

The Secret War

10 page challenge

FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

SUPER: 1940. Occupied Poland.

A long dirt road cuts through small fields and gardens. It leads to a small village that sits against the backdrop of a dense forest

A RUMBLE.

From within the forest, a row of German half-tracks appear and rumble towards the gates of the small village. At the head of the infantry division, a jeep speeds ahead.

The jeep slows down and stops. THREE VILLAGERS, pitchforks and torches in hand, block the way.

The door opens and a GERMAN SS COMMANDER steps out. A "Black Sun" pendant hangs around his neck and is tucked inside by black-gloved hands.

The SS Commander is RUDOLPH HEISS, 40's, tall, black eyes, weathered face.

He is flanked by SS SOLDIERS, guns drawn.

OSCAR, a middle-aged farmer, steps forward to greet him.

OSCAR

There are no Jews here.

HEISS

You know why I am here.

OSCAR

We have done nothing wrong. Leave us be.

HEISS

Let us through or we will force our way.

Oscar spits on his shoe.

Heiss takes out his pistol and shoots the other two Villagers in the head.

OSCAR

No!

Heiss turns and walks back to his jeep. SS Soldiers grab the bodies, slide them to the side of the road and pull open the gates.

Oscar watches as the jeep and half-tracks drive into the village square.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

SS Soldiers have rounded up the VILLAGERS and they stand in a huddle.

Heiss turns to Oscar, who stands at gun point.

HEISS  
Where is she?

OSCAR  
I don't know who you speak of?

Heiss turns to SS Sergeant, HANS VOGEL, mid-20's, eager to please. He nods his head and Vogel points to a line of SOLDIERS.

The soldiers grab random men from the huddle of villagers and line them up against the side of a barn.

OSCAR  
Please.

HEISS  
Where is she?

OSCAR  
She is not here. I promise.

HEISS  
So be it.

VOGEL  
Fire!

The soldiers lift their rifles and FIRE. The line of villagers fall down dead.

Oscar falls to his knees.

HEISS  
I'll give you one more chance.

Oscar cries.

HEISS  
 (to the Vogel)  
 The women.

The soldiers pull women from the group and line them up against the bloody barn. They SCREAM, CRY, WHIMPER.

At the end of the row, HELENE, a young brunette stands. She has long brown hair, slim, pretty. She looks at the SS Soldiers and then to Oscar and Heiss.

HEISS  
 (To Oscar)  
 No? Fine.

ANNA (O.C.)  
 Stop!

Heiss, Oscar and Vogel look to the huddle of men, women and children.

ANNA, a Polish woman, mid-40's, with curly black hair and dressed in black garb, steps forward.

ANNA  
 Leave them be.

Heiss turns to her.

HEISS  
 You are her?

ANNA  
 Yes.

HEISS  
 Then show me.

ANNA  
 What?

HEISS  
 Prove yourself to me and we will  
 leave this place without burning it  
 to the ground.

Anna looks nervous. She looks around; all the faces, including Helene, stare back.

HEISS  
 Sergeant?

The execution squad raise their rifles. The guns point to the women in the lineup.

Anna looks over at the women.

HEISS  
Kill them.

VOGEL  
Fire!

Suddenly all of the lights in the village square blow out.

The jeep headlights explode, the half-track headlights explode, gas lanterns explode. Only the flicker of torches light up the village square.

The women in the lineup cower together in a huddle. No shots are fired.

HEISS  
Very impressive.  
(to Vogel)  
Take her.

VOGEL  
Yes, sir.

Two SS GUARDS grab Anna and drag her away.

VOGEL  
And the rest?

HEISS  
Take them to the barn and burn it.

OSCAR  
You promised!

HEISS  
And kill the peasant fool.

Vogel pulls out his pistol and executes Oscar on the spot.

The remaining villagers are pushed towards the entrance of the barn.

Helene breaks free and runs over to Oscar. The butt-end of a rifle slams into her back and she falls to her knees.

SS SOLDIER  
Move!

The soldier grabs her and drags her to the stable.

INT. JEEP - MOMENTS LATER

The jeep peels away from the small village.

Heiss sits in the passenger seat. Anna sits in the back. She looks over her shoulder as flames lick up the sides of the barn.

She pulls out a necklace and holds it tight. With eyes closed, she whispers something over and over. Tears streak down her cheeks.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

The villagers stand in the middle of the smoky, dark barn.

Children CRY. Mothers WEEP. Men bash on the doors, but they are locked tight.

The smoke fills the place.

In the middle of the huddle, on her knees, is Helene. She comforts a SMALL CHILD.

CHILD

Please. I can't breathe.

The men SHAKE and PULL on the doors.

PETR, a large framed man, still in his butcher's apron, appears in front of Helene.

PETR

This is your fault, Helene. Do something!

HELENE

Me?!

Petr grabs her and pushes her to the front doors.

PETR

Please. For my son.

He holds the small child in his arms.

HELENE

I don't know what to do.

Men bash the doors.

HELENE

Please! I didn't ask for this!

She falls to the floor in a COUGH. The smoke is everywhere. Flames appear at the back walls. The crowd push forward.

She presses up against the doors, closes her eyes and whispers.

HELENE

Please.

She presses her head against the door.

There is a CRACK. The door shudders.

Suddenly, the doors BURST open in a splintering CRACK.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

The men, women and children escape the flames.

The last person to exit is Helene. Dumbfounded, she looks at the doors that lay on the dirt floor.

Broken chains are scattered all around. She picks up a piece of the metal, sheered in half.

EXT. AUSTRIAN MOUNTAIN RANGE - CASTLE - DAY

Nazi cars and trucks arrive and depart through the gates of a giant castle, now fortified with a German SS division. Nazi flags drape over openings and castle walls.

INT. CASTLE ROOM - DAY

A large table sits in the center of an empty room.

The door opens and an SS GUARD enters.

Behind, dressed in ragged clothes, is a bruised and battered Anna.

The guard drags her to a chair, sits her down and then exits.

Anna sniffs and cries to herself.

A moment later, the door swings open and Heiss marches in. He has a rolled map under his arm.

He unrolls it and places it on the table. It's a map of Europe.

HEISS

Again.

ANNA

I can't.

Heiss pulls out his leather gloves and slides them on each hand. Anna shirks back from him.

HEISS

Tell me again. There are more like you. Tell me where they are.

ANNA

I don't know.

Heiss grabs her hair and pulls it back. He looks down at her.

HEISS

I know there are more. And I will find them. Where are they?

Heiss forces her head down against the map.

ANNA

I don't know. Please. I don't know.

Heiss releases his grip, turns and walks away from her. He opens the door and exits. As he steps outside, a large SS PRISON GUARD enters.

ANNA

No. Please.

Anna gets up and scampers to the back wall. The Guard walks towards her with a smirk on his face.

EXT. VILLAGE - GRAVEYARD - DAY

A row of freshly packed dirt mounds line the front of a small graveyard.

Helene reaches down and places a wreath of flowers on a large mound.



She turns to face a group of VILLAGERS. TOMASZ, a grey haired, middle-aged man steps forward.

TOMASZ

Helene. We are sorry for your lose.

HELENE

Thank you.

TOMASZ

We have talked, all of us, and we believe it is best you move on.

HELENE

What?

Petr, the man from the barn, pushes forward.

PETR

You're not welcome here anymore.  
Your family is a curse on this village.

He spits at her feet.

HELENE

My father died trying to protect this town.

PETR

Oscar died protecting you! These mounds. These innocent people are dead because of your family.

HELENE

But.

TOMASZ

We will give you a horse and cart for your things. But you must leave.

PETR

This is no place for a witch.

TOMASZ

Petr!

Petr turns and storms away. Tomasz tries to console Helene. He reaches out to rub her hand.

Helene turns and flees.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

SUPER: Manchester, England.

An OFFICER runs down a hallway, slides to a stop and enters a door.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

MAJOR WALTER SMITH, 60's, burly, red-cheeked, sits patiently at his desk. He looks up at MAJOR ROBERT BARNES, a pencil-thin man, who paces back and forth.

The door swings open and CAPTAIN EWAN DOUGLAS, Scottish, mid-20's, athletic, chiseled face, enters.

EWAN

Sorry, sir. Was delayed on the flight back.

SMITH

Captain, I'd like you to meet-

Barnes interrupts him.

BARNES

Major Barnes. Please have a seat.

Ewan takes a seat.

BARNES

I've read in your records that you recently escaped your second capture by German forces?

EWAN

Third, actually.

BARNES

Three. Right then. What I am more interested in, is your seemingly efficient ability to find yourself behind enemy lines.

EWAN

Sir?

Major Smith pulls out a file folder and slides it over to Ewan.

SMITH

Your name has been put forth,  
Captain. A search and retrieve  
mission of utmost importance to the  
war efforts.

EWAN

What is it?

BARNES

We need you to go behind enemy  
lines and smuggle someone out.

Ewan opens the file folder and scans the notes.

EWAN

How far?

BARNES

Poland. Maybe Austria.

EWAN

Jesus.

Ewan scans the file.

EWAN

Who is he?

BARNES

It's a she.

EWAN

A she?

BARNES

Yes. Here.

Barnes hands Ewan a folded photograph.

BARNES

It has come to light that this  
individual has some special talents  
that could aid the war effort. And  
she may currently be in the hands  
of Nazi Germany.

Ewan unfolds the photograph to reveal a faded picture of  
Helene.

Ewan looks up at the men.