WYLER
He's playing a stable boy.

Huston chuckles to himself.

WYLER (CONT'D)
Olivier is fine. It's Oberon who
can't act. But she also can't take
the criticism; Olivier can. That's
why I ride *him* -- but I make sure
it's while *she*'s listening.

Goldwyn sits, calming down.

WYLER (CONT'D)
There's a great performance in
there and I'll get it.

GOLDWYN
(mulling this over)
Good, good. You'll work with him.
Good. Now that we've resolved that--
(with slight hesitation)
I screened your ending--
(goes for it)
Too gloomy. We need to reshoot.
Huston, write up some new pages,
will ya? Something more upbeat?

WYLER
Sam! They both die! How do you
suggest we make that upbeat?

GOLDWYN
(shrugging)
John's the writer.

Huston puffs his cigar, but says nothing. Cool as a cucumber.

WYLER
Let's get the first cut in the can,
and watch the ending in context.
And *then* decide what to do. Deal?

Goldwyn's eyes reveal he's not quite sold.

GOLDWYN
Deal.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE GOLDWYN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Wyler and Huston walk briskly down a gaudy corridor.

WYLER
If only I had your talent with the pen. I'd write myself out of this god damn contract.

HUSTON
Never trust a man with a beard or a bow tie. He's hiding something.

They laugh.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD PRODUCTION CODE OFFICE (HAYS OFFICE) - DAY

Close on a Nazi Flag on top of a car pennant pole. Attached to a gleaming Rolls Royce, pulling into the drive.

INT. HAYS OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

JOSEPH BREEN (51, severe) reviews various pages of screenplays, marking them in red pen before handing them off to an ASSISTANT.

Flanking Breen are several NAZI OFFICIALS, the most prominent of whom, GEORG GYSSLING (46, Germany's Hollywood Consul), encourages Breen with a pat on the back.

EXT. WARNER BROTHERS STUDIO LOT - DUSK

Tires SCREECH to a halt outside a darkened soundstage. SHADY CHARACTERS hop out of black cars.

MILTON (O.S.)
By order of Joseph Breen, this picture is shut down for violation of the Hays Code -- Article 10--

INT. WARNER BROTHERS SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

MILTON ROBERTS (40, buttoned up) reads a decree, backed up by the Shady Characters and several LOCAL POLICE. A devastated FILM CREW absorbs the awful news.

MILTON

-- Paragraph 2 -- "the history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly"--

The DIRECTOR throws over his chair in disgust. Off in a corner, a couple TEENAGE EXTRAS start to cry.

EXT. NATIONAL MALL - WASHINGTON DC - NIGHT

Gyssling speaks in incoherent whispers to a FIGURE shrouded in darkness. A handshake. A smile. Then a briefcase moves from Gyssling to the Figure. As Gyssling walks off--

The eyes of the Figure appear through a sliver of light in the shadows. Shallow, malicious eyes.

The Capitol Building rises in the distance.

INT. WEST HOLLYWOOD BAR - NIGHT

Huston arm wrestles two local BIKERS simultaneously, crushing them in an impressive display. He celebrates his victory with an enormous swig of tequila. PAPARAZZI flash their bulbs at the scene, until a BOUNCER shoves them all out the door.

Wyler watches from the bar, laughing and throwing back a shot himself. Discarding the glass next to several empty friends. The BARTENDER smirks.

Olivier sits next to Wyler -- out of his element.

OLIVIER

Vodka martini, please.

Wyler drunkenly holds up two fingers, indicating he wants one also. The bartender leaves. Olivier turns sharply to Wyler--

OLIVIER (CONT'D)

You think I'm a lousy actor.

WYLER

Larry, you're the most talented actor I've worked with.

OLIVIER

Then why are you so hard on me?

WYLER

That's why.

Huston lumbers over, snatches a bottle of Jack from the bar and throws it back. He throws down a random assortment of crumpled up bills and change. Olivier grimaces in disgust.

HUSTON

On our last picture, Willy and I survived on baked beans, asparagus, and Scotch whiskey. Whenever a fly bit one of us, it dropped dead.

Oliver winces at Huston's breath. Huston trudges away.

WYLER

You're the best actor on the London stage. But you have a chip on your shoulder about Hollywood. Can't you see your attitude is pure snobbery?

Olivier starts to protest, but Wyler cuts him off--

WYLER (CONT'D)

There's nothing you can't do on film. You tell me you can't do *Hamlet* on it -- you can do *Hamlet* on it. You can do *Oedipus Rex* on it. You can do any damned thing in the world. All you have to do is find out *how*.

Olivier takes it in. Suddenly, the front door BURSTS open! It's Bobby!

BOBBY

(catching his breath)
Mr. Wyler -- *Wuthering Heights* -- there's a situation.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Wyler and Huston recklessly SPEED through town on their motorcycles. Bobby holds onto Wyler. Holding onto Huston is -- Olivier -- soiling himself.

EXT. GOLDWYN STUDIOS - CONTINUOUS

Wyler and Huston BURST onto the Goldwyn Studios lot, racing through incongruous backlots -- an old west town square -- a colonial village -- a New York east side neighborhood.

INT. GOLDWYN STUDIOS - SCREENING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Wyler, Huston, Olivier, and Bobby sit in the dark, watching a projection of a scene from *Wuthering Heights*. The surprised looks on their faces reveal this footage is unfamiliar.

In it, the ghosts of Olivier and Oberon's characters walk together hand-in-hand, deeply in love, backs to the camera, into a fog-filled horizon. Romantic music swelling.

OLIVIER

That's not me. I never filmed that.

HUSTON

Goldwyn shot a new ending.
(half impressed)
That son of a bitch.

We close on Wyler's face -- filling with white hot rage.

INT. PARLOR - WYLER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A fist SLAMS down on a desk. Wyler's fist.

WYLER

Dammit Sam! This is the last straw!

We pull out to reveal Wyler performing for a boozy Huston. The parlor is cozy, but smells of new money. An oak writing desk. A French leather sofa. A marble fireplace.

Talli sits on a chaise in the corner, immersed in a book. Surrounded by a graveyard of scripts. Beside her, CATHERINE (infant) coos in a playpen.

HUSTON

Good one. Now make it sing.

Wyler collapses in a chair and sips a whiskey.

WYLER

What a terrible business. Nothing but humiliation.

Talli raises an eyebrow, but says nothing.

WYLER (CONT'D)

If I do this, go out on my own --
I'll basically be auditioning again
for the entire town. My next
project -- it's got to be great.

HUSTON

(nods)

We'll find top source material.
I'll adapt it. You'll direct the
shit out of it. As soon as your
contract with Goldwyn is up--

WYLER

I can't wait that long. It's --
it's got to be now.

Talli raises another eyebrow.

HUSTON

You mean -- break your contract?

Wyler nods, taking another drink.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

(knowing his friend)
Is this about your birthday?

WYLER

Twenty years in this town and I've
gotten nowhere.

HUSTON

You're only turning 37.

WYLER

Thalberg died at 37.

TALLI

(had enough)
That's it. Pity party's over.

She approaches Wyler and hands him her book with authority.

TALLI (CONT'D)

Leaving Goldwyn -- maybe it gives
us the chance we've been waiting
for. To do something meaningful.

Wyler considers it, unsure. He reads the cover--

WYLER

How Green Was My Valley--

HUSTON

Willy, that's the hottest property
in town. It's a goddamned
masterpiece. Talk about Oscar bait.

Wyler's eyes light up, but he tries to play it cool.

WYLER
Oscar bait? Who owns the rights?

Huston's expression sours.

WYLER (CONT'D)
Who?

TALLI
Goldwyn?

Huston shakes his head no. Wyler sickens as he realizes.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - BEVERLY HILLS, CA - NIGHT

Wyler parks his motorcycle on the curb.

He stares up at the majestic facade of the Victorian mansion on the corner. It towers over him. He starts to sweat.

EXT. CARL LAEMMLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A long walk up the stone path leading to the front door. Lined with gaudy English landscaping.

Wyler rings the doorbell. No one answers. On edge, he fidgets with his motorcycle jacket. Smooths his hair.

He rings the doorbell again. A long, excruciating silence. Feet getting colder, he turns to leave. But before he can -- MAX (65, butler) opens the door with a stone-face. Cementing Wyler's unease. Then Max smiles, letting him off the hook.

MAX
Great to see you, Willy.

Reassured, but only slightly, Wyler enters the--

INT. GRAND HALLWAY (LAEMMLE'S HOUSE) - CONTINUOUS

As he walks, he takes in the walls. Pictures of the master of the house with various MOVIE STARS. With PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT.

He reaches a photo of an OLDER, BALD MAN in a tux, smiling proudly at the camera -- holding an Academy Award. Wyler shrugs -- a complex cocktail of jealousy and nostalgia.

LAEMMLE (O.S.)
All Quiet on the Western Front.

Wyler looks up to see CARL LAEMMLE (72) in the foyer. The old, bald man from the photo. He's graceful, with a soft-spoken German accent. His eyes are kind, wise. But also, sad.

WYLER

Great picture. They don't make 'em like that anymore.

LAEMMLE

Some don't try.

Wyler ignores the dig.

LAEMMLE (CONT'D)

I assume you'd like a Scotch?

WYLER

Thank you.

Laemmle waves Wyler to the sofa and approaches a wet bar in the corner. Wyler hates needing him. More than anything.

WYLER (CONT'D)

I love your new landscaping. Very -- well manicured.

LAEMMLE

Willy, I'm not giving you *How Green Was My Valley*.

WYLER

(stunned, angry)

Then why invite me here? To reject me in person?! You always were a mean old prick!

LAEMMLE

I sold it. I -- I needed the money.

(letting his guard down)

I'm broke, Willy.

WYLER

Broke? Look at this house!

LAEMMLE

The bank owns it. They're letting me stay. For now.

WYLER

I don't understand. What happened?

Laemmle considers his response--

INT. SCREENING ROOM (LAEMMLE'S HOUSE) - MINUTES LATER

A state-of-the-art home theater. Wyler and Laemmle settle into two red leather chairs near the back.

LAEMMLE

You following the news back home?

Wyler shifts in his chair, uncomfortable.

LAEMMLE (CONT'D)

Thousands of Jewish businesses destroyed. Tens of thousands shipped to internment camps. Hundreds dead--

WYLER

Kristallnacht--

LAEMMLE

-- the synagogue in Laupheim -- my childhood synagogue -- burned to the ground!

WYLER

(nods)

I saw pictures.

LAEMMLE

You haven't seen this.

Laemmle turns off the light. And starts the projector. We see BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE of:

A title card: Havana, Cuba

Then -- a giant OCEAN LINER in a harbor. Hundreds of weary PEOPLE crowd the rails, staring desperately at the shore. Imprinted on the ship in large letters: MS St. Louis Hamburg.

Various shots of distraught PASSENGERS. The ELDERLY. CHILDREN. Then footage of CUBAN OFFICIALS, on land, laughing and joking. Carefree.

A final shot of a despairing family, trapped on the boat.

Laemmle turns off the projector and flips on the light.

LAEMMLE (CONT'D)

900 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Germany. All with Cuban Visas.

(MORE)

LAEMMLE (CONT'D)

But just before they docked in Havana, the government instituted a Jewish ban. They've been stuck in that harbor six days.

Wyler is disturbed. He stares at the blank screen.

WYLER

Anti-Semitism is an evil as old as the world. This too will pass.

LAEMMLE

If Hitler invades Poland, Europe will be thrust into war. And the extermination of the Jewish people will begin.

WYLER

Hitler won't invade Poland. He doesn't want a war.

Laemmle thinks Wyler is naive. He speaks to him in German.

LAEMMLE

I've been sponsoring Jews from Laupheim and Wurttemberg so they can immigrate to America. We've gotten hundreds out so far. It's cost my entire fortune.

Wyler can't believe it. He's in awe.

LAEMMLE (CONT'D)

But we're out of time. And the US is asleep. As we speak, the Senate's considering a petition to admit the St. Louis. It will be rejected. And these poor souls will be sent back to Germany.

WYLER

(in German)

America is neutral in European affairs. You know that.

LAEMMLE

(leaning in, switching back to English)

I want to make a picture that will expose the Nazi atrocities and convince America to take action. I'd like you to direct.

Wyler is shocked at the offer.

WYLER

Carl, the studios don't release
Nazi pictures. It's impossible.

Laemmle gives him a hard look.

WYLER (CONT'D)

Carl, I wish I could, but -- I'm
just under too much scrutiny right
now. I'm sorry, Carl. I can't.

Laemmle nods, disappointed.

LAEMMLE

It's getting late.

FRONT DOORWAY

Laemmle escorts Wyler out of the house. Deafening silence
between the men. Until--

LAEMMLE (CONT'D)

I sold *How Green Was My Valley* to
MGM. Go see Louis B. Mayer -- I'll
put in a good word.

WYLER

Carl -- I --
(can't find the words)
-- thank you.

They nod goodbye. Then Wyler walks off into the night.
Laemmle watches Wyler go, Max appearing behind him.

MAX

What did Willy want?

LAEMMLE

To apologize.

INT. TROCADERO NIGHT CLUB - SUNSET STRIP, CA - NIGHT

Black tie French-inspired supper club. A BIG SWING JAZZ BAND
plays the hits of Basie, Ellington, and Goodman.

A giant banner above the stage: *Happy Birthday L.B.!*

Celebrities. Socialites. Aristocrats. Packed like sardines.
Frolicking like teenagers. CARY GRANT and JIMMY STEWART joke
in one corner. CLARK GABLE and CAROLE LOMBARD flirt in
another. MYRNA LOY jumps on stage with the band.

Wyler and Talli enter, dressed to the nines.

TALLI

(in awe, but a little
turned off)

This is his *birthday* party?

Wyler smiles mischievously -- he could get used to this. He notices Goldwyn across the room. The two men scowl at each other. Interrupted by--

Huston bounds over out of nowhere to give Wyler a bear hug from behind and a big kiss on the cheek. Wyler squirms.

HUSTON

Oops -- thought you were Garbo.

Talli shakes her head at the endearing bohemian, as he leads her and Wyler to the bar. Huston spots Jimmy Stewart nearby.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

Jimmy -- you crazy, skinny son-of-a-bitch! Come over here and meet the best director in the world!

Stewart extends his hand to Wyler.

STEWART

(joking)

Nice to meet you, Mr. Hitchcock.

They all laugh -- except Wyler.

ON STAGE - MINUTES LATER

LOUIS B. MAYER (55, balding, commanding, malleable demeanor) and his wife, MARGARET SHENBERG (35, depressed), grace the main stage to much fanfare. Wyler, Talli, and Huston observe.

HUSTON

If anybody on earth ever created himself, Louis B. Mayer did.

Wyler watches Mayer with admiration. Talli is skeptical.

PRIVATE MEETING ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

TWO CLUB SECURITY escort Wyler and Huston into a private room where Mayer and several HANGERS-ON drink the expensive stuff.

MAYER

(spotting them)

Boys! Great to see you!

WYLER

Thank you for inviting us, sir.
Happy birthday.

MAYER

I hear you just celebrated a
birthday as well.

HUSTON

(with a devilish smile)
Willy turned 40.

WYLER

I turned 37.

MAYER

(teasing)

Hey, we're all 37 at heart, right?
(to the hangers-on)
Gentlemen, will you please excuse
Mr. Wyler and I?

Huston throws his arm around an ELDERLY HANGER-ON, whose
neckwear catches Huston's suspicious eye--

HUSTON

Bow tie, huh?

Huston leads the crowd off for more drinks.

WYLER

Mr. Mayer, I appreciate you taking
the time--

MAYER

Relax, Willy -- it's yours.

Wyler's speechless. Mayer puts his arm around him--

MAYER (CONT'D)

You're an extraordinary talent.
You're ready to take your career to
the next level.

Ecstatic, Wyler grins his biggest possible grin.

MAYER (CONT'D)

(toasting his glass)

"Do it right, do it big, give it
class." Welcome to the MGM family.

MAIN DANCE FLOOR

Music! Dancing! Laughter! Celebration!

The room celebrates Mayer. Wyler celebrates himself.

He and Talli swing with zeal. Huston dances over with a beautiful ACTRESS (19). He slaps Wyler proudly on the back, before he and his date lindy hop away.

Smiling wide, Wyler dips Talli with a big kiss. They laugh.

Wyler notices Goldwyn staring angrily at him from across the room. Drunk with victory, Wyler ignores him.

EXT. TROCADERO NIGHT CLUB - END OF THE NIGHT

Wyler hands a ticket to a VALET, who promptly scurries off, leaving the self-satisfied director alone at the curb.

Casually scanning the sidewalk, Wyler notices TWO ELDERLY HOMELESS MEN sleeping near a bench. Before he can dwell on them, he hears TWO YOUNG MALE PARTY GOERS behind him, joking--

PARTY GOER 1
Hear the German weather report?
Predicted reign, with a strong
chance of hail.

They laugh.

PARTY GOER 2
Hitler taught the Queen the Nazi
salute. Took some practice, but she
got it "Reich" the third time.

They laugh again. Wyler isn't amused. He can't help but--

WYLER
Hey guys -- I know you're just
kidding around, but it's really not
something to joke about.

PARTY GOER 1
What's your problem, pal?

WYLER
I'm just saying, it's really pretty
serious what's going on over there.

PARTY GOER 2
Why don't you mind your fuckin'
business, asshole?

Wyler's temperature rises, but he doesn't engage. The valet returns with his car. Talli arrives as well, unaware of what's been unfolding. As the Wylers get in their car:

PARTY GOER 1
Asshole.

PARTY GOER 2
What do you expect from a Jew?

Wyler's blood boils. Talli is shocked. She turns to Wyler, expecting her proud husband to launch himself at them. But he bites his lip and drives away. To her surprise. And dismay.

INT. CAPITOL HILL HALLWAY - DAY

We see the back of a TALL MAN moving swiftly through the marble corridors of power. An entourage behind him. A gang of REPORTERS with note pads scramble to intercept him.

REPORTER 1
Senator! Senator!

Close on the back of the Tall Man's head, as he stops. His hair is slicked back. He has a Midwestern drawl.

REPORTER 1 (CONT'D)
Your committee votes tomorrow on
the MS St. Louis. What's your
position on allowing Jewish
refugees from Germany into the US?

TALL MAN
(cold)
I don't think it would meet the
better part of wisdom. Conditions
here at home prohibit accepting an
influx of population.

The reporters quickly scribble down his every word.

EXT. MOVIE COLONY HOTEL POOL - MIAMI BEACH, FL - DAY

Swanky, exclusive ocean resort. Surrounded by lush tropical beauty, turquoise waterfalls, pink lounge chairs, and CELEBRITIES behaving badly.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY (MOVIE COLONY HOTEL) - CONTINUOUS

Wyler, Talli, Huston, and a GIGGLY ACTRESS (20) check in. Talli holds baby Catherine. She cringes at the gaudy splendor oozing from the lobby.

TALLI
Another understated MGM affair.

HUSTON
(winks)
Good year for Andy Hardy.

Giggly Actress giggles.

Wyler notices a newspaper on the counter. The front page headline: *US Rejects Jewish Refugees*. He lingers on this.

The sound of the others talking drains from the soundtrack.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

Wyler, Talli, Huston, and Giggly Actress sunbathe along the hotel's lagoon pool. The men chat -- Wyler seeming distracted. The ladies read -- we can't see what.

HUSTON
Miami was an inspired choice for an MGM sabbatical. Well done, sir!

Giggly Actress takes an interest in Talli's book.

WYLER
Thanks. I guess I've been reading a lot about Miami lately.

Giggly Actress bounces into Huston's lap.

GIGGLY ACTRESS
(re: Talli's book)
Honey! I have to have this! Would you pick me up a copy at that cute little book shop in town?!

Wyler and Talli roll their eyes at each other.

WYLER
I'll go. I could use a drive.

Wyler walks off. Talli watches him go, concerned.

EXT. PORT OF MIAMI - AN HOUR LATER

Wyler drives up to the main cruise terminal and parks. He investigates the empty Biscayne Bay. No ships.

Wandering around the port, he sees HOMELESS MAN upon HOMELESS MAN huddled together. Penniless. Starving. Staring back.

He approaches an OLD SEA CAPTAIN, smoking a pipe.

WYLER

You know the St. Louis?

The Captain says nothing.

WYLER (CONT'D)

Were any refugees able to land?

CAPTAIN

(shaking head no)

Can't feed our own damn people.

What we gonna do wit bunch a Jews?

Wyler feels sick. He stares back out at the empty bay.

EXT. HOTEL ROOM PATIO - DAY

Wyler and Talli read, overlooking the beach. White sands. Palm trees. Children splashing in the clear, blue waves.

TALLI

(laughing at her book)

This cute English family has the most charming adventures. You have to read this! Although the final chapters get more serious as hostilities rise in Europe. Scary world we live in.

WYLER

(immersed in a newspaper)

Sounds great, my love.

Talli realizes he's not paying attention.

TALLI

And then everyone dies.

WYLER

Wonderful, my love.

She lowers the newspaper from his face.

TALLI

Where are you?

Wyler breaks from his fog.

WYLER

Hitler's demanding Danzig from Poland. Yesterday, he and Mussolini signed a military pact.

(MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

No one knows Hitler's next move,
but it sure doesn't look like
dinner and dancing. Meanwhile--

He hands her his paper, pointing to an article.

WYLER (CONT'D)

88% of Americans think we should
stay out of European affairs.

Talli reads the headline.

WYLER (CONT'D)

If Hitler starts a war--

TALLI

(finishing his thought)
-- is the US going to fight?

Wyler ponders the question. He turns toward the water -- a vast ocean between America and Europe.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - NIGHT

A pool side party. A mariachi band. Cocktails with umbrellas.

Huston and Giggly Actress sizzle up a storm in the dance area. Wyler and Talli are content to stay away from the makeshift nightclub, but Huston finally convinces them to let loose and do an uncoordinated jitterbug.

HUSTON

(roaring with laughter)
Willy -- you're a dead hoofer!

They all laugh. And keep the limbs whirling.

At that moment, an EMERGENCY BROADCAST comes over the hotel loudspeaker. The band stops playing. The crowd stops dancing.

We close on Wyler as he listens to the broadcast.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is a special CBS news report.
This morning, shortly before 6
a.m., German troops crossed the
border into Poland--

Wyler's face drops. He's frozen, white as a ghost. He turns to Talli, who shares his expression.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

-- After a huge aerial and land bombardment, the force and speed of the invasion shocked the Polish military. In a matter of hours, the German airforce had destroyed the Polish railway system and shot its airforce out of the skies--

Wyler looks at Talli, searching for the words--

WYLER

I'll be right back.

INT. WYLER'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler paces impatiently, in front of an erratic fire.

WYLER

Dammit -- pick up the phone, Carl.

Across the room, Baby Catherine coos in her crib. He picks her up and plays with her. She erupts with giggles, melting his heart. He kisses her on the forehead.

TALLI (O.S.)

Laemmle?

Talli enters the room, taking Catherine from him.

WYLER

(shaking head no)

Not yet. It's taking too long.

TALLI

Britain and France have declared war on Germany.

Wyler nods, solemnly. They both sit.

The phone RINGS. Wyler picks it up.

WYLER

Hello.

He reacts to bad news on the line, sinking in his chair. He looks up at Talli, pain in his eyes.

INT. WILSHIRE B'NAI B'RITH TEMPLE - LOS ANGELES, CA - DAY

A giant poster of Laemmle smiling, next to a closed casket.

A packed house of HOLLYWOOD ELITE, including: Mayer, Goldwyn, Olivier and his wife VIVIEN LEIGH, Jimmy Stewart, and more--

Wyler sits in the front row, between Talli and Huston. Wyler holds Catherine.

RABBI F. EDGAR MAGNIN delivers a eulogy. Wyler tries to remain stoic, but he's clearly affected.

We close on Wyler, consumed with his own thoughts.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Massive, all-white, extravagant. The office of a man at the center of Hollywood power, and letting you know it.

Mayer sits behind a huge semi-circle desk. He has two phones, an intercom, and a pen holder shaped like a race horse. Flanking him is EDDIE MANNIX (48, balding, intimidating). He wears a smile, but not the kind you want to see.

JUNE CALDWELL (30, tough, alluring), works at a small desk in the corner. Typing relentlessly.

Wyler sits across from Mayer.

WYLER

I want to make a movie about
Hitler.

Mayer is taken aback, but tries to hide it. The typing stops.

MAYER

Adolf Hitler?

WYLER

No, Fred Hitler.

Mayer ignores the quip. He leans back in his chair, carefully considering his response.

MAYER

Why do you want to make a movie
about Adolf Hitler?

WYLER

You and I came together to make
prestige pictures -- to win awards--

MAYER

(correcting him)

You and I came together to make *How
Green Was My Valley*.

WYLER

Hollywood has stayed silent on the events in Europe for six years. But the world's at war now. It's time to comment. Courage -- that's what the Academy wants.

MAYER

Willy, I founded the Academy. Robin Hood pictures are what it wants.

WYLER

(frustrated)

I defer to your wisdom, of course.

MAYER

There's a depression on. People are starving. They go to the movies to escape. The last thing they want to see are Nazi pictures.

WYLER

But, sir--

MAYER

Enough!

(sternly)

MGM is the biggest studio in the world. We're a huge global corporation. I'm responsible to my stockholders. We have theaters all over the world -- including Berlin.

Wyler knows he's lost. He nods, defeated.

MAYER (CONT'D)

Good.

(easing up)

And trust me, if it's awards your concerned with, *How Green Was My Valley* is what the Academy wants.

WYLER

Thank you, sir.

Mayer nods, clearly signaling that Wyler should go. Wyler does, Mayer watching him. As soon as Wyler exits, Mayer's face turns from cordial to troubled.

June observes the crusty mogul closely.

EXT. MGM LOT - MINUTES LATER

Wyler gazes at his surroundings. Miles of massive sound stages and glorious back lots. EXTRAS milling about in colorful dress. PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS scampering to and fro. MGM is a dream factory. Everything Wyler's always wanted.

He notices a CAMERAMAN and SOUND OPERATOR filming a lion, lifted up on crates, for use as the studio's production logo at the beginning of pictures. The lion ROARS.

Wyler kick-starts his motorcycle. About to ride off, when--

JUNE

(rushing toward him)

Mr. Wyler! Mr. Wyler!--

(reaching him, breathless)

I can help you make your picture.

INT. WYLER'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Wyler, Talli, Huston, and June dine on red wine and meatloaf. Catherine, in high chair, cutely dribbles milk down her chin.

JUNE

He was lying. He doesn't care about the German market -- there is no German market. American studio assets are frozen in German banks -- they have no access to them.

Huston can't help but check out June's curves.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Besides, Goebbels refuses to import films with Jewish crew members. So there's no German market anyway for any picture you direct. You are Jewish, right?

Wyler lays down his fork and knife.

WYLER

I'm not religious.

Talli notices Wyler's evasive response. June moves on--

JUNE

Mayer is afraid of the censorship office. Of Joseph Breen. Every Jewish studio executive is.

Wyler and Talli exchange a glance of "where is this going?"

June pulls a letter out of her work bag and slides it across the table to Wyler and Talli.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Breen's handwriting.

Talli takes the letter and reads it aloud.

TALLI

"They are a rotten bunch of vile people with no respect for anything beyond the making of money. Here in Hollywood, sexual perversion is rampant. Ninety-five percent of these folks are Jews of Eastern European lineage. They are, probably, the scum of the earth."

HUSTON
(sarcastic)
What a charmer.

JUNE

Most of Breen's rules center on language and sex, but the code also bans criticism of a foreign country. Breen uses that to block anything negative of Nazi Germany. You comply or he shuts you down.

Looks of growing concern around the table.

JUNE (CONT'D)
In '36, Mayer tried to adapt the book, *It Can't Happen Here*. Breen proposed sixty cuts and threatened great difficulty for MGM. Mayer backed down. Cancelled the project.
(leaning in)
Last year, Mayer tried to adapt *Three Comrades*. History repeated.

WYLER
Are you telling us Mayer wants to make a Nazi picture?

JUNE
He's been trying to for years. He just can't figure out how.

Wyler and Talli turn to each other, searching for answers.

EXT. BACKYARD (WYLER'S HOUSE) - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler and Huston kick back with a couple cigars. Wyler thinks to himself. Huston watches him closely.

HUSTON
Don't do it, Willy.

Wyler looks at Huston innocently, as if to ask, "do what?"

HUSTON (CONT'D)
This Nazi thing. I'm telling you --
it's trouble. Our careers are hot
right now. This could destroy
everything we've worked for.

Wyler broods over this, not pushing back.

HUSTON (CONT'D)
We're artists, man. Country doesn't
want to hear what two Hollywood
guys think about world affairs--

WYLER
(cutting him off)
I'm not about to commit career
suicide. All our friends are out of
work, I'm not looking to join them.

Huston nods. Leaning back with his cigar, relieved.

INT. WYLER'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Wyler and Talli lie in bed, staring at the ceiling.

TALLI
Why'd you tell that woman you're
not Jewish?

WYLER
(defensive)
I'm not religious. You know that.

TALLI
That's not what she was asking.

The truth hits Wyler hard. He shifts uncomfortably, as Talli rolls over to go to sleep. Wyler stares at the ceiling.

INT. WYLER'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Exhausted, Wyler nervously drinks his morning coffee. Talli enters, holding *Variety*. She looks to console him--

TALLI
Sorry, my love--

Wyler looks defeated. He curses under his breath.

TALLI (CONT'D)
(with a smile)
-- but you're gonna have to dust
off your tux! Eight nominations!

Wyler jumps out of his chair! He grabs the paper.

WYLER
Wuthering Heights -- Outstanding
Production! Best Direction! Oliver
for Best Actor!
(proud)
Way to go, Larry.

TALLI
(smiling wide)
People love the Brits.

WYLER
Larry's wife was nominated too. For
Gone With the Wind.

TALLI
Vivien Leigh? See, Americans love
the Brits. It's the accent.

Wyler's face is hidden behind the paper. He lowers it, revealing he's working out an idea in his mind.

WYLER
What was that book you read on
vacation?

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Accompanied by a jazz soundtrack, we see Wyler pitch his new idea to Mayer. June listens eagerly by Wyler's side.

Wyler is animated, impassioned, persuasive.

Mayer leans back in his chair, skeptically considering--

INT. CIRO'S BAR - SUNSET STRIP, WEST HOLLYWOOD - THAT NIGHT

A shimmering hot spot for celebrities and their entourages. Seductive CIGARETTE GIRLS glide from table to table. Wyler, Talli, Huston, and June celebrate at a corner table overflowing with bottles of champagne.

TALLI
(lifting her glass)
To *Mrs. Miniver*!

They all toast and cheer.

CUT TO:

Wyler and June talk privately. Talli and Huston do the same.

WYLER
(energized)
Imagine -- a cute comedy about an adorable English family, that's secretly a drama about the European war. We show Americans the destructive effect of the German war machine, but without any references to Hitler or the Nazis, Breen can't block it!

Huston, eavesdropping, is uncomfortable with Wyler's plan.

Wyler and June toast. As Wyler drinks, June looks like she wants to tell him something, but doesn't know how.

JUNE
Willy, before we start production, there's something you need to know--

Wyler lowers his glass, sensing her ominous tone.

JUNE (CONT'D)
The forces against this picture -- go way higher than Joseph Breen.

INT. SENATE CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

A packed house of professional Washington DC GAWKERS watches BANKING EXECUTIVES testify in front of the SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE. A creaky, stodgy old white room presided over by creaky, stodgy OLD WHITE MEN. The only relatively young face--

SENATOR GERALD NYE (46) aggressively commands the room, pummeling a withering EXECUTIVE. He has slicked back hair and a Midwestern drawl. And shallow, malicious eyes.

NYE

And exactly what percent of allied financing did US banks provide during the Great War?

EXECUTIVE

(stammering)

I -- I can't recall--

NYE

75 percent, sir! Meanwhile, you and your colleagues also financed 50 percent of the German side!

The crowd turns on the executive. A wild booing beast.

EXECUTIVE

That's not true. It's complicated--

NYE

You claim to operate in the name of patriotism, when, in fact, you're profiteers! You and your friends, sir, are merchants of death!

The audience goes wild. Nye smiles. Smug. Slick. Shifty.

NYE (CONT'D)

Americans want no more war. Most of all, they want no more participation in foreign wars. The passing of today's important neutrality legislation ensures the US will never again spill its blood and treasure on foreign soil!

The rabid crowd EXPLODES violently. Looking like they could tear the scared executive to pieces.

INT. CAPITOL HILL HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Nye walks briskly down the marble corridors of power. SENATOR BURTON WHEELER (57, colorful) follows close behind.

WHEELER

A huge victory, Senator! "Gerald the Giant Killer" strikes again!

Nye offers a polite, yet decidedly unfriendly, smile.

INT. NYE'S SENATE OFFICE - OUTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Organized chaos. AIDS and ASSISTANTS flitter about. Nye and Wheeler quickly power through. HENRY, a legislative aid (22, male) chases after. Wheeler never stops talking.

WHEELER (CONT'D) HENRY
-- But is the neutrality act Senator Nye -- telegram from enough?-- California.

Still walking, Nye grabs the telegram from the aid and hurries into his interior office.

NYE'S INTERIOR OFFICE

Nye rips off his coat and poses behind his desk, skimming the telegram. Wheeler sits across from him.

WHEELER
-- Is it enough to stop Roosevelt?
He keeps pushing for war, while impersonating a man of peace. Rumor is he'll run for a 3rd term.

NYE
Of course he will. He'll defeat Wendell Wilkie too. But hubris will be his downfall. That's how I nailed Harding on Teapot Dome. FDR is ten times as arrogant.

Wheeler nods with hero worship. He starts to speak. But Nye, reading, holds up his hand, gesturing Wheeler to be quiet. As Nye reads on, Wheeler sits in awkward silence. Then--

NYE (CONT'D)
Henry -- get Joseph Breen on the phone! Tell him it's urgent.

HENRY (O.S.)
Yes, sir.

Nye turns to Wheeler, scheming--

NYE
Who the hell is William Wyler?

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - LOS ANGELES - OSCAR NIGHT

An explosion of excess. A sea of neurotic MOVIE STARS caked in makeup. And that's just the men.

All eyes on BOB HOPE delivering his opening monologue--

HOPE

Welcome to the Academy Awards! All over America, people are saying, "I wonder who will win?" And all over Beverly Hills, psychiatrists are dusting off their couches and saying, "I wonder who will lose?"

Tense laughter from the star-studded crowd.

Wyler sits nervously at his table, flanked by Talli and Huston. Across the room sits a nervous Goldwyn, who Wyler spies out of the corner of his eye.

CUT TO:

Paramount executive Y. FRANK FREEMAN reads the nominees for outstanding production--

FREEMAN

-- and *Wuthering Heights*, Samuel Goldwyn Productions--
(opening envelope)
-- and the Oscar for outstanding production -- *Gone With the Wind*!

The grand score of *Gone With the Wind* overpowers the room.

INT. LOBBY (AMBASSADOR HOTEL) - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler, disappointed (but almost getting used to it), chats with Huston. Goldwyn bulldozes over. Wyler turns to his old nemesis, willing to let bygones be.

WYLER

Hey Sam, guess it wasn't our year -- again.

GOLDWYN

You double-crossing son-of-a-bitch.

Wyler starts to steam, but lets the old man say his piece.

GOLDWYN (CONT'D)

Your delicate ego gets bruised and you jump ship at the first opportunity. After all I've done for you. Now you're already in trouble at MGM -- getting axed from *How Green Was My Valley*?

WYLER
(defensive)
I left on my own accord.

GOLDWYN
I'm going to crush you at the box office. And with the Academy. I guarantee I win an Oscar before you. I guarantee it.

Goldwyn is pushing his buttons and loving it.

GOLDWYN (CONT'D)
Carl Laemmle was right about you. You'll never succeed in this business because you don't care about anything but yourself.

Over the line. Huston cuts in--

HUSTON
Sam, is your ass jealous of all the shit that comes out of your mouth?

Goldwyn storms off, leaving Wyler angry and stunned.

INT. CUTTING ROOM (MGM STUDIOS) - DAY

A dingy dungeon. Where the real magic happens. Wyler, Huston, and HAROLD KRESS (27, Wyler's editor) watch a projection of the German propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*.

Wyler is quiet. Focused. In his own head.

KRESS
This German shit has no subtlety. I'll edit *Mrs. Miniver* to draw out the message with finesse--

WYLER
(cutting him off)
Our picture must be entertainment first, message second.

Huston notices the comment, but stays silent.

KRESS
But I thought the point is--

WYLER
The most powerful message in the world falls on deaf ears in an empty theatre.

Kress nods. Huston is stone-faced.

A phone RINGS. Wyler picks it up.

WYLER (CONT'D)

This is Wyler.

(listening)

Shit. Ok, we'll be here.

(hangs up)

Breen's man is on his way to read
the treatment.

KRESS

The Hays office probably doesn't
need to know we're studying Nazi
war propaganda.

Wyler nods. Kress races off to empty the projector.

WYLER

(to Huston)

This picture has to thread the
finest of needles. It will be
difficult to write.

Huston blurts out what's been on his mind--

HUSTON

Willy, I can't write it.

WYLER

(shocked)

What?

HUSTON

(with hesitation)

I've been meaning to tell you--

(excited)

Warner Brothers -- they want me for
the new Dashiell Hammett picture --
The Maltese Falcon.

WYLER

To write?

HUSTON

-- and direct! You believe it?!

Wyler tries to be happy for his friend. It's not working.

WYLER

(halfheartedly)

That's great, Johnny. Really great.

(thinking)

(MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)
But can't you do *Mrs. Miniver*
first? I mean -- I need you--

HUSTON
The studio wants to start
preproduction right away.

A KNOCK at the door.

HUSTON (CONT'D)
Breen's guy.

Wyler doesn't move. He's too stunned.

Another knock on the door. Huston looks at Wyler, to see if he'll answer it. They exchange a long pained look.

Another knock--

WYLER
I'm happy for you, Johnny.

Wyler walks to the door. Huston watches him, conflicted.

INT. DC RESTAURANT - A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT

Nye, Wheeler, and Breen sit at a shadowy corner table. Nye leafs through a notepad. Breen is increasingly nervous.

NYE
Warner Brothers. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy?*

BREEN
They argue it's not propaganda
because it tells a factual story.
Hays agreed that--

NYE
(interrupting)
-- William Wyler. *Mrs. Miniver?*

BREEN
We've been all over it, sir. There
are no references to Nazi Germany--

NYE
(losing his temper)
For Chrissake, Breen! They're
pulling the wool over your eyes!

Nye throws the notes away, in a fury.

NYE (CONT'D)
Are these filmmakers Jews?

Breen pulls out a file and reads--

BREEN
Wyler's a Jew. He immigrated from the border of France and Germany as a teenager. On an expensive visa. We don't know how he afforded it.

WHEELER
This is exactly why we blocked the St. Louis in committee. See what happens when we let these people into our country?

Nye mulls this over. Then refocuses on bullying Breen.

NYE
Hollywood is attempting to drug the reason of the American people and rouse war fever. This, the U.S. Congress will not accept.
(with emphasis)
Will you accept it, Breen?

BREEN
(intimidated)
No, sir.

NYE
Good.
(menacing)
What are you gonna do about it?

INT. WYLER'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Wyler, Talli, and JAMES HILTON (39, screenwriter) huddle around the kitchen table. Hilton furiously scribbles notes.

WYLER
In the book, the Minivers are an upper-class family. We need to make them middle-class, so Americans will relate to them better.

HILTON
(eager to please)
Absolutely, Mr. Wyler.

WYLER

Understatement and restraint are
the key. The pulse of real humanity
must beat through this picture.

HILTON

(scribbling madly)

Yes, sir.

WYLER

Remember, all pages go through
Talli. She'll pass them to me.

(Hilton nods)

And--

(conflicted, he pulls out
a binder)

-- these notes from MGM's
production office -- we need these
elements in the film to appeal to
the Academy. It's very important.

Talli shoots Wyler a distressed look. He tries to deflect it.
She starts to speak, but before she can--

A phone RINGS in the other room. He leaves to answer. Talli
lingers on the binder, disappointed in her husband.

INT. WYLER'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS / INT. MGM LOT - DAY

Wyler on the phone with June, mid-conversation. We cut back
and forth between Wyler and June on the MGM lot.

WYLER

Breen can't do that! What about the
First Amendment?

JUNE

The First Amendment doesn't protect
free speech in motion pictures.

WYLER

Says who?!

JUNE

The Supreme Court.

Wyler exhales in frustration.

INT. WYLER'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Talli and Hilton continue work on the notes. Wyler enters--

WYLER

Breen just banned all pictures
about the war. All of them.

HILTON

What do we do?

Wyler looks at Talli, both their wheels turning.

INT. PRODUCTION CODE OFFICE (HAYS OFFICE) - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Hays Office May 1940

Wyler and Talli sit in a waiting area, flipping through magazines. Talli looks up from hers.

TALLI

French troops are in the
Netherlands.

Wyler grunts. Says nothing.

TALLI (CONT'D)

Is all your family out of France?

Wyler tenses at the question. Talli starts to ask another--

WYLER

(confidently)

Germany will never defeat France.
Maginot Line.

Talli isn't so sure.

The door to the main office opens, revealing June.

JUNE

(beckoning Wyler)

We're ready.

(then)

Remember what I told you.

INT. BREEN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Breen sits behind his desk. Wyler and June across from him.

Wyler scans the sterile room. A giant wooden crucifix on the wall. He notices that Breen is wearing a bow tie.

Breen is no longer the whipping boy he was with Nye. In this exchange, he's the one with the power. And he relishes it.

BREEN

"Jailbird Willy" -- always good to
see you.

Wyler holds back his contempt for Breen. He simply nods.

BREEN (CONT'D)

Congrats on wrapping your latest
picture. *The Letter* is already
getting Oscar buzz.

WYLER

Thank you.

BREEN

I wish you luck. It's tough always
being a bridesmaid.

WYLER

There are worse things to be.

Sensing the hostility rising, June jumps in--

JUNE

Mr. Breen has an offer which will
enable *Mrs. Miniver* to resume
production--

BREEN

(interrupting)
-- under certain conditions.

WYLER

I'm sure we can oblige.

Breen hands them a multi-page list. Wyler is stunned as he
thumbs through it.

BREEN

In addition, one of my men must be
on set every day, all day -- to
assure compliance.

Wyler is livid. He turns to June, begging for permission to
speak his mind. With her eyes, June denies him.

WYLER

(turning back to Breen)
Thank you for your generosity.

INT. WYLER'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Wyler and Talli sit up in bed. Talli marking up the latest draft of *Mrs. Miniver*. She pauses and turns to Wyler--

TALLI

Can you still make the picture you want?

He's increasingly uncertain.

WYLER

The key is the speech at the end.
If we can rewrite that, I think we--

TALLI

Hard enough in Hollywood to make a picture you want. Impossible to make a picture you don't want.

Wyler thinks it over. Weary before he's even begun.

INT. WARNER BROTHERS SOUND STAGE - MALTESE FALCON SET - DAY

Huston sits in a director's chair, reading a cast list. Wyler stands over him.

HUSTON

Greer Garson as Mrs. Miniver!
Walter Pidgeon as Mr. Miniver!
(hands list to Wyler)
Serious A-list wattage.

Insecure, Wyler hands him thirty pages of screenplay.

WYLER

Anyway -- here it is. Act One. If you have time--

To Wyler's surprise, Huston immediately opens up the script and starts reading.

HUSTON

This is good. You write this?

WYLER

Me and a couple hired studio guns.

HUSTON

(reading)
This is really good, Willy.

Wyler beams.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

You can clip some of this plot though. Develop this Mr. Ballard character -- that'll maximize the triviality of the domestic vignettes before the war comes.

WYLER

Of course I was planning to--

Huston takes out a red pen.

HUSTON

What if the old lady, after she says "I don't know what the country's coming to," she jokes "no wonder Germany's arming!" It'll get a laugh and tighten the exposition.

WYLER

Well I don't know--

HUSTON

(filled with great ideas)
And if we move this line up here --
and get rid of this--

Wyler watches in horror as Huston marks up the draft in a flurry. Each pen stroke a stab to the heart. Blind to Wyler's sensitivity, Huston finishes his mark-up with enthusiasm.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

(handing it back)
Isn't this better?

We close on Wyler reading. Insecurity and jealousy simmering.

WYLER

Much.

INT. WYLER'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Wyler and Talli eat dinner in silence. He's tense.

TALLI

How's the script?

Wyler doesn't respond. He picks at his food.

TALLI (CONT'D)

How's the meatloaf?

Wyler's shoulders stiffen--

WYLER

The Maltese Falcon is inconsequential drivel. A silly murder mystery. I'm trying to do something important.

Talli listens. A poker face.

WYLER (CONT'D)

He doesn't understand directing. I shot a dozen two-reelers before I figured anything out. Paid my dues.
(dialing it down)
Don't get me wrong -- I'm happy for him -- but John has a lot to learn.

Talli's anger at his childish behavior bubbles to the surface. But she holds back.

TALLI

Well, I'm sure Johnny just appreciates you're happy for him.

Wyler stabs angrily at his food with his fork.

INT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Mrs. Miniver - Day 1

Wyler and June walk purposely to the set. Kress and Hilton in tow. Milton Roberts, Breen's errand boy, rushes after Wyler.

MILTON

Mr. Wyler--

Wyler hears him, but keeps walking. June stops him.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Milton Roberts -- from the Hays office. Mr. Breen sent me--

WYLER

(insincerely)
Great to meet you, Milton.

MILTON

I have Mr. Breen's script notes for the first week of shooting.

Wyler takes the notes from Milton and starts to flip through. Annoyed, he looks to June. She offers only a poker-faced nod.

WYLER
 (suppressing irritation)
 Good. Good.
 (shakes Milton's hand)
 Let's get to work!

Milton smiles, mistaking the handshake for a gesture of genuine friendship.

ON SET

Wyler settles into his director's chair. Adrenaline pumping. He gazes over to the corner of the set where Huston usually sits, scribbling notes. He sees -- an empty chair.

Before he can dwell on it, Bobby appears out of nowhere--

BOBBY
 A present from Ms. Garson!

Bobby hands Wyler a small ornate box, with a satin gold bow. Wyler unwraps it to find -- a pair of black velvet gloves. And a note: *For the iron hand of William Wyler.*

Wyler looks up to find GREER GARSON (35, elegant, crimson hair, classic beauty). She is already on her first mark, in costume, laughing at Wyler's reaction to the gift.

Wyler appreciates the good-humored jab. He turns to his FIRST A.D. and gives him a "go-ahead" nod.

FIRST A.D.
 Places everybody! Quiet on the set!

Swing music consumes the soundtrack, as we transition into a--

MONTAGE

(Note: The montage covers a one-month period)

-- Wyler directs Garson, WALTER PIDGEON (43), and other ACTORS in various scenes. Wyler demonstrates the highest expertise in framing and scene composition. But he frustrates his actors by barking orders and generally abusing them.

-- Wyler shoots take after take. Never offering specific direction as to what his actors should do. After yelling "cut," Wyler will simply mutter:

WYLER
 Again.
 (or)
 Do it better.
 (MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

(or)

No good. Do it again.

-- In one instance, he angers RICHARD NEY (24, playing Garson's son) to the point where Ney EXPLODES in character, yelling his lines at Garson. Garson is shocked by Wyler's seemingly brutal technique. She glares at Wyler, who simply offers back a sly wink and smile -- Nye's character is supposed to be furious in that scene. And Wyler brought out a brilliant performance.

-- Milton stalks Wyler day after day, giving unwanted directing tips. Sometimes, Breen is on set too. June tries to keep them at bay. Grudgingly, Wyler complies with all wishes.

-- Wyler, obsessed with work, comes home late night after night, leaving an agitated Talli home alone with the baby.

END MONTAGE

INT. MOVIE HOUSE

Black and white newsreel footage: *Nazis Invade France!*

A NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER speaks over various war scenes of Germany attacking French forces.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

After smashing through Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland, five Nazi armies bulldozed across France this morning. France and Germany are now engaged in a furious campaign as all the world watches. Who will survive? Who will crumble?

We see Wyler and Talli, in the theatre, watching the newsreel. Horror on their faces.

INT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Mrs. Miniver - Day 22

Wyler directs Garson and an Austrian actor, HELMUT DANTINE (22, dark good looks), playing a German pilot, in a scene in the Miniver kitchen.

In the scene, Dantine threatens Garson at gunpoint.

DANTINE

Move or make noise, I shoot.

Garson trembles with fear.

Milton stands over Wyler's shoulder, looking concerned.

DANTINE (CONT'D)

Alone?

GARSON

My children are upstairs, and the maid. All asleep.

DANTINE

(gesturing with the gun)
Food. Drink.

GARSON

Alright.

DANTINE

Food, quick.

GARSON

I'm getting it.

Milton doesn't like the tone of this scene at all.

CUT TO:

Between takes, Milton approaches Wyler.

MILTON

Mr. Wyler -- I don't think this scene is gonna work.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

MAYER

The German pilot comes off quite hostile. It's alarming.

WYLER

That's the point.

MAYER

Don't forget what we discussed -- nothing offensive to Germany.

Wyler leans back in his chair, frustrated.

WYLER

With all due respect, you are aware of what is happening in Europe, aren't you? Or have you been in a coma since 1933?

MAYER

Watch your tongue, Willy. I'm not as forgiving as Sam Goldwyn.

WYLER

What are you so afraid of?--

MAYER

Dammit Willy, that's enough! We're not at war with Germany!

The two man are at a standoff. Mayer breaks the silence--

MAYER (CONT'D)

Let's take a walk.

EXT. MGM LOT - MINUTES LATER

Wyler and Mayer stroll around the studio lot. EXTRAS and CREW mill about, noticing the two famous men as they walk past.

MAYER

I came to this country with a fifth grade education. Wasn't good looking. Wasn't charming. I had no natural advantages. All I had was drive. And look at how this country rewarded me. Far greater than if I'd done exactly the same in any other nation on earth. We have a lot in common, Willy. We're proof of what America can do.

Wyler resists him. Mayer leads him to a bench. They sit.

MAYER (CONT'D)

(conceding)

There's no denying the awful treatment of German Jews under Hitler. I'd have left long ago. But so many have stayed, because they believe the dark times will pass. Germany is their country. Just as America is our country.

WYLER

I'm not afraid of Senator Nye.

MAYER

You should be. He's smart. And
relentless. And in the pockets of
the Nazi government.

Wyler can't believe it.

MAYER (CONT'D)

They're watching us, Willy.
Closely. They're ready to paint us
as Jewish war-mongers at the first
opportunity. And that will only
stoke anti-Semitism in our own
country and make things worse for
Jews around the world.

Wyler takes it in.

MAYER (CONT'D)

(moving closer to Wyler)
You want to make a picture that
will help Americans sympathize with
Britain, fine. But you cannot
attack Germany. I won't let you.
For your own good.

(then)

Nazism will fade away on its own in
due course.

Wyler feels overwhelmed.

WYLER

I don't believe in censorship.

MAYER

This isn't censorship. It's
survival.

INT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - LATER THAT DAY

Wyler approaches Garson, still in costume from the German
pilot scene. Milton stands nearby, eavesdropping. As he
speaks to Garson, Wyler notices Milton.

WYLER

Greer -- I'm making some revisions--
(pained)
I'm cutting the German pilot scene.

June, listening off to side, hangs her head.

Milton smiles at Wyler, who nods politely in return.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

Mayer sits quietly at his desk, staring out the window.

EXT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - LATER THAT DAY

Wyler sits on a stoop, head in his hands, cigarette dangling from his lips. Hilton sits next to him, scribbling on a pad.

HILTON

It's gonna be hard to write around that scene.

WYLER

(short)
Well we have to, understand?

Before Hilton can respond, Wyler spots Huston walking over--

WYLER (CONT'D)

Shit! Jim -- pretend I just told you something funny--

Wyler lets rip a big fake laugh. Completely confused, Hilton follows his lead.

Huston is upon them. He sees through the charade.

HUSTON

What's so funny?

HILTON

(accidently honest)
I don't know.

WYLER

Johnny -- I didn't see you there!
John Huston, this is my great friend, Jim Hilton.

HILTON

The John Huston?! Your screenplay for *Jezebel* was perfection! I'm your biggest fan!--

Wyler kicks Hilton to shut him up. Huston is amused.

WYLER

How's the picture?

HUSTON

Great. Great. Yours?

WYLER

(awkwardly)

Oh great. You know -- great.

HUSTON

Thought I'd drop by your set. See if you wanted to grab a drink.

WYLER

Oh -- well -- that sounds great--
(putting his arm around a surprised Hilton)

-- but Jimmy and I were going to grab a drink tonight -- go over some notes for *Mrs. Miniver*.

HUSTON

(taking the hint)

I see.

WYLER

Next time?

HUSTON

(cold)

You bet.

Huston walks off. Wyler watches him go, hating himself. He wants to call Huston back, but doesn't.

INT. SUNSET STRIP BAR - NIGHT

Wyler and Hilton sit at the bar. Wyler nurses a whiskey. Hilton scribbles on a pad.

WYLER

Scotch?

HILTON

I don't drink.

Beaten down by life, Wyler stares aimlessly at his beverage.

HILTON (CONT'D)

(innocently)

Think Mr. Huston would give me an autograph?

Wyler would strangle Hilton if he had the strength.

Suddenly, the door SWINGS open. An AGITATED MAN pops his head in and yells at the BARTENDER.

AGITATED MAN

Harry, better turn on the news --
the Nazis -- they've taken France!

Wyler and Hilton are stunned. As is HARRY (the bartender).
Harry turns on the radio behind the bar--

RADIO REPORTER (V.O.)

-- Paris has fallen--

Wyler is distraught.

RADIO REPORTER (V.O.)

-- Just two weeks into the Nazi
invasion of France, the German
blitzkrieg overwhelmed French,
English, and Belgian troops. A
desperate situation for the British
as the Nazis have trapped them at
Dunkirk, backs to the sea--

The bartender shuts off the radio.

BARTENDER

Fuckin' European nonsense.
(to Wyler and Hilton)
Not our business, that's what I
say. America first, right?

Wyler stares at him blankly, shaken to his core.

EXT. MGM STUDIO ENTRANCE - DAY

Talli drives up to the front gate. The GUARD recognizes her
and lets her through.

INT. MGM LOT - MINUTES LATER

Talli and June walk along a concrete lined "lake" dressed as
a European town waterfront. EXTRAS and CREW bustle about.

JUNE

He doesn't talk about France.

TALLI

And the actors?

JUNE

Eating them alive, as usual. Never
articulates what he wants. Thinks
it produces more authentic
performances. Oddly, he's right.

TALLI

That's not his only reason.

June thinks this over, then moves on. With regret--

JUNE

The deal with Breen was my idea.
Now it's blown up in our face--

TALLI

(cuts her off)
This picture doesn't happen if not
for you.

June appreciates the kind words. With hesitation--

JUNE

I used to work for Selznick.

Talli stops dead in her tracks and turns to June. After a moment of reflection, she keeps moving.

TALLI

(knowing smile)
I thought I recognized you.

JUNE

You were a finalist for Scarlett O'Hara. Why'd you drop out?

TALLI

Why'd you leave Selznick?

JUNE

Mayer offered me VP of business affairs. He was the first studio exec to take me seriously. View me as more than a pretty face. Turns out a Harvard degree only takes a girl so far in this town.

TALLI

In most towns, I'm afraid.

JUNE

I know Mayer seems like a son-of-a-bitch. But he's full of surprises.

(beat)

Anyway, I need to hustle for the next five years or so. Then, hopefully, I'll still be young enough to start a family.

Talli stops and turns to June. Hand on her shoulder.

TALLI

A woman's choices are never easy.

JUNE

(thoughtful pause)

I know what they're doing in Europe. And if it can happen there, it can happen here. If this movie can somehow change any of that, the least I can do is work late hours.

Talli nods with admiration. They walk on.

TALLI

I'll talk to Willy. Cheer him up. Try to get *Miniver* back on course. (big smile) I'm very glad you called me today.

June smiles back.

INT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - LATER

Wyler bullies Garson and Pidgeon, while a FEMALE MAKEUP ARTIST applies mascara to Garson's eyelashes.

WYLER

Christ, Walter -- just be better!

PIDGEON

I need direction, Willy! How am I supposed to know how to act?

WYLER

Dammit, Walter! Try acting like a goddamn human being!

(impatient, to makeup artist)

Please, by all means, take all day! It's okay -- we'll live forever!

ARTIST

(panicking)

Sorry, Mr. Wyler.

GARSON

(stepping in)

Willy, she's doing the best she can. My makeup takes time. I'm supposed to look old enough to have a twenty-year old son.

WYLER

You don't need that much makeup.
(mean-spirited)
Everyone knows you look old for
your age.

Garson's mouth drops at the remark. She's about to tear up, but she composes herself--

GARSON

(calmly)
You're a real asshole, Willy.

Garson storms off. Pidgeon follows her. Leaving Wyler alone, staring at an empty set, fuming. Angry. Mostly at himself.

In a fit of frustration, Wyler picks up his director's chair and THROWS it at the set, BREAKING it into pieces. He tries to stop himself from going further, but now that the dam has broken, Wyler EXPLODES with pent-up emotion. He picks up various set pieces and props and destroys them -- KICKING, TEARING, SLAMMING things down -- out of control. He pulverizes the set.

Finally, sweating, panting, Wyler regains his composure. He studies his destroyed set, shocked at what he's done.

He looks up to see his crew staring at him, in stunned silence. He's embarrassed and ashamed.

CORNER OF SET

Talli and June witnessed everything. Talli's overcome with shock and disappointment. She turns to June--

TALLI

I wasn't here.

Talli quickly walks off.

INT. WAITING ROOM - OUTSIDE MAYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Wyler stands in the waiting area, staring out a window.

June exits Mayer's office and approaches. Wyler awaits her news, impatiently. She shakes her head in the negative.

JUNE

He won't see you.

Wyler nods, understanding.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Suspended. Two weeks. No pay.

Wyler takes it on the chin, feeling he deserves it.

JUNE (CONT'D)
(with hesitation)
There's more.

WYLER
I can't wait.

JUNE
(delicately)
He's not happy with the footage
he's seen. He thinks the picture
isn't working.

WYLER
(frustrated)
That's because it's not.

JUNE
When you get back, he wants to
discuss maybe pulling the plug.

Wyler nods and hangs his head in defeat.

JUNE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Willy. I still believe
in you.

WYLER
That makes one of us.

INT. NYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Nye holds court, seducing the FAMILY VALUES LOBBY.

Henry (Nye's aide), interrupts them. He whispers something in
Nye's ear which causes the Senator to grin wide.

INT. WYLER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Talli lays alone in bed, eyes open, unable to sleep.

She hears footsteps downstairs, making their way to the
bedroom. She closes her eyes, pretending to sleep, as Wyler
tiptoes into the room.

He slides into bed with her, without saying anything. He
rolls away from her, pretending to quickly fall asleep.

She opens her eyes, distressed.

EXT. BILTMORE HOTEL - NIGHT

Oscar night. Glitz. Glamour. Flashbulbs.

Wyler and Talli exit a limo and walk the red carpet. They don't hold hands. They look like strangers.

INT. BILTMORE BOWL BALLROOM (BILTMORE HOTEL) - MINUTES LATER

Wyler and Talli eat dinner at their table, watching the Oscar ceremony. They both look uncomfortable, stressed.

Finally -- the award for Outstanding Production. DAVID O. SELZNICK finishes announcing the nominees--

SELZNICK

And the Oscar goes to--

Selznick opens the envelope and prepares to read the winner--

SELZNICK (CONT'D)

-- *How Green Was My Valley!*

INT. WYLER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler and Talli quietly enter the house. They do not speak or even look at each other.

He walks to the liquor cabinet and pours a drink. She hangs up her coat.

WYLER

(defeated)

I never should have left that picture. Walked away from an Oscar and for what? At this rate, I'll never be up on that podium.

TALLI

Maybe you don't deserve to be.

WYLER

(shocked)

Excuse me?

TALLI

(standing firm)

You heard me.

WYLER

Whose side are you on?

TALLI

(angry)

I might ask you the same thing.

Talli's combativeness catches Wyler off guard.

TALLI (CONT'D)

Why exactly are you making *Mrs. Miniver*?

He hesitates.

TALLI (CONT'D)

Are you aware of what's going on in Europe? To *your* people?

WYLER

Of course I'm aware--

TALLI

Then what the hell are you gonna do about it?!

Wyler EXPLODES--

WYLER

What do you want me to tell you?! That I'm afraid of never working in this town again?! That I'm afraid of pushing too hard in support for the war because people will say it's cause I'm an immigrant Jew?! I've spent twenty years in this country working my ass off to prove I belong -- that I'm an American. And now it could all go away!

Now Talli is caught off guard.

WYLER (CONT'D)

You've seen the polls. Americans don't care about what's happening to England or France, much less the Jews of Europe.

TALLI

They would care if they really knew what was happening. If they knew the suffering. You can show them.

WYLER

I can't! That's the point! Mayer and Breen will never allow it! So I have to thread this impossible needle of subtlety and nuance and it's just not working! The picture doesn't work! Besides, you listen to the news. France has been taken. Britain is on the run. The war is over! Germany won! What the hell's the point of making a shitty picture aimed at getting America into the war, when the god damn war is over anyway?!

Wyler hurls his glass at the wall, shattering it. From another room, baby Catherine starts to cry.

Talli starts to leave, but turns back around--

TALLI

A great man I knew used to say, "there's nothing you can't do on film. All you've got to do is figure out *how*."

WYLER

(defeated)

What would you have me do?

Talli pauses a moment, then hits Wyler with his own advice.

TALLI

Be better.

Talli exits, leaving Wyler searching for a response--

WYLER

Well, your meatloaf tastes like sandpaper!

No response. Wyler is alone. More than he's ever been.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS STREETS - NIGHT

Wyler recklessly RACES down neighborhood streets on his motorcycle. Barely dodging several angry, honking DRIVERS.

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK TRAIL - NIGHT

Wyler leans against his bike, drinking out of a paper bag.

He looks up at the giant iconic "Hollywoodland" sign, towering over him. Lost in thought.

INT. WARNER BROTHERS SOUND STAGE - MALTESE FALCON SET - NIGHT

After hours. The room is dark, save for a few overhead lights illuminating a pair of wooden chairs.

Huston sits alone, staring at his set, doubt in his eyes.

He walks to the stage and puts his hand on a conspicuous prop -- a foot high black statuette of a bird, perched on a table.

He hears footsteps behind him. He turns to see Wyler, stepping into a sliver of light.

They exchange a long look. Brothers. No words necessary.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD CANYON ROAD - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler and Huston sit in the grass, laughing. Huston smokes his customary cigar. The Hollywoodland sign glows above.

WYLER

(turning reflective)

What kind of a world did I bring my daughter into? Hitler. Mussolini.

It's a descent into madness. Maybe Nietzsche was right -- god is dead.

HUSTON

I prefer to think he's just drunk.

Wyler laughs weakly.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

I had to go my own way.

WYLER

I know.

HUSTON

Making *Miniver* -- that took balls. Big ones.

WYLER

I've boxed myself into a corner. Played things too safe. Thalberg must be laughing his ass off.

Huston feels for his friend.

HUSTON

Remember *Winter's Eve*? The director had that awful idea to shoot in the actual snow. Everyone's getting hypothermia, so the crew pretends its equipment is frozen to persuade him to go back to the lot. But nothing worked. Until this clever young AD hatched a bolder plan. And locked the director in a closet.

WYLER

The scene was filmed in the snow anyway and I was fired. I failed. I was reckless.

HUSTON

Fearless. There's a difference.

Wyler sighs heavily.

WYLER

If I take on Mayer and Breen and fail, my career is over.

HUSTON

(after a reflective pause)

Yes.

Wyler takes it in, the weight of the world on his shoulders.

INT. WYLER'S PARLOR - NIGHT

Wyler leans back in an arm chair in front of a fire. On a side table, his binder of *Miniver* notes from the Hays Office.

Wyler listens to WINSTON CHURCHILL speak on BBC radio.

CHURCHILL (O.S.)

-- What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire--

We close on Wyler, as he listens carefully.

CHURCHILL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-- But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "this was their finest hour."

Wyler makes his decision.

He picks up the binder and tosses it into the fire.

INT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

Wyler walks tentatively through the door. Still embarrassed. Everyone turns to him, a quick silence falling over the set.

He goes to Garson, who chats with Pidgeon by craft service.

WYLER

Your performance in this film has been nothing short of remarkable.

Garson examines him with great skepticism.

WYLER (CONT'D)

Especially considering your director is an ass.

Garson can't help but crack a smile. Pidgeon too.

WYLER (CONT'D)

You both have every right to hate my guts, but if you'll humor me, I have a favor to ask.

Garson and Pidgeon look at each other, puzzled.

INT. EMPTY MGM STAGE - LATER THAT DAY

Hilton and Kress walk hurriedly toward a semi-hidden door.

HILTON

What's this all about?

KRESS
Beats me.

They open the door and walk inside, to find a barren room containing Wyler, Garson, Pidgeon, and SEVERAL OTHER CAST.

CUT TO:

Minutes later, Wyler addresses the clandestine group. June is by his side. The two exchange a knowing nod. Then--

WYLER
What I say cannot leave this room.
It must be kept from Mayer. It must
be kept from Breen. It must be kept
from all their associates. Agreed?

Unsure of what's happening, the group looks around at each other. Then, one by one, slowly nods in agreement.

For the first time in a while, Wyler smiles.

INT. NYE'S SENATE OFFICE - TELEGRAPH ROOM - DAY

The rapid RATTLING of telegraph copy going to print.

Close on Henry, who reads the incoming message.

HENRY
Oh shit.

NYE'S INTERIOR OFFICE

Nye stands behind his desk. Tall and imposing. He reads the telegraph to himself. Processing its several pages.

Wheeler and Henry sit across from him, bracing themselves.

NYE
I don't understand. Who approved
these new *Miniver* script pages?
How'd this get past Breen?

WHEELER
(shrugging)
We're looking into it.

NYE
(reading)
"I don't know what this country's
coming to. No wonder Germany's
arming."
(perplexed)
(MORE)

NYE (CONT'D)

How'd that sneak in? What page is
that on?

HENRY

(nervously)

Page one, sir.

Nye turns red in anger, the veins on his forehead throbbing.

NYE

(calm, but with menace)

Get Breen on the phone now.

Henry runs out the door to make the call.

NYE (CONT'D)

(with venom)

Tell him to shut this picture down!

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

Close on Hilton on the phone.

HILTON

Yes, unfortunately Ms. Garson is
still suffering from strep throat,
so we had to shut down production
two more days.

(listening)

Yes, sir -- I'll call you then.

Hilton hangs up.

We see Wyler and Garson standing next to Hilton. Hilton nods to Wyler who nods back, pleased.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MILTON'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Milton sits in bed, wearing unforgivable pajamas, holding his phone receiver. He hangs it up and rolls over, back to sleep.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - LATER THAT DAY

Wyler directs Garson and Dantine in a reworked pilot scene.

GARSON

The war won't last forever.

DANTINE

(menacing)

No. Soon we finish it. You will see. We will come. We will bomb your cities! Like Barcelona! Warsaw! Narvik! Rotterdam!

Wyler watches closely, thrilled with the new material.

GARSON

Innocent people. Women and children.

DANTINE

Thirty-two thousand in two hours. And we will do the same thing here!

Garson slaps Dantine hard across the face. Wyler's overjoyed.

Suddenly, the stage door BURSTS open. Mannix enters, slowly, methodically. Flanked by two seedy-looking GOONS. Underneath a shadowy bowler hat, Mannix wears a most unfriendly face.

June emerges from a corner of the set, a lump in her throat. She slides over toward Wyler, who is increasingly unsettled.

WYLER

Uh oh.

Mannix is suddenly in front of them. His eyes bear into Wyler, commanding the director to follow him.

Wyler had been feeling brave recently. Until now.

INT. HALLWAY (MGM OFFICES) - MINUTES LATER

Wyler and June follow Mannix down the hallway to Mayer's office, like prisoners being led to their executioner.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Wyler and June sit across from Mayer, who has never looked more intimidating. Mannix is by his side.

MAYER

Did I not clearly explain that we are not at war with Germany?

WYLER

(trying to exude confidence)

You did, sir.

MAYER

Did I not forbid anything offensive
to Germany in this picture?

WYLER

(increasingly nervous)
You did, sir. But--

Mayer holds up his hand, ordering Wyler to keep silent. Mayer has the answers he wanted. He turns to Mannix and nods.

Mannix holds up a sheet of paper for Wyler to see. It reads: *This room is bugged. Nod if you understand.*

Shocked, Wyler turns to Mayer who eagerly awaits his response. Wyler nods.

MAYER

(continuing the
performance)

Any scene you film that is anti-
Nazi will never make it into this
picture. Do you understand?

Mannix flips the page. This one reads: *Keep doing what you're doing. Do you understand?*

WYLER

I understand.

MAYER

This is your final warning.

Mannix flips the page: *Thank you.*

WYLER

(holding back a smile)
Thank you, sir.

MAYER

Now leave.

Wyler quickly gets up and walks out.

June is befuddled. She turns to Mayer, in search of an explanation. Mayer shoots her a wink and smile.

EXT. NYE'S SENATE OFFICE - NIGHT

Nye stands, staring out his office window at the Capitol lawn, coldly focused. Wheeler sits, reading a document.

WHEELER

The studios are emboldened by the President. By Lend-Lease.

(reading aloud)

MGM, Goldwyn, Warner Brothers--

Nye turns to Wheeler with an icy stare. Wheeler takes the hint and stops reading the list of offenders.

WHEELER (CONT'D)

(trying to be positive)

Most Americans still think we should stay out of the war. But the numbers are dropping fast. Americans are starting to sympathize with the Brits.

Nye looks out his office window, steaming.

NYE

Roosevelt thinks he's so damn clever. Shipping free war material to Britain isn't neutrality, it's a license to wage an undeclared war!

WHEELER

He's given Hollywood cover.

NYE

Amazing how their pictures never reveal American sons writhing in agony in trenches. Or living legless, lungless, brainless, sightless in hospitals. This European war is not worthy of the sacrifice of one American mule, much less one American son!

WHEELER

How do we win a PR campaign against the President? He's the most popular public figure in America.

A light bulb goes off in Nye's head. He smiles.

NYE

No, he's not.

EXT. STAGE - CAUMSETT STATE PARK - LONG ISLAND, NY - DAY

CHARLES LINDBERGH (38, handsome, blonde, blue-eyed, All-American) addresses an adoring AUDIENCE OF WEALTHY PATRONS at a state fair on the grounds of a vast manor estate.

LINDBERGH

-- flying Northeast along the coast, I headed out over the Atlantic--

(dramatic pause)

-- with only a magnetic compass, an airspeed indicator, and a little luck to navigate me to Ireland.

Awestruck, the crowd "oohs" and "ahhs."

BEHIND THE STAGE AREA

Lindbergh gabs with a few of his wealthier SYCOPHANTS.

SYCOPHANT 1

You'd beat Roosevelt if you ran!

SYCOPHANT 2

Warmongering traitor!

LINDBERGH

(always on)

Gentlemen, gentlemen -- that's very kind -- but as I've assured you, I've no plans to run for President.

SYCOPHANT 3

(wink)

No plans yet!

They all laugh, as Henry (Nye's aide), appears backstage--

HENRY

Mr. Charles Lindbergh?

LINDBERGH

(smugly)

How may I be of service?

Henry whispers something in Lindbergh's ear. We cannot hear it, but whatever it is, Lindbergh's intrigued.

INT. WYLER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Wyler bounces through the front door, happier than we've seen him. He holds a bouquet of flowers.

WYLER

Talli! We're going out! You won't believe what Mayer did today!

No answer. No sign of Talli. Or Catherine.

DINING ROOM

Wyler enters--

WYLER (CONT'D)

Talli?

He reads a note on the dining room table: *Gone to my mother's*
Wyler's heart sinks.

INT. MODEST ROW HOUSE - WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA - NIGHT

Talli sits at a kitchen table, drinking wine alone. She hears a strange sound outside. She goes to the window.

EXT. ROW HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bathed in moonlight, Wyler stands below the window, serenading her with a violin.

All his heart and soul go into this concert. The playing isn't perfect, but he's trying his hardest.

She gazes at him lovingly. The man she fell in love with.

EXT. ROW HOUSE DOORWAY - MINUTES LATER

Wyler pleads with Talli.

WYLER

Come home.

TALLI

(smiling knowingly)
Willy, I only came to my mother's
for dinner.

Wyler smiles back. They laugh. Hard.

INT. WYLER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler and Talli sit on the floor in front of a warm fire. Drinking wine and listening to jazz on the radio. Suddenly--

WYLER

Carl Laemmle was my uncle.

Stunned, Talli turns off the music. Before she can ask--

WYLER (CONT'D)

I never told you cause I was
embarrassed. By what I'd done.

(then)

I was nineteen when he paid for me
to come to the States to work for
Universal. I'd never left Europe.
Barely ever left Alsace-Lorraine.

Talli listens intently.

WYLER (CONT'D)

Irving Thalberg was his right-hand
man. Thought I was a bum. That all
I did was drink and gamble and take
advantage of my uncle's generosity.

(turning to her)

He was right, of course.

(then)

He tagged me "Jailbird Willy." And
Laemmle told me if I didn't shape
up, I'd never amount to anything.
I've been trying to prove those two
men wrong for twenty years.

(with regret)

As soon as my reputation as a young
director grew, I left Universal for
Goldwyn. Carl felt betrayed. We
didn't speak for years.

TALLI

(comforting him)

You were young.

WYLER

If it wasn't for Uncle Carl, I'd be
just another over-the-hill Jew
living on the border between France
and Germany. How would that be
working out for me right now?

(Talli need not respond)

I owe everything I have in life to
Carl Laemmle. But the damn old man
went to his grave before I could
thank him.

Talli holds Wyler tighter. His face deep in thought.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - US SENATE BUILDING - DAY

Nye chairs a meeting of two dozen OLD WHITE MEN in suits.
Wheeler sits at his side. The only young face in the room is
the charismatic Lindbergh.

NYE

Morality and prudence dictate the United States avoid being drawn into this new European war at any cost. This is the sacred cause of--

Nye holds up a pamphlet with a fancy logo on the front.

NYE (CONT'D)

-- the America First Committee.

A rousing round of applause.

WHEELER

With Mr. Lindbergh as our spokesman and us working behind the scenes--

LINDBERGH

(interrupting with gusto)
Nazi victory is certain. America's attention should be placed elsewhere. Germany is our friend.

Nye and Wheeler are impressed by Lindbergh's conviction.

LINDBERGH (CONT'D)

America, Britain, and Germany must realize we share the same interests. We must preserve that most priceless possession, our inheritance of European blood.

(then)

The Jews will not drag us to war.

Smattering of applause. A few disconcerted faces.

Nye looks most displeased.

INT. NYE'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Nye, Wheeler, and Lindbergh congratulate themselves.

LINDBERGH

Good meeting, gents.

WHEELER

Very.

They both seek Nye's approval, but the Senator withholds it.

LINDBERGH

(to Nye, cocky)

You ever smile or what?

NYE
Cut out the Jewish shit.

LINDBERGH
(pushing back)
We can never talk about the Jewish
problem in this country?

NYE
(angry)
You want to be President one day?
Then listen to me very carefully.
We all know who the real problem in
this country is. Say it with
innuendo if you must. Say it with
insinuation. But mention the Jews
by name again and you risk
everything we've worked for. And
then you'll have to answer to me.

Scared of Nye, Lindbergh nods sheepishly in agreement.

EXT. AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE RALLY - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Lindbergh delivers a fiery speech to a crowd of thousands.

LINDBERGH
France has been defeated; and it is
now obvious that England is losing
the war. But they have one last
desperate plan remaining.

(pause for effect)
They hope to persuade us to send
another American Expeditionary
Force to Europe, and to share
militarily, and financially, the
fiasco of this war!

Raucous, angry boos from the crowd.

BACKSTAGE

Nye and Wheeler watch from the wings. Nye is pleased. SENATOR CLARK approaches.

CLARK
Great work here, gentlemen.

NYE
Senator Clark, have you made the
necessary arrangements?

CLARK

The resolution is prepared. If Ambassador Kennedy can't get Hollywood to do this the easy way, then we'll do it the hard way.

WHEELER

(to Nye, concerned)
But Gerald, I thought we agreed it would be too dangerous to--

NYE

(coldly cutting him off)
We agreed to nothing.

Sensing tension, Clark leaves them.

WHEELER

I have an election coming up.

Nye shoots daggers at Wheeler.

NYE

Don't ever let me hear you put politics above principle again.

Wheeler shrinks, nervous about what he's gotten himself into.

BACK TO LINDBERGH

LINDBERGH

(with passion)
There are many interventionists in America--

Nye pays close attention to Lindbergh's choice of words.

LINDBERGH (CONT'D)

-- but there are more people among us of a different type.
(pause for applause)
And we demand faith in an independent American destiny. This is the policy of the America First Committee today. A policy not of isolation, but of independence; not of defeat, but of courage!

Violent applause. The building shakes.

A "Lindbergh" chant RISES from the crowd. Backstage, Nye couldn't be happier.

EXT. MGM FRONT GATE - DAY

AMERICA FIRST PROTESTORS block the entrance to the studio, jeering and booing at STUDIO EMPLOYEES who try to sneak past.

Wyler pulls up on his motorcycle, looking for a way in. He drives around to the back of the lot.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Mayer, Mannix, and June talk with Breen, Milton, and a POLICE CHIEF. Wyler storms in--

WYLER

I can't get on my set.
(surprised to see Breen)
What the hell is going on?

BREEN

The crowds are too dangerous. I'm shutting your picture down -- for your own safety.

Wyler can't believe it. He's boiling over.

WYLER

(moving toward Breen)
You son-of-a-bitch.

Mayer raises his hand to Wyler, signaling him to stand down.

MAYER

It's temporary.

WYLER

Till when?!

POLICE CHIEF

Till I say so.

Breen wears a smug look on his face. Wyler would like to punch it off.

INT. BALLROOM - WARNER BROTHERS STUDIOS - NIGHT

Ambassador JOSEPH KENNEDY addresses a dining room so packed with studio executives, it's standing room only.

In the wings, his sons JOE KENNEDY JR. and JACK KENNEDY (both early 20s) listen on.

Wyler, Mayer, and June stand in the back, watching.

KENNEDY

Gentlemen, I speak to you tonight
as a lover of motion pictures. As a
former colleague. As a friend.

Dead silence.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

As our nation's Ambassador to Great
Britain, I'm intimately familiar
with the events in Europe. Of the
interests of England and Germany.
It is my most sincere opinion that
the United States should limit aid
to Britain in case the Nazis win
the war -- an event I think likely.

The crowd is on edge.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

I know many in this room hold
animosity for the Nazi regime for --
personal reasons. However, for your
own sake, I fervently ask you to
stop making anti-Nazi pictures or
using the film medium to promote or
show sympathy to the cause of
England versus Germany. Such
pictures do more harm than good
because they highlight Jewish
control of the movies.

Uncomfortable murmurs in the crowd.

Backstage, Jack Kennedy winces at his father.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

Many Anglos blame the war on the
Jews and anti-Semitism is on the
rise in Britain. I advise you all --
for your own safety -- stop making
these pictures immediately and get
those Jewish names off the screen.

Complete silence. The executives are speechless. And scared.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mayer works at his desk. He sits in the dark, the only sliver
of light coming from the exterior office.

Suddenly, a shadow covers the room in darkness.

Mayer looks up. In the door -- a male silhouette. The shadowy figure flips on the office light.

It's Nye.

NYE
You look like hell.

Mayer doesn't respond. He watches the Senator take a seat.

NYE (CONT'D)
I'm tired of fighting, LB.

MAYER
Are we fighting?

EXTERIOR OFFICE

Wyler walks through toward Mayer's inner sanctum. He hears Mayer and Nye talking. He stops and eaves drops at the door.

INTERIOR OFFICE

NYE
(smug)
Senator Clark is preparing an investigation into war propaganda in motion pictures.
(dramatic pause)
I told him he was being rash, of course. Told him I was sure we could work something out.

MAYER
You're a man of honor.

NYE
You've been against *Mrs. Miniver* from the beginning. You know the picture's reckless. Why not just shut it down?

MAYER
(lying)
Too much money invested. My shareholders would revolt.

NYE
Wyler's a petulant child. You have to be the adult in the room.

MAYER
(challenging)
Do I?

NYE
(cold)
Senate investigations can be ugly
things.

MAYER
I have nothing to hide.

NYE
MGM invested millions in German
armament to bypass currency export
restrictions. You signed the deal.

Mayer's turns a sickly pale.

NYE (CONT'D)
Do I have your attention now?

Wyler is stunned. He can't believe it.

NYE (CONT'D)
Shut down the anti-Nazi pictures.
All of them.

MAYER
Even if I did, there's still Warner
Brothers, Paramount--

NYE
You're the biggest fish. Whatever
you do, the others will follow.
(then)
I'll be back tomorrow. 8am. Give me
your answer then.

INT. MGM - EMPTY SOUNDSTAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wyler and Mayer sit on stools in a corner.

MAYER
We didn't know what the Nazis would
become. We just didn't know. It's
the biggest regret of my life.

WYLER
(forgiving)
We were all blind -- for too long.
That's why we can't back down now.

MAYER
A Senate investigation could
destroy MGM. This isn't about you
and me, Willy.
(MORE)

MAYER (CONT'D)

This is about every man, woman and child who depends on MGM for a paycheck.

WYLER

This is about right and wrong.

June enters the soundstage and speed walks toward them. She carries a notepad.

JUNE

What's the urgency?

MAYER

Call the board. Tonight. I need their opinion on something. Off the record. Don't keep minutes.

June looks at them, quizzically.

WYLER

(to Mayer, angry)
You chicken shit.

Wyler storms off. Mayer is ashamed, but steadfast.

EXT. MAYER'S OFFICE - DAWN

Mayer stands on the lush MGM lawn, watching the STUDIO WORKERS tend to their mundane daily tasks. June approaches and hands him a note. He reads it.

JUNE

The board will do whatever you think is best.

Mayer nods in understanding and puts the note in his pocket. His face reveals that's not what he wanted to hear.

It all rests on him now.

INT. MAYER'S OFFICE - 8AM

Mayer and June work at their desks. Mannix flanks Mayer. A SECRETARY appears in the doorway.

SECRETARY

Senator Nye to see you--

Mayer waves his hand as a signal to let Nye in.

Close on Mayer as he contemplates what to tell Nye.

Nye enters, with his usual arrogant swagger.

NYE

Morning, LB. Have an answer for me?

Mayer pauses for a long beat, taking a hard look at Nye. June and Mannix are breathless as they wait for his response.

MAYER

(deliberately)

Yeah. Go fuck yourself.

June grins wide. If possible, Mannix grins wider.

From a side door, Wyler enters, radiating confidence. He stands behind Mayer and flashes Nye a hard look.

A long cold exchange. Both men understand. This is war.

Nye smiles. A diabolical smile.

NYE

(to Wyler)

I can't wait to watch you burn.

Nye rushes out of the office.

June and Mannix congratulate Mayer.

But Wyler and the old mogul resist celebration. They lock eyes, worried about what they've just done.

EXT. CAPITOL HILL - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Nye addresses a hoard of rabid reporters.

NYE

The eight major film companies in Hollywood have taken advantage of their access to the American people to promote involvement in a war that is none of America's concern.

(pause for effect)

This treason ends today. This morning, the Interstate Commerce Committee appointed a five-person panel to investigate war propaganda in Hollywood films--

INT. CAPITOL HILL HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Nye and Clark talk, shadowed in a dark corner.

NYE

Good work pushing this hearing through committee, Senator. I'll make sure you're rewarded.

CLARK

Don't reward me yet. We still need a victory at the hearing.

Nye laughs, finding Clark naive.

NYE

Silly man. Don't you see? The hearing *is* the victory.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - BILTMORE HOTEL - DAY

The most powerful men in Hollywood sit around an oak table. Goldwyn, Selznick, HARRY WARNER, JACK WARNER, DARRYL ZANUCK, HARRY COHN, BARNEY BALABAN, WILL HAYS, and other EXECUTIVES.

COHN

(whispers to Selznick)
Where's our mystery lawyer?

Selznick shrugs.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

Wyler and Mayer approach the door.

MAYER

(whispering)
Remember -- we're just here to see which way the wind's blowing. Don't say a word.

INSIDE THE ROOM

Mayer slides into the room trying to go unseen. Wyler trails. They sit at a far corner of the table.

Goldwyn notices them. He shoots Wyler a dirty look.

Hays opens the meeting.

HAYS

Gentlemen, this morning I accepted Joseph Breen's resignation as chief censor of my office.

The room buzzes; surprised and pleased. Hays is somber.

HAYS (CONT'D)
Our industry is under attack.
(thoughtful pause)
We must be united. Or the attack
may be fatal.

Wyler and Goldwyn exchange a glance. Each wondering if they can bury the hatchet. The moguls look at each other, everyone hesitant to speak first. Then--

EXECUTIVE 1
We should just deny Hollywood's
trying to influence opinion on the
war issue. If we stick to that line
-- how can they prove otherwise?

A low rumble of agreement around the room. Then--

WYLER
That's the wrong approach.

Attention turns to Wyler. Hays shifts. Mayer isn't happy.

WYLER (CONT'D)
It would be a mistake to pull our
punches in any manner whatsoever.

HAYS
What do you suggest? EXECUTIVE 2
Is that "Jailbird Willy?"--

MAYER
Please excuse young Mr. Wyler--

WYLER
We go at this with bare knuckles.
Blast the committee from the start
as a pack of Nazi smear artists.

Mayer feels a coronary coming on due to Wyler's brashness.

WILKIE
(storming into the room)
Mr. Wyler is absolutely right.

The executives are shocked at the appearance of former
Presidential candidate WENDELL WILKIE (49) as their counsel.
All stand out of respect as he enters and slams a briefcase
down on the table.

HAYS
Mr. Wilkie needs no introduction.

Hays retreats and lets Wilkie take over.

WILKIE

Nye is savvy. He knows he doesn't have to put big points on the board to win these hearings. He just has to drag them on and on. As long as he can keep these hearings running into perpetuity, he can keep all your productions shut down till the end of the war.

ZANUCK

Which means--

GOLDWYN

(somber)

Bankruptcy.

WILKIE

In Nye's twisted game of musical chairs, the music doesn't stop till you all go out of business.

The room nods, understanding the gravity. Mayer feels sick.

JACK WARNER

How do we win?

WILKIE

(thoughtful pause)

We need a knockout blow.

(passes out one-sheet)

Nye stacked this committee with his lackies, but Senator Wheeler dropped out at the last second for reasons unknown. He was replaced by a young Junior Senator from Arizona -- Mr. MacFarland. Just elected. Been in the Senate seven months. No one knows his politics on this. Nye's bet is that he's so green, he'll just keep his mouth shut. We must get to MacFarland.

HARRY WARNER

How?

WILKIE

As Mr. Wyler suggested, we punch and we punch hard. We hit them on their anti-Semitism. Attack them as un-American. We get MacFarland's attention. He's the only man capable of turning the heat up on Clark. And Clark hates controversy.

(MORE)

WILKIE (CONT'D)

If he thinks he's looking like the bad guy, he'll turn just to save his own ass. Clark is the only one who can end this hearing. If we turn MacFarland, we can turn Clark.

The executives look around at each other, uncomfortably. Everyone afraid of the moment.

Wyler and Goldwyn lock eyes, Wyler giving him a nod of silent encouragement for Wilkie's plan. Goldwyn stares back with disdain. Finally, Goldwyn turns to Wilkie--

GOLDWYN

Let's do it.

The room nods.

WILKIE

Politics is theatre, gentlemen. And DC is the world's biggest stage.
(with emphasis)
Let's give them a show.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTER THE MEETING

The room empties. Wyler and Mayer talk apart from the others.

WYLER

I'm testifying on *Mrs. Miniver*.

MAYER

Hell you are.

WYLER

(insisting)

Nye will bring up MGM's payments to Germany. He'll destroy you.

Mayer is well aware. But he's made up his mind. Wyler sees he can't dissuade the old man.

MAYER

We have two weeks before MGM defaults with the bank.

(pulls Wyler closer with a hand on the shoulder)

Your weapon's the movie camera.

Finish that goddamned picture, Willy. Shove it down the throats of those Nazi sons of bitches.

Wyler nods, with unbreakable determination.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 14 Days Left

Wyler shoots a tense scene with Garson, where her character waits anxiously in a dark bedroom during an air mission. The ominous buzz of bombers flying overhead building dread.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - NIGHT / INT. SENATE BUILDING - NIGHT

Buried in storyboards, Wyler talks on the phone to June. We cut back and forth between them.

WYLER
How's the hearing?

June ponders how to respond--

CUT TO:

INT. HEARING - SENATE CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

PRESS, POLITICOS, and HOLLYWOOD-OPHILES pack the chambers to observe the juiciest show in town. The room is loud. Rowdy.

Nye, Clark, SENATOR MACFARLAND, and two other SENATORS line the dais. Clark sits center as chairman, flanked by Nye.

Gerald the Giant Killer pulverizes the biggest names in Hollywood, one after another. Each response to one of Nye's questions is from a different battered executive.

NYE
Do you support pictures that breed
hate and distrust of other nations?

HARRY WARNER
As I said in my statement, I will
do everything I possibly can to
help destroy Nazi-ism.

NYE
(angry)
Even if you plunge your country
into war and wreck it forever?

SELZNICK
No, sir; I do not agree with you--

NYE
(relentless)
You said you would do *everything*
you could--

GOLDWYN
(flustered)
You misrepresent me, sir! At this
rate, we could be here for years!

NYE
(cold)
That we could be here for years,
you are quite right.

BACK TO:

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - NIGHT

WYLER
(concerned)
And MacFarland?

CUT TO:

INT. HEARING - SENATE CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

Close on MacFarland perched at the end of the panel. Head
resting in hand, looking bored out of his mind.

BACK TO:

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - NIGHT / INT. SENATE
BUILDING - NIGHT

JUNE
At least he's well rested.

Wyler racks his brain.

WYLER
Can you get me daily transcripts of
the hearing? By the next morning?

JUNE
(determined)
You'll have them that night.

They hang up. Wyler refocuses. He must work fast.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 12 Days Left

Wyler instructs his DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (DP).

WYLER

Move Greer stage right. Set a diagonal composition with a deep focus. Both big and intimate.

The DP nods, impressed with Wyler's command.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 9 Days Left

Wyler directs Garson, Ney, and THERESA WRIGHT (22, playing Ney's fiancée) in a scene in the Miniver home. Ney's character, recalled to British military service, walks upstairs to pack his bags. Garson and Wright are left behind in the room, the backs of their heads to the camera.

At first, the CREW is confused by the unusual technique of filming backs to the camera. Then they realize Wyler has focused all attention on the empty space left on the stairs by Nye. A poignant moment.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 8 Days Left

Wyler and Hilton sit together in a corner of the set. Marking up script pages. Drowning in paper.

WYLER

(slashing with a pen)
We need to rewrite the third act.
All of it.

HILTON

In a week?!

WYLER

The vicar's speech at the end. It must be stirring, thought provoking -- everything depends on it!

Hilton nods, panicked by the unreasonable deadline.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 6 Days Left

Wyler films a scene with Garson, Pidgeon and their characters' TWO YOUNG CHILDREN. They hunker down in an underground bunker, trying to distract themselves as the sounds of bombs falling are heard in the streets above. Unspoken fear on Garson's face.

The scene works, burning with subtle intensity and power. Hilton, standing next to Wyler, gives the director a nod of approval. Wyler shoots him half a smile. Pleased at the scene, but worried time is running out.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY / INT. SENATE BUILDING - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 5 Days Left

Wyler on the phone with June. We cut between them.

WYLER

I don't have it. I need more time.

June is at her wit's end.

JUNE

I can move some accounts around.
Get you a day, maybe two.

Wyler considers whether this is enough time. It's not.

WYLER

Thank you.

They hang up. Wyler's mind races with worry.

INT. HEARING - SENATE CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

Balaban testifies. Nye is on the attack.

SUPERIMPOSE: Hollywood Propaganda Hearing Washington DC

SUPERIMPOSE: September 25, 1941 (4 Days Left)

NYE

Mr. Balaban, in your picture *That Hamilton Woman*, your hero is hunted by German agents, correct?

BALABAN

No.

NYE

No? I have here a transcript--

BALABAN

The picture is *Man Hunt*. Not *That Hamilton Woman*.

June furiously scribbles down notes to send to Wyler.

NYE

Nevertheless, your picture portrays Germany in a negative light.

BALABAN

The picture tells the factual--

NYE

Have you been in Europe since this last war started?

BALABAN

I have not.

NYE

Then you speak with no authority as to whether the matters depicted in this picture are true or false.

Nervous murmuring among the executives.

BALABAN

I know enough about the European war not to take the Nazi side.

NYE

So you admit you've taken a side?

BALABAN

You're twisting my words--

NYE

(for the kill)

The American way, sir, is to present all sides! You should put down your junk scripts and pick up a copy of the US Constitution. You may learn something!

Loud applause. Nye smirks; he owns the room.

Wilkie sinks in his chair, disgusted by this circus. Mayer and the other executives eye each other nervously.

June writes as fast as she can.

INT. WYLER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: 2 Days Left

Wyler and Hilton huddle around a desk. Wyler marking up Hilton's new script pages.

Next to them, Talli sorts through the hearing transcripts.

Wyler scribbles faster and faster until his frustration BOILS over. Finally, he EXPLODES, throwing the papers everywhere--

WYLER

Dammit! It's not enough time!

Dead silence. No one can comfort him. Because he's right.

WYLER (CONT'D)

Three scenes to rewrite and shoot
in two days. Impossible.

Wyler grabs the last page of the script, tearing it up.

WYLER (CONT'D)

And this vicar's speech is shit.
Total shit.

Wyler realizes he's gone too far as soon as the words leave his mouth. He turns to the wounded Hilton.

WYLER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Jim. I didn't mean it.

Talli jumps in, soothing Hilton. Leading him to the door.

TALLI

My husband's an ass. Your writing
is phenomenal. Draft the other two
scenes. We'll handle the speech.

Hilton nods and smiles, trusting in Talli. He exits.

Alone, the married couple sit facing each other, sharing a long silent look. Talli full of purpose. Wyler full of doubt.

WYLER

You're going to write the speech?

Talli stays silent. But her slight smile clearly says no.

WYLER (CONT'D)
Johnny's hiding in the kitchen?

TALLI

The Minivers and their neighbors
are ordinary folks, caught up in
something not of their making.
Something greater than themselves.
You know these people. You can
write these people.

WYLER
I'm not a writer. You know that. I
can't -- articulate what I want to
say--

She hands him blank paper and a pen.

WYLER (CONT'D)
(panicked, blurting out)
-- But my English! You know I have
trouble with English!

She knows how difficult that is for him to admit. She
lovingly touches his arm, encouraging.

TALLI

When I gave up my acting career,
the studios assumed it was to play
the good wife -- to bake pies or
pump out babies -- or whatever it
is I'm supposed to do.

Wyler motions to stop her. He knows none of it's true.

TALLI (CONT'D)
And I'm fine with that. It's a
sexist world. I get it. I don't
need the approval of the Hollywood
boy's club to feel good about my
decisions. Or my reasons.
(leaning toward him)
You're the most talented filmmaker
in the world. Male or female. In
any language. And I knew that with
my help, preparing scripts,
translating scripts, we'd be an
invincible team. And together, we'd
do more important work than I could
ever dream of as an actress.

WYLER
 (grateful)
 You could have been Scarlet O'Hara.
 You could have gotten the part.

TALLI
 (with love)
 I got you instead.
 (cheeky grin)
 I'll brew the coffee.

Wyler stares at the blank page, scared to death.

Jazz music fills the soundtrack, as we transition to a--

MONTAGE

-- Wyler alternates between handwriting and typing various versions of the vicar's speech.

-- Wyler paces, frustrated, hating everything he's written.

-- Talli supports him, bringing him coffee into the wee hours of the morning.

END MONTAGE

INT. WYLER'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

A bleary-eyed Wyler reviews his latest draft. Talli reads over his shoulder. Wyler breathes a sigh of relief, finally smiling. This version just might work.

He looks up to Talli for affirmation. She smiles back.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: 1 Day Left

Wyler arrives early to the pitch black set. First one there.

He flips on the lights. Nothing. Confused, he tries again. Nothing.

CUT TO:

Wyler pokes around the fuse box. Nothing.

Suddenly, behind him, Hilton appears, holding script pages.

HILTON
 Hey boss, what's going on?

A sick feeling rises in Wyler's stomach as he realizes he's a day too late.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY / INT. SENATE BUILDING - DAY

Wyler and June talk on the phone. We cut back and forth between them.

JUNE

We're broke.
(then)
I'm sorry. I tried.

SUPERIMPOSE: 0 Days Left

Wyler knows she did. And he knows this is all his fault, not hers. He's thrown them all out of a job.

Silence as they both wallow in their defeat.

INT. WYLER'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Wyler and Talli sit around the table. Lunch in front of them. Too sick to eat. The radio WHISPERS softly in the background.

Reading the hearing transcripts, Wyler emits a curious groan.

TALLI

What?

WYLER

Something about Nye's questions is off. I can't put my finger on it.

The doorbell RINGS. Talli leaves to answer.

The radio catches Wyler's attention. He turns it up.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

-- Controversy today in Iowa when
Charles Lindbergh made the
following remarks--

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICA FIRST RALLY - DES MOINES, IA - EARLIER THAT DAY

Lindbergh's actual remarks. Delivered to another capacity crowd of supporters. "America First" and "Lindbergh for President" signs are everywhere.

Nye and Wheeler watch backstage.

LINDBERGH

The greatest danger to this country lies in the large Jewish ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our government.

NYE

Fuck.

Furious, Nye rushes off.

LINDBERGH

I am not attacking the Jewish people. We cannot blame them for looking out for what they believe to be their own interests, but we also must look out for ours. We cannot allow the natural passions and prejudices of other peoples to lead our country to destruction!

Huge, violent applause. Chilling.

BACK TO:

INT. WYLER'S KITCHEN - DAY

Wyler turns off the radio, stunned by Lindbergh's rhetoric.

He looks up to see Talli holding up the just-delivered afternoon newspaper. The headline: *Lindbergh Blames Jews for Country's Drift Toward War*.

TALLI

Should we call June?

WYLER

(smiling)

Yes. But first call Pan Am. We're going to Washington.

INT. HEARING - SENATE CAUCUS ROOM - NEXT DAY

Wyler and Talli slip into the crowd, listening attentively. They see Mayer and June in the audience, and exchange nods.

Wilkie testifies, passionately. Senator Clark, the committee chairman, tries to keep Wilkie calm.

CLARK

Mr. Lindbergh is not at issue in these hearings. At issue here--

WILKIE

Why not, Senator? I have been in American politics a long time. And that speech is the most un-American talk made in my time by any person of national reputation!

Nye squirms.

CLARK

Mr. Lindbergh does not represent this committee. His interests are not our interests.

WILKIE

With all due respect, the assertions of Mr. Nye regarding the Jewish people comport perfectly with the assertions of Mr. Lindbergh. And, frankly, possess a striking similarity to the outpourings of Berlin!

Loud applause from the audience. Nye is pissed.

CLARK

(striking gavel)
Order! Order!

Wyler tries to read MacFarland's reaction. But MacFarland's poker face is impenetrable.

CUT TO:

Nye testifies. Wyler listens closely.

NYE

I bitterly resent, Mr. Chairman, this effort to misrepresent our purpose and to prejudice the public mind by dragging this racial issue to the front. If the anti-Semitic issue is now raised for the moment, it is raised by those of the Jewish faith and those who would prejudice the issues in these studies -- not by me, not by this committee.

Wilkie, still at the table, shakes his head angrily. MacFarland watches every moment. Wyler watches MacFarland.

WILKIE

Mr. Chairman, in light of these shocking new developments, and given the decided lack of evidence of Hollywood war propaganda presented thus far during this hearing, I respectfully request that this investigation be immediately adjourned.

MACFARLAND

May I say something?

Clark nods. Silence fills the room. The importance of MacFarland's impending statement is felt by all.

Wyler's been waiting for this moment. He holds his breath.

MACFARLAND (CONT'D)

There is no tolerance for anti-Semitism in the United States Senate. As for the statements of Mr. Lindbergh in Des Moines, there can be no doubt -- at best they were grossly insensitive, at worst flagrantly anti-Semitic.

Wyler leans forward with anticipation, holding Talli's hand tight. The executives are on pins and needles.

MACFARLAND (CONT'D)

(long thoughtful pause)
This committee -- this committee--

Wyler can't stand it.

MACFARLAND (CONT'D)

-- this committee, however, has not demonstrated anti-Semitism itself. I take Senator Nye at his word. We are here to investigate Hollywood war propaganda which he has evidence of out of his own personal knowledge. He has watched these pictures and he has judged them. Until the rest of this committee has weighed enough evidence to judge for ourselves, this investigation must continue. Sorry, Mr. Wilkie, your request is denied.

Wyler can't believe it. He's crushed. The executives are utterly defeated.

CLARK

Good. We shall adjourn for lunch
and return this afternoon at two
for testimony from MGM.

Nye smiles wickedly, as Clark strikes his gavel.

INT. CAPITOL HILL RESTAURANT - DAY

Classic DC establishment. Immaculate. Sterile. Buttoned-up.

Wyler and Talli sit at the bar. In silence. Uncomfortable, Wyler blurts out what's on his mind.

WYLER

Do you regret marrying a Jew? With
the way the world is now -- are you
scared? For our daughter?

TALLI

(thoughtful pause)
I've never been more proud.

She kisses his forehead and walks off. Wyler sits alone, trying to collect his thoughts.

HUSTON (O.S.)

I always thought the death of the
Republic would involve more gin.

Wyler turns, surprised to see Huston walking towards him, beer in hand. The men exchange a bear hug, a solemn embrace.

They sit down at the bar, side by side. Like old times.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

(sarcastic)
Industry's all aces out there.

WYLER

(playing along)
I think we've got Nye on the ropes.

HUSTON

Man's a Neanderthal. Naked and
hungry.

WYLER

He's certainly eaten us alive.
(pause)
Naked?

HUSTON

The emperor has no clothes.

Wyler's clearly puzzled. Huston swigs back his beer.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

How many pictures you see this year?

WYLER

Ten? Fifteen?

HUSTON

Same here. And this is our livelihood.

(then)

Nye's condemning a list of 150 pictures, all from the last three years. Think he's seen them all?

The world shifts beneath Wyler's feet. At long last, everything makes sense.

Energized, Wyler pulls out a pocket watch, checks the time, and bolts for the door. Now Huston is the one puzzled.

HUSTON (CONT'D)

(joking)

Men's room's on the left. Don't forget to jiggle the handle.

WYLER

(turning back briefly)

Funny. I've known for a year I couldn't finish *Mrs. Miniver* without you. I just didn't understand how.

Huston gets it. The two men exchange a nod. Then Wyler sprints out the door.

INT. SENATE HALLWAYS - MINUTES LATER

Wyler runs through the crowded hallway, darting in between SEVERAL CONFUSED POLITICOS. Finally, he finds the door he wants. He catches his breath and calmly enters a--

SENATE BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM

Mayer stands in front of a mirror, fixing his suit.

WYLER

You look good.

MAYER
(not turning around)
I look old.

Wyler walks up to Mayer and extends his hand for Mayer to shake. Mayer turns toward him.

WYLER
LB -- thank you.

With that, Wyler walks away, turning around just before exiting. He takes one last look at Mayer and then disappears, closing the door behind him.

Alone with his thoughts, Mayer takes a breath. He's ready.

He walks to the door and tries to open it -- but the knob won't turn. Mayer tries harder, slamming his body against the door several times. It won't budge. He's locked in.

Mayer turns red with anger--

MAYER
God dammit, Willy!

INT. SENATE CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

CLARK
(striking his gavel)
Order please.

The room quiets.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Speaking on behalf of MGM today--

A LEGISLATIVE INTERN walks up to Clark and whispers in his ear, handing him a note. Clark looks confused.

CLARK (CONT'D)
We have a change on the schedule--

Nye furrows his brow. This is a surprise to him.

CLARK (CONT'D)
-- speaking on behalf of MGM -- Mr.
William Wyler.

As Wyler enters the room and heads to the witness table, a buzz of intrigue ripples through the crowd. Wilkie is stunned; he whispers something to a LAWYER COLLEAGUE.

Wyler stops and stands at the table.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Mr. Wyler, please hold up your
right hand.

Wyler does so.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Do you solemnly swear the evidence
you are about to give will be the
truth, the whole truth, and nothing
but the truth, so help you God?

WYLER

I do.

CLARK

You may be seated.

Wyler sits. Nye lasers in on him -- a hunter after his prey.

NYE

Mr. Wyler -- where were you born?

WYLER

Mulhouse in Alsace-Lorraine.

NYE

Is that in Germany or France?

WYLER

Tough to tell these days.

Trickles of laughter in the crowd. Nye ignores it.

NYE

And what is your religion?

Talli leans forward.

WYLER

I'm Jewish.

NYE

Interesting.

WYLER

If you'd ever been to temple, you'd
know it's not that interesting.

A bigger laugh from the crowd.

CLARK

Mr. Wyler, this is a serious
proceeding. Please.

Wyler nods in compliance.

NYE

Mr. Wyler, are you engaged in the production of a picture for MGM Studios entitled *Mrs. Miniver*?

WYLER

I am.

NYE

What is the plot of this picture?

WYLER

A British family struggles to survive the war against Germany.

NYE

And the purpose of this picture?

WYLER

(without missing a beat)
It's propaganda, sir.

A buzz of surprise in the room. Nye smiles at the confession. Wilkie grows nervous -- where is Wyler going with this?

NYE

(smiling)
I'm sorry -- can you repeat that?

WYLER

It's a propaganda picture, Senator.

NYE

So you admit the picture is manipulative and deceitful?

WYLER

The picture is neither. It portrays the truth about the Nazi threat.

NYE

But you admit its propaganda?

WYLER

It's a factual portrayal of life in Britain during the war. If that's propaganda, I plead guilty.

Nye can't believe his ears.

NYE
(to Clark, smiling)
We have all we need.

MacFarland reflects on what just transpired.

CLARK
Well, uh -- thank you, Mr. Wyler.
Unless you have something else you
would like to present--

WYLER
I do have one thing -- and I'll be
brief.

CLARK
Go ahead.

All eyes on Wyler. He feels the weight of the room. He drinks a sip of water. A long beat.

At that moment, the door to the chamber CREAKS open. Wyler turns to see a MAN slip into a seat near the back. He locks eyes with the man. It's Huston. Wyler smiles.

Wyler then moves his gaze towards Talli, sitting in the crowd. She smiles proudly and nods. Emboldened, Wyler turns back toward the committee.

WYLER
When I first heard of this proposed investigation, I was deeply resentful, naturally. After awhile, in thinking it over, my anger cooled a bit. It gives me the opportunity to say what I am going to say now.

You can hear a pin drop.

WYLER (CONT'D)
I am proud to be a part of the motion picture business. I go back and I think of what this little nickelodeon business has grown to, and I cannot help but be proud. I recall the hours and hours and weeks and months and years of entertainment that the people of the world have received from this industry and it makes me proud.

The room's at rapt attention. A disheveled Mayer slips in.

WYLER (CONT'D)

I look back and I can see Charlie Chaplin as the "little tramp" in *Kid Auto Races at Venice*. His baggy pants and oversized shoes. I look back and see John Gilbert in the *Big Parade*. I see Renée Adorée on the truck when he kissed her goodbye and went away to war. I look back and recall picture after picture, so strong and powerful they sold the American way of life, not only to America but to the world. They sold it so strongly that when dictators took over Italy and Germany, what did Hitler and his flunky, Mussolini, do? First thing was ban our pictures, throw us out. They wanted no part of the American way of life.

Listening, Mayer nods. As do the Warners. As does Goldwyn.

WYLER (CONT'D)

And I come down right now to the pictures of today. To *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* and *How Green Was My Valley*. To the pictures at issue during this hearing which I remember so well--
 (lingering on Nye)
 -- even if some others do not.

McFarland notices the statement and the long look at Nye. He glances at Nye himself, thinking things over.

WYLER (CONT'D)

I remember all these pictures and the enjoyment they have given. And I am very proud. This industry has stood for a lot. It has stood for the American way of life.

McFarland nods in agreement.

WYLER (CONT'D)

And so yes, MGM is currently producing and I am directing a picture revealing the astonishing threat which Nazi Germany presents to Great Britain, to America, and to people all over the world. Guilty as charged.

(staring hard at Nye)
 (MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

And we will continue to disregard
threats and pleas intended to
dissuade us from our purpose.

Nye angrily stares down Wyler. Talli's never been more proud.

WYLER (CONT'D)

(turning back to Clark)

Senator Nye has repeatedly accused
myself and my colleagues of
manipulating the motion picture
medium to argue for war. On this
point, the Senator completely
misses the boat. So much so, that I
sometimes wonder if he has in fact
seen any of the pictures he so
regularly attacks.

Wilkie's ears perk up as he realizes what Wyler is trying to
establish -- Nye has never actually watched these pictures!

MacFarland's eyes narrow. He listens more closely than ever.

WYLER (CONT'D)

With all due respect, Senators, war
is coming, whatever course we take.
The real issue is whether we are
going to live in the future as free
men, or whether the attack of the
Axis powers is to destroy our
prospect of liberty. Senators, we
are not arguing for war, we are
arguing for freedom!

The power of Wyler's speech leaves the room stunned silent.

WYLER (CONT'D)

(with conviction)

Now, if you please, I'd like to go
home and finish my picture.

Wyler removes himself from the witness table, as the room
ERUPTS in thunderous applause. Pandemonium.

Nye looks uncomfortable.

CLARK

(striking his gavel)

Order -- order please. The
subcommittee will have order.

Everyone congratulates Wyler with hugs and handshakes. But
Wyler keeps his eyes on McFarland.

McFarland is calm and steely during the chaos, lost in thought. As soon as Clark manages to quiet the crowd--

MCFARLAND

Mr. Chairman -- I'd like to recall Senator Nye to the stand.

Clark is surprised, but seems fine with it. Clark turns to Nye, who shrugs and nods in agreement.

Wyler and Talli lock eyes in understanding. They silently try to hide their excitement.

Nye descends to the table.

CLARK

We thank you, Senator Nye. Please remember you are still under oath.

NYE

Yes, Senator.

MCFARLAND

(to Nye)

Senator, you stated that you have seen the war pictures in question?

NYE

That is right.

Wyler smiles knowingly. Checkmate.

MCFARLAND

Which of those picture was the most objectionable from your point of view?

NYE

(arrogantly)

That is a question that is most difficult to answer. It is a terrible weakness of mine to go to a picture tonight and not be able to state the title of it tomorrow morning. Somehow or other, I have a rather lasting impression of a picture titled *I Married a Nazi*.

MCFARLAND

Alright. We will take that picture. What was there in that picture that was particularly objectionable from your point of view?

NYE

Senator -- I have not reviewed that picture in a long, long time--

MCFARLAND

(combative)

I am trying to find out about what we are asked to investigate. You've drawn a lot of conclusions here. I want to be able to determine whether they are well-founded.

NYE

(backpedaling)

Yes, but--

MCFARLAND

Did you see the picture *Escape*?

NYE

Perhaps if you can tell me a bit of the story, I could tell you better whether I have seen *Escape* or not.

Clark shifts nervously in his seat. Wyler squeezes Talli's hand harder with excitement.

MCFARLAND

(pulling out a list)

Senator, I might pick some of the pictures you enumerated in your testimony at this very hearing.

(reading)

Convoy -- did you see that picture?

NYE

I am at a loss to call to mind any particular features--

Nye is rattled. Wyler is exuberant. The movie executives can't hide their smiles. The shift in momentum is palpable.

MCFARLAND

Did you see *Flight Command*?

NYE

I do not believe I did, Senator.

MCFARLAND

That Hamilton Woman?

NYE

I did not.

MCFARLAND

Man Hunt?

NYE

I did not.

MCFARLAND

Mortal Storm?

NYE

I did not.

MCFARLAND

Sergeant York?

NYE

(delighted)

Yes! I saw that one!

The crowd laughs at Nye.

MCFARLAND

What in that picture was
particularly objectionable to you?

NYE

Why, it was a -- I -- I cannot
quite recall--

MCFARLAND

(going in for the kill)

Senator -- from what I can tell,
you have either not seen or cannot
remember any of these pictures! Yet
you have dragged us to this
inquisition because these pictures
do not coincide with your views in
regard to the foreign situation --
is that not a fact?

Loud applause. Nye feels the crowd against him.

MCFARLAND (CONT'D)

You are of course entitled to your
beliefs. But what about the motion
picture industry? Do they not have
a right to a little belief?

Wyler and Mayer lock eyes in glee.

MCFARLAND (CONT'D)

Senator Nye, the United States, with England and its allies, remain the bulwark of the rights of the individual in the world today. But the rights of the individual mean nothing if freedom of the press and freedom of speech are destroyed. There can be no disunity within the United States on this principle--
(staring down Nye)
-- and I know there is none.

Nye sinks in his chair. He's never felt smaller. Clark doesn't know what to do--

CLARK

Perhaps we need a short recess--

MCFARLAND

(ignoring Clark)

As such, I recommend to the Chairman the immediate adjournment of this subcommittee and the permanent close of this investigation.

Loud applause.

CLARK

(pounding gavel)

Order -- order please--

Clark can't control the room. He looks at Nye for direction, but Nye's too deflated to notice. Clark panics--

CLARK (CONT'D)

In light of a -- recent events -- this investigation is hereby -- and, uh, permanently --- adjourned.

An EXPLOSION of cheers and celebration in the crowd. Mayer, June, Wilkie, and the Hollywood executives rejoice.

Wyler and Tally embrace. But are interrupted by a MAN bear hugging Wyler and offering his hand in friendship.

Goldwyn. Wyler hugs him right back.

INT. MGM SOUND STAGE - MRS. MINIVER SET - DAY

Wyler walks onto the set to applause from his cast and crew. Garson and Pidgeon hug Wyler. They all laugh and celebrate.

ON SET

At long last, Wyler gets to shoot his vicar speech.

Close on Wyler watching from his director's chair as HENRY WILCOXON (36, playing the vicar) addresses the Minivers and their neighbors in the ruins of a bombed out parish church.

WILCOXON

Because this is not only a war of soldiers in uniform. It is a war of the people, of all the people, and it must be fought not only on the battlefield, but in the cities and in the villages, in the factories and on the farms, in the home, and in the heart of every man, woman, and child who loves freedom!

Wyler glows with the relief of accomplishment.

EXT. GRAUMAN'S CHINESE THEATRE - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

CROWDS cheer wildly outside a sold-out movie premiere.

INT. LIMOSINE - CONTINUOUS

Wyler and Talli sit in the back, pulling up to theatre.

Talli makes a move to exit, but notices that Wyler is frozen, distracted. Outside, wild FANS try to see who's inside.

TALLI

What is it?

WYLER

This war -- a lot of people are going to die. Those who survive will come back changed.

TALLI

It's a necessary war. Hitler must be defeated. Your picture makes that a greater possibility.

WYLER

(burdened)

If propaganda can be shaped for moral purposes today, it can be shaped for immoral and indecent purposes tomorrow.

TALLI

Which is why we must make sure that never happens.

Wyler nods, deep in thought. She kisses him on the cheek. He lets go of his worrying, for the time being.

They exit the limo and walk the red carpet of the raucous movie premiere. PAPARAZZI and screaming FANS on all sides.

We pan up to read the theatre marquee: *The Maltese Falcon*

EXT. HOME OF PEACE CEMETERY - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Wyler, Talli, and a three-year old Catherine pay their respects at a gravestone. Catherine holds a white rose.

Close on the tombstone, which reads:

Carl Laemmle, Beloved Father, 1867-1939

Catherine looks over the tombstone with curiosity and awe. She looks up at her father. With a nod, he encourages her to place the rose on the tombstone.

She does.

We close on Wyler and Talli as they hold hands, looking on.

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - LOS ANGELES - OSCAR NIGHT

A giant red velvet curtain opens, revealing the stage of the Academy Awards. The musical fanfare reaches a crescendo--

CUT TO:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bob Hope!

To rousing applause, Bob Hope saunters on stage.

HOPE

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Academy Awards. Or as they call it at my house, Passover.

Laughter.

CUT TO:

HOPE (CONT'D)

Announcing this year's award for
best director -- Mr. Frank Capra!

Legendary director FRANK CAPRA graces the stage. He announces the nominees, including:

CAPRA

-- William Wyler for *Mrs. Miniver*.

Close on -- an EMPTY SEAT -- next to Talli.

Several OSCAR GOERS notice Wyler's absence. Curious whispers amongst the crowd.

CAPRA (CONT'D)

(opening envelope)

And the Oscar goes to--

As Capra reads the name to himself, the crowd holds its collective breath.

Mayer, June, Goldwyn -- all on pins and needles.

CAPRA (CONT'D)

(excited)

-- William Wyler for *Mrs. Miniver*!

An EXPLOSION of exuberant applause overtakes the room.

Much to her surprise, Talli loses control of her emotions, crying tears of joy as she moves toward the stage to accept the award on her husband's behalf.

June stands, clapping wildly. Mayer hugs everyone around him. Goldwyn cheers loudly and pumps his fist.

Talli ascends the stage and reaches the podium. She looks out at the jam-packed ballroom, in boisterous celebration. She tries to speak, but can't find the words. She just stands there proudly, holding Wyler's Academy Award.

The room RISES to give her a STANDING OVATION.

INT. BOEING B-17 BOMBER - OVER THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

Halfway across the world--

Wyler sits, dressed in army gear, on a bench seat next to another GI. His hand shakes as he tightens his helmet.

We see the GI next to Wyler. It's Huston.

The cheers of the Oscar crowd fade from the soundtrack, leaving only the hum of the bomber's four engines.

We close on Wyler as he stares into the distance, embracing an uncertain future.

We hold on Wyler as we--

FADE TO BLACK.

The hum of the engines remains in the soundtrack.

CARD #1: *Mrs. Miniver* was the highest grossing film of 1942. It won six Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director.

CARD #2: Senator Nye's reputation never recovered after the Hollywood propaganda hearings. He lost his next election.

CARD #3: President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill credited *Mrs. Miniver* with helping to promote American intervention in World War II. Said Churchill, "*Mrs. Miniver* did more for the allied cause than a flotilla of battleships."

CARD #4: Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels called *Mrs. Miniver* an exemplary piece of propaganda and ordered German filmmakers to study the film and adapt its devices.

CARD #5: William Wyler is the most acclaimed director in Hollywood history, holding the records for Academy Award nominations for Best Director (twelve) and for directing the most Oscar-nominated performances (thirty-five).

CARD #6: Wyler also holds the distinction of directing thirteen Best Picture nominated movies and three Best Picture winning movies, *Mrs. Miniver* (1942), *The Best Years of our Lives* (1946), and *Ben-Hur* (1959).

Superimpose over CARD #6: He won an Academy Award for Best Director for all three films.

THE END