LENI: A SCREENPLAY BASED
ON THE CAREER OF LENI
RIEFENSTAHL

THESIS

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MASTER OF ARTS

By

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This screenplay dramatizes the controversial career of German film maker Leni Riefenstahl during ten years of her association with the Nazi Party. Beginning with the premiere of her first film in 1932, this account chronicles her rise as a film director of such films as Triumph of the Will and Olympia to her arrest after World War II on charges that she had been a Nazi sympathizer.

Besides delineating the character and talents of Leni Riefenstahl, this screenplay addresses the difficult question of the relationship between politics and art.
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PROLOGUE

Leni Riefenstahl has been called one of the greatest film directors of all time--quite possibly the greatest female director. Her work, which has been compared to that of Eisenstein and Griffith, set the standard for documentary film making. It was the subject matter of her films as well as her involvement with Adolph Hitler and the Nazi regime that made her a figure of controversy. Because of her background, she is a woman who is seldom praised and is largely forgotten.

This thesis is a screenplay of an ambitious, successful artist whose goals were within her grasp, but who was unable to comprehend the implications inherent in those goals. Because Leni Riefenstahl documented the Nazi regime, was she therefore a Nazi sympathizer? And because her documentation was so visually exciting, was she more political or more artistic? Where does the sociopolitical or humanitarian responsibility begin and end, or does such a responsibility even exist? Is the work itself her only responsibility?

Very little has been written about Riefenstahl's personal life that is not speculation. The preparation for writing a screenplay, therefore, has included viewing and analyzing her films, and researching the social, cultural, and historical events that affected her life and work.

The intent is to illustrate Riefenstahl's rise to success
along with Hitler's rise to power, and her ultimate downfall as a result of the decline of the Third Reich. Her films serve as framing devices for the different stages in her career: the idealistic gypsy girl in the Blue Light; the triumphant, independent artist who created Triumph of the Will; the film maker who saw beauty and unity among the countries in the Olympic games in Olympia; and the woman who attempted the pastorale Tiefland at a time when the world was no longer interested in fairy tales.

In questioning the dangerous dichotomy between art and politics, Riefenstahl's life offers no response. It is a question which has been submitted to her many times. It is a question which will arise anytime the life and career of Leni Riefenstahl is presented for discussion. In an attempt to address this question, this thesis offers the talents and character of the woman herself.
EXCERPTS FROM THE FILM THE BLUE LIGHT:

EXT MOUNTAIN PATH--DAY

Junta, a young gypsy girl walks along the mountain path guided by the blue light emanating by the moon glowing on the blue crystals of the mountain.

EXT VILLAGE IN THE MOUNTAINS--DAY

A coach rides into the village below the mountains leaving behind the visitor, Vico. He is a tall, handsome, well educated artist. The Innkeeper rushes out to greet him and directs him to the inn. The two men are passed in the road by Junta, dressed in rags and carrying a basket of berries. The villagers look upon her with disgust and a village priest crosses himself upon seeing her. Vico watches this display in wonder—it is apparent to him that she is an outcast to the village.

INT INSIDE THE INN--DAY

Vico sits at a corner table drinking a glass of wine. He looks around the dimly lit inn at the other men sitting near him. All seem sad and do not speak—to him or each other. The innkeeper approaches Vico's table with more wine.

VICO
You are not very merry around here.

VILLAGER
A full moon is expected tonight. At least one young man in the village of Santa Maria will die.

INNKEEPER
A curse lies upon us.

Loud voices and noises are heard outside. Vico and the other villagers rush to the window to see what all the commotion is about. Vico watches as Junta is chased by the villagers and their children who jeer at her and call her names. They throw stones at her in disgust. In her escape, she drops her basket and a shiny blue crystal falls out. One villager grabs at the crystal. Junta bites his hand to get it back and flees the village.

VICO
What do you have against her?

INNKEEPER
Why can only this young woman climb the
mountain, while our boys fall to their deaths? Junta, that cursed witch!

EXT MOUNTAINS OVERLOOKING THE VILLAGE--DAY

Junta runs through the beautiful countryside away from the village. Across the meadows, and through the mountain forests, she runs to her peaceful mountain cabin. She rests, breathing heavily, then wanders to the edge and looks down upon the chaotic civilization she has left behind.

THE STORY OF LENI BEGINS:

INT THEATRE LOBBY--NIGHT

The audience gathers at the lavish, champagne reception for the premiere of *The Blue Light* and to honor the film's director and star, Leni Riefenstahl. She emerges from the theatre to applause and praise, which she accepts gratefully and expectedly. She is a petite woman, well built and groomed in a very sexy evening gown. On her arm is professional skier, cameraman and her current love, Hans Schneeberger.

Among the guests at the reception are film makers, critics, reporters, some political figures, including Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels who studies Leni closely.

Among her friends are actresses Marlene Dietrich and Anna May Wong, with whom she poses for photographers. Dr. Arnold Fanck, director of Germany's "Mountain Films"--many of which starred Leni--and Leni's teacher, speaks with her and the press about her newfound profession. Not at all shy, she is very willing to discuss the film and herself. She amazes many with her strong sense of pride and her loud, boisterous laugh.

LENI

You see, Junta was happy with the blue light. It was . . . like a symbol for her--an ideal. Vigo was a good man, basically, but even so he was entirely too realistic a person. He did not understand Junta's idealism. She could escape to the mountains to get away from the reality of civilization. When her ideal was destroyed, she did not want to live anymore.

She closes her eyes, thinking about Junta.

I have seen this so often in people. There are those who love beauty and have this ideal, but when they
have to face the real world and all its harsh realities, they can't do it . . . they break.

She looks at the reporter and laughs.

LENI
Have I answered your question?

Dr. Fanck walks up to them.

REPORTER
Do you think you can survive in this profession without your 'Svengeli' now, Miss Riefenstahl?

LENI
Svengeli?

DR. FANCK
I hope this doesn't mean I need to find a new leading lady. It is so hard to find an actress, mountain climber and skier all in one.

LENI
Don't forget student. I thought you were getting tired of me constantly asking you why and how all the time.

They laugh for a second for the benefit of the press as their picture is taken. As they are left alone their manner becomes a little more strained.

FANCK
Only when you became more interested in what went on behind the cameras than in front. Somewhere along the way you forgot that an actress is supposed to look and act pretty.

Hans walks up to them and gives Leni a hug.

HANS
I hope you will go back to acting. I miss you as a leading lady.

LENI
You just don't want me to be your boss anymore. I am sorry about that little tiff we had, Hans.
HANS
Which one?

LENI
The big one.

HANS
You should never tell a cameraman how to run his camera, Leni.

LENI
I know. But I was right. Wasn't I?

HANS
It's forgotten.

They start to kiss when they are interrupted by a reporter. Leni willingly leaves Hans' affections for the reporter's attention.

REPORTER
Miss Riefenstahl, The Blue Light has such a magical look, much different from the films you made with Dr. Fanck. How do you explain this?

LENI
That has been an ongoing argument between the good doctor and myself for a long time. He always had these beautiful, fantasy-like pictures, but then he would put a realistic story behind them. It always bothered me. I like fairy-tales. Dreamy, soft. You must remember, Dr. Fanck is a doctor of Geology, not fantasy.

REPORTER
Can you tell me, what was the symbolism of silhouetting Junta against the white sky during the climbing scenes. Or is that an artistic secret.

LENI
(coy)
Yes, I don't think I can tell you that.

HANS
It was the only way to distinguish her from the mountain.
The reporter and Hans laugh together, Leni gives Hans a reprimanding stare, then quickly tries to recover.

LENI
But it is one of my favorite techniques. The individual, standing out against the elements. Man against nature, if you will.

REPORTER
(still laughing with Hans)
Yes, thank you, Miss Riefenstahl.

He walks away.

HANS
(affectionate)
You're a phony, my darling.

LENI
Technicalities can sound so unappealing, dear Hans. Artistic is better than technique.

HANS
Art can be very technical, Leni.

LENI
Beauty is art, and human, not machines.

GOEBBELS
And you are quite an artist, Fraulein Riefenstahl.

Leni and Hans look at this small, ugly man without much interest.

LENI
Thank you.

GOEBBELS
A beautiful artist, at that.

LENI
Thank you, again.

Leni is suspicious of this tiny, pompous man. On his arm is a very young, pretty movie starlet. Dr. Fanck walks up to make the introductions.

FANCK
Leni, this is Dr. Joseph Goebbels.
He is the Minister for the People's Enlightenment and Propaganda.

LENI
(impressed)
Ah!

GOEBBELS
Fraulein.

LENI
It is indeed a pleasure, Dr. Goebbels. Quite an impressive title.

GOEBBELS
(leading her away)
Excuse us, please? A very pictorial film, Fraulein. You wrote and directed it all by yourself?

Leni is not impressed with his patronizing attitude.

LENI
Yes, I did.

GOEBBELS
You are a very handsome and talented woman.

LENI
Thank you.

GOEBBELS
Adolph Hitler and I are always interested in finding superiority in German art. We think art is very valuable.

LENI
That's very admirable. I always thought political people didn't go to movies much.

GOEBBELS
Not so. Hitler is an insatiable movie-goer. He has seen you act in many of Dr. Fanck's films—The White Hell of Piz Palu, Mountain of Destiny. He would like very much to meet you. You know, he will be the new chancellor of Germany, Fraulein.

Hans approaches Leni and Goebbels with two glasses of champagne. Leni takes a glass, not taking her eyes off Goebbels.
LENI
Yes... I would like to meet him.

GOEBBELS
I will be in touch. Good evening.

HANS
What did he want?

LENI
You don't care for him do you?

HANS
No.

LENI
I don't much either. I don't know what it is about him.

HANS
He's a well-known womanizer, Leni.

LENI
You've heard of him?

HANS
You haven't?

LENI
(dismissing it)
You can't believe everything you hear, Hans.

HANS
I can believe what I see. And I do not believe that little blonde on his arm is his wife.

LENI
He doesn't interest me. He can't do anything for me. But Adolph Hitler... Now he might be of some help to me.

HANS
Leni, Goebbels is just trying to find a female companion for his boss. He is interested you as a bedpartner, not a film maker.

LENI
Then I'll come as quite a surprise, won't I?
Months later the fateful meeting takes place. Adolph Hitler is now officially the chancellor of Germany. He stands off to the side apart from the rest of the party which includes Leni, Goebbels and his wife, Magda, and Putzi Hufstangl.

Leni and Putzi sit on the couch talking. Hitler looks at books in the bookcases along the wall. Occasionally he glances over to Leni, but whenever she looks up at him, he quickly looks away. Goebbels and Madga observe the situation, trying to figure out how to get these two together.

LENI
(whispering to Putzi)
Is he always this shy?

PUTZI
Not really. He can be very charming.

GOEBBELS
Putzi, why don't you play our guests a tune on the piano?

PUTZI
Of course. Any requests?

MAGDA
Something soft and romantic, I think.

LENI
That would be nice.

Putzi begins to play on the piano. Leni looks around the room, uncomfortable alone on the couch, then carries her drink to the piano. Hitler glances back at her, then quickly looks away again as she passes by.

LENI
You play very well.

PUTZI
Thank you.

LENI
I love music.

She dances a few steps next to the piano.

PUTZI
Reminds you of your dancing days?
GOEBBELS
Did you know, Chancellor, that Leni was an acclaimed dancer with Max Reinhardt?

HITLER
It doesn't surprise me. You are a woman of many talents, Fraulein.

LENI
Leni, please. Talents, or trends, I can't seem to make up my mind what I like best. Film work was only to be a temporary diversion while my knee was healing. But I love it.

HITLER
And it's a lucky thing for the film world that you do.

LENI
Would you like to dance?

Goebbels jumps up and begins barking orders.

GOEBBELS
Magda, don't you have something to do in the kitchen?

MAGDA
Yes, dear, right away.

GOEBBELS
Putzi, I'd like to speak with you privately a moment.

PUTZI
Coming! (pats Leni on the shoulder and grins as he passes)

Leni and Hitler watch as the party evacuates the room. They stand in the middle of the floor staring in wonder at the situation, then, realizing they have been left alone deliberately, they look at each other and laugh. Leni, her loud, hysterical laugh. Hitler, a chuckle to himself, rather embarrassed with the whole situation.

EXT LENI'S CHILDHOOD HOME--DAY

Leni sits out on the porch with her mother having afternoon tea. Her mother is an extremely well-groomed and well preserved lady. The outside of the house alone indicates
wealth and comfort. The Riefenstahl family suffered very little following World War I.

Leni and her Mum chat about last night's meeting and discussion with Hitler as the maid refills their tea.

LENI
Thank you, Annie.

MUM
I don't know that I like you working for these people, Leni.

LENI
I'm not working for them, Mum. I'm just going to make a film about them.

MUM
Well, I don't like it. Adolph Hitler or his people.

LENI
Mum! He's the chancellor of Germany.

MUM
Just the same, I don't like him.

LENI
You've been listening to Heinze again.

MUM
Your brother feels very passionately about these things.

LENI
How can you feel passionately about politics?

MUM
Now, Leni, don't criticize your little brother.

LENI
It's boring! Now music, art, film—that's something to feel passionately about.

MUM
And Adolph Hitler does?
LENI
He does. You should see some of his paintings. His people are terrible, but his mountains and architecture show great promise. That's why he wants me to film the Rally in Nuremberg. He wants an artist's touch.

MUM
When do you have to leave?

LENI
Tomorrow. The Rally begins in six days.

MUM
Six days? He's not giving you much notice.

LENI
It's not his fault. He told Dr. Goebbels to offer this commission to me over a month ago and he never did.

MUM
Why not?

LENI
I don't think he likes me. Just as well, I don't like him.

MUM
What makes you think that?

LENI
He's terribly patronizing. He only invited me over for dinner to get me in bed with Hitler.

MUM
Leni!

LENI
Well, it's true! You should have seen the pathetic way they tried to set us up. I'd never seen such a poor performance. The last thing in the world he expected was for me to walk out of there a business
partner. It gave me such pleasure to smile and wave to him and say "Goodbye, Dr. Goebbels. We'll be seeing a lot of each other."

She bursts into laughter. Her Mum looks very disturbed about the whole thing.

MUM
I wish you wouldn't do it.

LENI
Oh, Mum. It's only going to take a few days. And think of the benefits I'll get from this.

MUM
You don't need them.

LENI
I said no, believe me. But Adolph Hitler leaned toward me, very seriously, and he looked into my eyes—he's got these deep, sparkling eyes—and he said to me, "Leni, give me six days of your life." He's the Chancellor. This Rally is a celebration of the Nazis coming to power. And I'm going to be there to document it.

MUM
It's the way they're coming to power that I don't like.

LENI
Now what do mean?

MUM
All these soldiers, guns, military . . . this family has always been pacifist.

LENI
That's what I told him, and do you know what he said? He's a pacifist too.

MUM
What?

LENI
He is. He said that's why he wants
Germany to be the strongest country in the world. So no one will ever attack her again.

MUM
Sounds like you've already made up your mind. (Leni nods) Be careful, baby.

LENI
Don't worry.

MUM
You father and knew when you were five you would never be a hausfrau. That's why we sent you to the best dance schools in the world. You have wonderful talents, Leni. Great imagination. Use it to the best of your abilities.

LENI
I always have, Mum. And when this is all over, I'm going to make a film just for you. Tiefland.

MUM
You're going to make a film of it?

LENI
Remember when you took me to see it when I was just a little girl?

MUM
You were so enraptured.

LENI
For years I dreamed of being in it, now I can create it. And I will.

Annie comes out to clear the tea things.

LENI
Annie, could you send the car around, please?

ANNIE
Yes, Miss Leni.

MUM
You be careful.
LENI
I'll be so busy with my work I won't even know what's going on.

EXT RALLY SITE, NUREMBERG--EARLY MORNING

Leni's car pulls up to the site of the Rally. Hans drives, Leni sits in the car next to him, in the back are two other cameramen, Sepp Allgeier and Walter Frentz. She gets out of the car and surveys the area--right now a very large, empty space. The men remain in the car looking very sleepy and bored.

SEPP
Okay, Leni. What are we doing here?

LENI
Sepp, you don't understand. We are going to film a historical event. One that will run for days and days, and will be all scattered about all over the city. We have one day to look the place over and prepare for this monstrosity. We are taking on a challenge. An important moment in our country's history. In other words, I have no idea.

WALTER
You haven't prepared at all for this thing?

LENI
No, Walter, I haven't. I don't have a script because I have no idea what is going to happen here. I don't know where anybody's mark is. Just point the camera and shoot, that's all a documentary is. Isn't it?

HANS
If you want boredom.

SEPP
And low box-office receipts.

HANS
I don't understand why you agreed to do this. Is Adolph Hitler that impressive?
LENI
I couldn't refuse him, Hans. He put his confidence in me. Besides, I've never been offered that much money before in my life. And, besides, that damned little Goebbels is just dying for me to fail. I don't know what it is about that man but I don't trust him. I get the distinct impression that he thinks I don't know what I'm doing.

HANS
Do you?

LENI
(frustrated)
No! (she turns to the huge wide open space) Will somebody tell me where to begin? (turns back to the crew) Okay. We do it, we do it right. We are not just going to point and shoot. This is not going to be a boring documentary with low box-office receipts. I'm going to challenge that audience to want to walk out.
Now, let's get this over with. Then we fly out of here and make a real movie. I've already got a script and everything.

HANS
When did this happen?

LENI
I've been meaning to talk to you about this. (shouts to the crew) Unload!

HANS
What script?

LENI
For our new film.

HANS
Our new film? Or your new film?

LENI
Well, you can still help me with it.

HANS
I knew Goebbels would be a bad influence.
LENI
At least I'm producing movies and not doing what you thought I'd be doing.

EXT THE PARTY RALLY--DAY

The people of Nuremberg fill the empty field in huge numbers. They hang out of windows and doors, and stand in the streets eagerly awaiting Hitler's arrival. The band plays the "Badenwiler March" as Hitler walks down the aisle and all hands raise in waves and salutations. He acknowledges the praise, and takes the podium to begin his speech.

Leni stands below the podium next to Hans as he films Hitler's speech. She turns around and looks at the cheering crowds, the excited faces, the gazes focused in admiration. She looks up at Hitler again, noting his animation, he's a much different man now than he was in Goebbels' den just a week ago.

LENI
Don't take your lens off him, Hans.

HANS
Where are you going?

LENI
To find Sepp. He's got to get some of these people down here.

She runs through the crowd looking for Sepp. She stops by a building and calls up to him in a window.

LENI
Sepp! Forget the overhead shots. Get down here and get some of these faces!

She wanders through the crowd, studying the faces and expressions, amazed by the worship this man has aroused in these people. She sees Walter alongside the crowd and runs over to him.

LENI
I want closeups. Plenty of closeups. I want faces, smiles, tears, cheers, laughter. I want everything. Don't miss a thing!

Back at the foot of the stage she gazes up at Hitler, proud and amazed at this performance. She shakes her head.

LENI
You ought to see this, Hans. He's got
them hypnotized.

HANS
You look pretty intrigued yourself.

LENI
I’ve seen only a few actors who were good enough to capture an audience like this. It’s amazing. (smiles and applauds) What a performance!

INT LUITPOLD HALL--DAY

Hitler sits in his chair center stage with his arms folded over his chest. Gauleiter Adolf Wagner steps to the podium to read the Fuhrer’s proclamation. Leni takes over the camera work off to the side of the crowd. Looking through the lens, she focuses on Hitler, moving in for a tight close-up, then back to reveal a two-shot of Hitler and Wagner.

WAGNER
The German form of life is definitely determined for the next thousand years. The Age of Nerves of the 19th century had found a close with us. There will be no other revolution in Germany for the next one thousand years.

The crowd breaks into thunderous applause and cheers. Hitler stands, salutes, and bask in the praise given him. He smiles at Wagner, looking very proud of himself. Leni watches through the view-finder of her camera, focusing on his smile, then pans left for a long shot of the cheering crowd. She turns her camera back on him. A smile slowly creeps across her face.

INT HITLER'S OFFICE--DAY

Hitler, Leni, and Goebbels screen the completed film. Beside the shaded windows are two SA men in uniform. As the film ends, Hitler stands and turns off the projector. The lights come on as one of the SA men lifts the shades from the windows. Hitler turns to Leni and takes her hands in his, smiling.

HITLER
Victory of Faith. I like it.

LENI
It seemed fitting to title the film after the rally itself.
HITLER
Well done. Did you have any problems?

LENI
(catching herself mid-yawn)
No, not really. It was rather hard filming something I had no control over. I can't stand not having control.

HITLER
I understand what you mean.

LENI
I also had a little trouble getting past some of the security. Was everyone told what we were doing?

HITLER
I don't know. Goebbels you were supposed to get clearance for Leni and her crewmembers. Did you forget?

GOEBBELS
(lying)
No, Mein Fuhrer. Some of the guards may have though.

LENI
Well, I got through. I figured out how to the control the situation rather than the situation controlling me.

GOEBBELS
I hope this project didn't wear you out. You don't look too well, Fraulein.

LENI
I am a little tired. I got so involved in editing, I didn't stop even to sleep or eat.

GOEBBELS
You must take a rest. A lady such as yourself isn't used to such labor, I'm sure.

LENI
I'll manage.

HITLER
I think you take to this style very
well, Leni.

LENI
Thank you, Adol--(catches herself)
I mean, Mein Fuhrer.

HITLER
That's why I have decided to name you
the Film Expert to the National Socialist
Party.

Goebbels gasps, obviously taken aback by this announcement.
He stares wide-eyed at Hitler, the turns a glare toward Leni.

LENI
What! Mein Fuhrer! It's an honor, a
tremendous honor, believe me . . .
but I cannot accept. I can't possibly
accept.

HITLER
Came as quite a surprise didn't it?
Well, it shouldn't. You've earned
it, and you deserve it.

LENI
But, I--(looks over to the SA men)
Could they leave?

HITLER
What?

LENI
Could we talk alone? I'm really not
comfortable with them around.

HITLER
Oh, of course. (waves them off) You
may go as well, Dr. Goebbels.

GOEBBELS
Excuse me?

HITLER
You may leave, too. This doesn't
concern you.

GOEBBELS
But--forgive me, but it does, Mein
Fuhrer. How you could possibly choose
this woman . . . how you could make
a decision like this without . . . My position as Minister for the People's--

HITLER
Yes, I know what your position is. I want to speak to Leni alone.

Goebbels glares at Leni who tries to fight off a grin. He turns, bows an excusal to Hitler, and leaves.

LENI
I am sorry, I didn't mean to cause any problems, I just don't like to talk when a lot of strangers are around.

HITLER
You'll get used to it.

LENI
I don't think so.

HITLER
You have taken to this challenge very well, Leni. Very well. You must return next year to do a feature-length film about the Party Rally.

LENI
But--another film?

HITLER
We have these rallies every year. Every year we come closer to power, the rallies become more spectacular. This one will be magnificent. I want a first rate film maker.

LENI
You flatter me. Really, you do. But I have to refuse.

HITLER
But why? As an artist who loves a challenge--

LENI
As an artist who is a free spirit--not a joiner of organizations.

HITLER
But you must join the party.
LENI
No, I belong to no one and nothing. Besides, I have been planning to do a film version of *Tiefland* for years now.

HITLER
The opera?

LENI
It's a personal favorite of mine. I have the script all written, and the perfect spot in Madrid to film it.

HITLER
But, another fairy-tale?

LENI
Of beauty, nature and romance.

HITLER
It can wait.

LENI
No. I appreciate the offer, but it can't. But, may I suggest, if I could, Walter Ruttman?

HITLER
Ruttman?

LENI
He's been a good friend for years. Did you see *Berlin, Symphony of a City*? Wonderful film. Just the kind of documentary style you want. Believe me, what Dr. Panck did for the mountains, Ruttman can do for a city.

HITLER
I will consider Ruttman, only if you promise to reconsider my offer.

LENI
I'll not change my mind.

HITLER
Neither will I.
INT CORRIDOR OUTSIDE HITLER'S OFFICE--SAME DAY

Leni leaves Hitler's office still smiling and laughing. She stops in her steps as she is met by an angry Goebbels. Her smile fades and she stiffens when she sees him, attempting to walk on past him. He grabs her arm. She turns and glares at this display of nerve.

GOEBBELS
Just what are you intentions, Fraulein?

LENI
I have no intentions.

GOEBBELS
I can't figure out if you are leading him on, or--

LENI
Leading him on? And just what was your initial purpose for our meeting to begin with? (she yanks her arm away) I am not leading him on. I'm not his type and he's not mine. It just so happens the man respects me.

GOEBBELS
Respects you?

LENI
You didn't figure on that, did you, Dr. Goebbels. I think he's a good man. He has taken an interest in my career and I think that's nice. We're friends.

GOEBBELS
No woman is a friend to the Fuhrer. I will not stand by and allow you to move in on my position.

LENI
I don't intend to.

GOEBBELS
Oh?

LENI
I like my position just fine.

GOEBBELS
You're only involved for personal gain.
LENI
And what are you here for?

GOEBBELS
Because I care for Germany. I care for the Party.

LENI
Tell me another.

GOEBBELS
You don't know what you're dealing with.

LENI
Perhaps not.

GOEBBELS
You'd better not try, Fraulein.

LENI
Try what?

GOEBBELS
To cut me down.

LENI
And why not?

GOEBBELS
Because I hold in my hand, the power.

LENI
Power?

GOEBBELS
Power to block any film you are trying to make.

LENI
Like you tried at the Rally. I know you didn't conveniently forget to tell the guards to let us in. But we got in. You only have the power to try. And do try it, Doctor. I'll go to the Fuhrer for final approval. And you know I'll get it.

Goebbels stares at her with a mixture of anger and fear. Leni stares him down with a self-appreciating grin. He turns and walks away from her.
EXT SNOWY MOUNTAINS IN GENEVA--DAY

Leni and a young actor enact a scene for Dr. Fanck's cameras in the treacherous mountain ranges amid falling ice and snow. They clutch onto each other for dear life, fearing the worst is yet to come if help does not soon arrive.

Over the mountain ranges appears a small charter plane flown by pilot/actor Ernst Udet. The two on the mountain spot the plane and scream for help. The plane lowers itself toward them and they clutch onto it. The plane carries them off to safety as:

    FANCK
    (yells)
    Cut!

The snow and ice stop falling as the crew stops the windmachines, cameras, lights and other film making apparatus. A crowd of onlookers at the foot of the mountain applauds the scene. The plane lowers the two actors to safety. Leni smiles and waves to the crowd of adoring fans, then straps on her skis and slides down the mountain. She takes her seat next to the director's chair and wipes her forehead in exhaustion.

    LENI
    Whew! You can really work up a sweat out there.

    FANCK
    Well done.

    LENI
    Do we need to do it again?

    FANCK
    I don't think so.

    LENI
    Thank God. Didn't think you were ever going to get me out of that avalanche.

    FANCK
    It was tempting, believe me.

Hans skis toward them, camera propped on his shoulder.

    HANS
    Nice work, my love.

    LENI
    Thank you, darling!
HANS
I wish you wouldn't do all those stunts yourself, though. Too dangerous.

LENI
Talk to my director.

FANCK
I will not use doubles, Hans.

HANS
But, Fanck--

FANCK
I insist on authenticity.

HANS
Safety is a big sacrifice to make for authenticity, Fanck. You almost lost the whole production unit in Greenland.

LENI
It takes a great deal of courage to be in a Fanck film.

FANCK
Leni was never in any danger.

HANS
Ha! In that avalanche? Hanging from an airplane? What about the time she broke her ankle?

LENI
That was my fault, Hans. I was too careless.

HANS
No, Leni--

LENI
I was careless, Hans. Don't worry about it.

FANCK
She was perfectly safe on that plane. Ernst Udet is an expert flyer.

Ernst flies overhead, swooping down dangerously low, then up and away.
HANS
Yeah, right.

LENI
(throws a snowball at the plane)
Ernst, you clown!

CREW MEMBER
Ready to check lights for the next shot, Dr. Fanck?

FANCK
Yes, right away. (to Hans) We're finishing the film here in Geneva, what more do you want?

HANS
Only because the production boat capsized and we lost half the equipment in Greenland.

LENI
Now, be nice. You know the Eskimos tried to fish the equipment out of the water but couldn't find it all. They must have thought we were crazy.

CREW MEMBER
Dr. Fanck!

FANCK
Coming!

LENI
Why don't you try a blue filter . . . (her voice trails off as Fanck glares at her) If I may make a suggestion?

FANCK
Yes?

LENI
How do you think a blue filter would look on the snow at twilight?

FANCK
Why don't we try it and see?

LENI
Thank you.

Fanck leaves.
HANS
You're awfully bold sometimes.

LENI
I'm awfully right sometimes.

HANS
He is the director.

LENI
I know. Ah, another tale of terror and woe in the mountains. Which white hell are we in this time?

HANS
S.O.S. Iceberg.

LENI
My God, some of these titles he comes--

PHOTOGRAPHER
(interrupting the two)
Miss Riefenstahl?

LENI
(quick change of mood to a lovely smile for the press)
Yes?

PHOTOGRAPHER
(holds up his camera)
You mind?

LENI
Not at all.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Will you be in any more scenes later?

LENI
We'll set up as soon as Dr. Fanck is ready.

PHOTOGRAPHER
What about after the day's shooting?

LENI
I'll be in my room in the lodge later, if you'd--(Hans clears his throat)
I'll be skiing later. You know, got to keep this body in shape. You're American, aren't you?
PHOTOGRAPHER
Yes, ma'am.

LENI
What publication?

PHOTOGRAPHER
Time magazine.

LENI
(impressed)
Oh, I see.

Two young girls approach shyly.

GIRL #1
Miss Riefenstahl?

LENI
Yes?

GIRL #1
May we have your autograph?

LENI
But of course.

GIRL #2
(to her companion)
Well?

GIRL #1
What?

GIRL #2
You going to ask her?

GIRL #1
You ask her.

LENI
Ask me what?

GIRL #1
Are you really (giggles) intimate with Adolph Hitler?

LENI
Intimate?
GIRL #2
All the magazines have pictures of you with him.

LENI
That doesn't mean we're intimate. Don't believe everything you read. Especially in the movie rags. (she smiles for the photographer as she signs the girls' autographs)

GIRL #1
(disappointed)
Then you don't really know him?

LENI
Oh, we're very good friends.

GIRL #2
(in awe)
Really?

LENI
Yes.

GIRL #1
(dreamily)
What's he really like?

LENI
Very nice.

GIRL #2
Are his eyes really blue?

LENI
(putting them on)
Oh, they're piercing, Just breathtaking. (the girls ooh and ahh, then burst into giggles). Run along now. We've got work to do.

GIRLS
(running off)
Thank you!

HANS
(mocking her)
Piercing! Breathtaking! You charmer.

LENI
I was just telling them what they want to hear. Actually, I've never noticed
his eyes.

HANS
Oh, come on, now!

LENI
Really!

HANS
Tell me another.

LENI
Hans, you don't think that I--?

HANS
You! I know you, remember?

FANCK
(yelling down to them)
Hey! Places for a runthrough. We need to test the light.

LENI
Coming! Oh, Hans, try to get a little bit closer on some of your shots. You're too far back.

HANS
(reprimanding)
Leni!

Leni covers her mouth and smiles, then reaches up and kisses him, playfully

LENI
I'm sorry, darling.

HANS
Don't tell me how to run my camera.

LENI
You know I just like you closer to me. Just a teensy bit? Hmmm?

HANS
(weakening)
Leni. (she kisses him again) I like your directing style better than Fanck's.

LENI
Because I'm such a charmer.
FANCK
Hey! Places!

LENI
Fanck?

FANCK
What is it?

LENI
Can I take off this damned bunny suit? I'm suffocating!

FANCK
All right, but hurry!

Leni takes off her ski suit, stripping down to a pair of long-sleeved tights. The Time magazine photographer makes serious note of her long, bare legs. She puts on her skis and starts to climb up toward Fanck and the set.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Miss Riefenstahl? Do you mind?

LENI
Not at all.

HANS
You'll make it hard for your readers to concentrate on the news.

PHOTOGRAPHER
This is for the cover.

He takes the photograph.

INT LENI'S ROOM IN THE LODGE--NIGHT

Leni and Hans sit on her bed looking through photographs and papers for her projected new film Tiefland. She is dressed in a loose fitting bathrobe, ready to call it a night.

HANS
Pastoral. Very nice.

LENI
Yes, I like it. I've got a lovely spot in Madrid just aching to be used in a film. Beautiful waterfalls, flowers, oh, and you should see the way the fog lifts over the water at dawn.
HANS
Your images are so different from Fanck's.

LENI
Yes, Fanck and his fascist mountains.

HANS
What? Listen, you're the one who was just dying to be in another one of his films.

LENI
What?

HANS
He told me you begged him to let you in this film.

LENI
I didn't.

HANS
That's what he told me.

LENI
What did he say?

HANS
That you came to him 'begging and bawling' to be in the film.

LENI
That's not true.

HANS
That's what he said. He told me he wanted Elly Beihorn for the part.

LENI
Elly Beihorn? She can't act.

HANS
No, but she can fly.

LENI
Carl Laemmle told me that he insisted on me for this role. No one else.

HANS
Laemmle? From Universal Pictures in America?
LENI
That's right. The Americans wanted me.

HANS
(not really believing)
That so.

LENI
It is. And don't let anyone tell you otherwise. How dare Fanck say such a thing. After all I've done for him. Now my film will be beautiful. It will show the beauty of nature, not the struggle, the conflict. Everyone knows there is struggle in the mountains. But that's part of the beauty. When you get to the top and look down, you forget about the pain. It takes strength to make it. Strength and will. It's going to be a beautiful film, Hans. And I can pay you this time. I made enough money from the Blue Light I can finance it myself.

HANS
You don't have to worry about that, Leni.

LENI
But the rest--

HANS
The guys? Don't worry about the crew. You know they'd do anything for you. They love you--maybe too many of them love you.

LENI
Thank you, my darling. (kisses him)
And, Hans, after this, I have so many ideas.

HANS
Then maybe you had better start paying me.

LENI
Fanck told me this story he read somewhere about a World War I female spy. They called her 'Mademoiselle Docteur.' It's a fascinating story, and it's true. He's trying to see about financing, but he's having some trouble.
HANS
Why?

LENI
The Ministry for the People's Enlightenment and Propaganda.

HANS
Goebbels?

LENI
Of course.

HANS
Well, I can imagine his reluctance toward a spy picture.

LENI
Oh, he's just trying to impress me. But I've also got a wonderful idea for a film about Penthesilia.

HANS
The Amazon queen? You're joking.

LENI
I'm very serious. I've been interested in it for years, ever since Max Reinhardt used to call me his little Penthesilea when I was dancing for him. I read up on it, and it's a fascinating story.

HANS
There's already a play about her, isn't there?

LENI
By Kleist, yes. And it is a beautiful play, really, but the language is too antiquated. Too many long poetic speeches and soliloquies. I have in mind a film opera.

HANS
You're kidding!

LENI
I'm very serious!

HANS
You don't know anything about opera.
LENI
I know I love it. And besides, wouldn't
I make a perfect Amazon queen?

HANS
(studies her body)
Hmm, you know they wore their bows and
arrows strapped over their shoulders.

LENI
Yes, so?

HANS
You may have to amputate your left breast.

She lunges at him on the bed and they roll around, laughing
and kissing. They just begin to stop kidding around when the
phone rings. Leni rolls over to answer it, still holding onto
Hans.

LENI
Hello. (she becomes very serious,
pushing Hans away and quickly sitting
up) Yes, Deputy Hess.

HANS
(whispers)
Rudolph Hess?

LENI
(shushes him)
How did you find me here? What? What
assignment? But I explained to him at
the time that I was unable to fulfill
the assignment. I suggested Walter Ruttman.
I believe he has already begun work on
it. (listens) What? No! No . . . This is getting me nowhere. Let me
speak to Hitler himself. All right
then let me speak to the Fuhrer himself.
(getting irritated) Well, all right
then. I'll see him there. Good day.
(annoyed) Oh, Heil Hitler, (slams the
receiver down) yourself.

HANS
What is it?

LENI
I have just received my orders to
report to Nuremberg.
HANS
The rally, again?

LENI
Can you believe the nerve?

HANS
Frankly yes, Leni. I didn't think you knew what you were getting yourself into.

LENI
Oh, don't give me a lecture about it now, Hans. I've got to get out of this.

HANS
Well, don't go.

LENI
I can't just not go. He is a powerful man, Hans. It would be smartest to stay in his good graces.

HANS
Leni--

LENI
I'm not committing, Hans. I have to go to Nuremberg though. I can't reach him by phone. Look, I'll go, make my apologies, explain the situation and we can . . . finish up where we left off. (kisses him) Okay?

HANS
I know you, Leni. The smell of fresh money and celluloid is too much for you to handle.

LENI
I can handle it, darling. I can handle it.

EXT OUTSIDE THE LODGE--SAME NIGHT

Leni hurries out to the car with her suitcases. Hans follows behind her, still trying to talk her out of going.

HANS
I don't like it. Leni. I don't like it at all.
LENI
Hans, dear. You know me well enough to know that what you think matters very little.

HANS
He's got you doesn't he?

LENI
What?

HANS
He's got you under his thumb.

LENI
Hans, no one has me under his thumb. Not you, not Adolph Hitler.

HANS
I'll bet.

LENI
Hans, I don't do anything I don't want to do. If I don't want to work, I don't work. It just so happens I love my work.

HANS
What do you think of him?

LENI
What?

HANS
What do you really think of him? You've never said.

LENI
I think he's a good man. (smiles) Faultless, so simple and yet so filled with power. He seems very sincere.

HANS
No, you said it right there.

LENI
What?

HANS
Power.
LENI
You don't understand him, Hans. He really wants nothing, nothing for himself. He's helping to pull Germany out of the worst depression ever. When one German suffers, we all suffer. He's going to stop the depression, the suffering. I think he can.

HANS
Do you?

LENI
You ought to listen to him speak, Hans. There's a radiance about him. He's very hypnotic. Very photogenic.

HANS
I think you need to listen to him.

LENI
I do.

HANS
No, Leni. You talk about radiance--what you see.

LENI
I can't help that. I look through a lens most of the time.

HANS
Well, put the camera down and take a good hard look, Leni. Something's happening. I don't know what it is, but I don't like it.

LENI
Hans--

HANS
Don't you read the papers?

LENI
When do I have time to read the papers?

HANS
You'd better start making time if you're going to be a part of this propaganda.
LENI
I am not a part of their propaganda.
Goebbels--that is propaganda. I am a
film maker and Adolph Hitler just
happens to like my films. There is
nothing wrong with that.

HANS
Tell it to Fritz Lang.

LENI
What's Fritz got to do with it?

HANS
Hitler liked Metropolis. So did Goebbels.
So much in fact that Goebbels offered
Fritz a job making films for the party.
He gave Fritz one day to decide whether
or not to take the job. Oh, he was kind
enough to overlook the fact that Fritz's
mother is Jewish.

LENI
(bored)
And?

HANS
He boarded a sleeper on a night train for
Paris. Left his home, his family. All
of his belongings.

LENI
Well, that wasn't very bright.

HANS
Leni, don't you understand? Fritz wouldn't
compromise his principles just because
Goebbels offered him a nice little future
in the film world. And neither should you.
A lot of people are leaving, Leni. Film
makers, too, just like Fritz.

LENI
Well, I'm not going anywhere. And I'm not
sacrificing my principles, either. My
principle is my work. I was born in
this country and I will live and work
here.

She gets in the car and starts it.
HANS
Then you had better at least educate yourself on what's going on here.

LENI
I am not going to stick my nose into things I know nothing about. Hitler's got people to take care of it. I'm a damned good film maker, Hans. Adolph Hitler can see that. Why can't you?

HANS
What does Hitler know? (Leni pulls off. Hans yells after her) His favorite movie is *King Kong*!

EXT NUREMBERG RALLY SITE--DAY

Hitler looks over the empty field with architect Albert Speer. Speer explains to Hitler where he will be adding the finishing touches as Leni is driven up in her car. She has been home to change and groom herself before leaving for Nuremberg. She passes all security and walks straight to Hitler.

HITLER
And here's my favorite film maker!

LENI
We need to talk.

HITLER
Leni, this is Albert Speer, the party architect. You two have a great deal in common.

LENI
Pleasure to meet you. (to Hitler) I have to talk to you.

HITLER
I want you two to get to know each other. He'll be a big help to you on this film. Speer, I want you to listen to this lady, and give her everything she wants. I promised--

LENI
(taking his arm)
I have to talk to you.
He looks at her, surprised by this display of boldness, then excuses himself. They walk off alone together.

HITLER
Speer's doing a fine job. A man with amazing talent. And put to such good use.

LENI
While I was in Geneva--

HITLER
I hope you had a nice vacation.

LENI
It wasn't a vacation. I was working on a film for Dr. Fanck.

HITLER
You don't need Fanck anymore.

LENI
I had already committed to him.

HITLER
You had already committed to me.

LENI
You're wrong. (he raises an eyebrow to her) I mean you're mistaken. But last night I received word . . . or should I say orders from Deputy Hess.

HITLER
And?

LENI
According to him, you still expect me to do this project.

HITLER
I do.

LENI
I recommended Walter Ruttman to you. Ruttman is a very good film maker and was extremely excited and enthusiastic about making this film for you.

HITLER
And your suggestion of Ruttman shows
me how very little you really know about our politics, Leni. Haven't you the slightest concept of what happened to us after World War I?

LENI
(defensive)
Of, course I do. But I do not see--

HITLER
Ruttman is a communist, Leni. He's not a friend of the party.

LENI
Even so, you said you wanted an expert film maker and that is exactly what Walter Ruttman is, communist or not. He is an expert in the field of documentary film making.

HITLER
Ruttman's idea of a documentary is a history film about the party. That doesn't appeal to me.

LENI
But he's already begun--

HITLER
(final)
He does not appeal to me, Leni.

LENI
Well, I don't see how I could appeal to you. You said it yourself, I'm naive about these things. I don't know what an SS is or an SA--I don't know what is important to you and what is not important.

She pauses to see if she has convinced him. His smile tells her she has not.

LENI
Dr. Goebbels doesn't like me.

HITLER
That's not true.

LENI
(insistant)
Dr. Goebbels does not like me, and
Dr. Goebbels is head of the cinema.

HITLER
Dr. Goebbels will cooperate.

LENI
I don't think so.

HITLER
Dr. Goebbels will cooperate because I have told him to cooperate.

EXT GARDEN OUTSIDE LENI'S HOME--DAY

A newsreel shows a smiling Leni being presented a bouquet of roses by an emotionally strained Dr. Goebbels. Standing aside, Adolph Hitler beams to the cameras. An announcer narrates the happenings.

ANNOUNCER
The Fuhrer himself appeared today at the home of his favorite film maker, screen star, Leni Riefenstahl. The beautiful actress beamed with delight at the presentation of a bouquet of roses as well as the commission to film the 1934 Nuremberg Party Rally.

Was it the red roses or the gleam in Hitler's eye which caused the lovely Leni to stumble, or her busy film making schedule? Whichever, it is apparent now that through her hard work and great talent, Leni Riefenstahl may now enjoy a permanent place in the company of Germany's finest film makers. In the company of the Fuhrer, as well.

Leni, Hitler and Goebbels smile and wave to the camera. As the newsreel stops, they get down to business with Leni and Goebbels as strained as ever.

LENI
Thank God that's over with.

HITLER
It's good for the press to see you two getting along.
LENI
Have you told him the grounds to which I have agreed to make this film for you?

GOEBBELS
What? She's going to film the Rally?

HITLER
It has been decided.

GOEBBELS
I had nothing to do with this decision.

LENI
You didn't have to.

HITLER
I have asked Leni to make the Rally film, and she has agreed.

LENI
On certain conditions.

GOEBBELS
And what are these conditions?

LENI
This film is to be made by my own company, not by the Ministry for People's whatever you call it.

GOEBBELS
That's out of the question.

HITLER
I've already agreed.

GOEBBELS
It's impossible! All films for Germany are made--

HITLER
Agreed.

LENI
There's more. I don't want anyone, (to Hitler) not you, and especially not you (to Goebbels) to see the film before it's finished.
GOEBBELS
Fraulein--

LENI
It's bad enough I'm being ordered to
do this, I won't have anyone looking
over my shoulder.

GOEBBELS
But that's my job.

LENI
Not on my film.

GOEBBELS
But it's the Party's film.

LENI
My company.

HITLER
Stop it, both of you. I won't have
this in-fighting anymore.

GOEBBELS
I won't accept.

LENI
You don't have any say in the matter.

GOEBBELS
Mein Fuhrer--

HITLER
It's already been decided. Leni is
making this film, by herself, for her
company.

GOEBBELS
But what about values? The values are
so important to every German film.

HITLER
Leni understands the values of a good
film, I'm sure.

LENI
Better than most.

GOEBBELS
Is that all?
HITLER
Yes.

LENI
No.

HITLER
But that's all we discussed.

LENI
There's one more thing.

HITLER
What is it?

LENI
Don't ever ask me to make a third film.

HITLER
All right, agreed.

LENI
I seem to have trouble saying 'no' to you.

They share in the laugh.

LENI
You've got yourself a film maker.

Hitler shakes her hand, then motions for Goebbels to do the same. He does, reluctantly. Leni folds her roses in her arms and smiles.

INT OFFICE OF KARL AUEN, OFFICIAL OF THE--DAY REICH FILM BUREAU

Leni passes by the secretary and bursts into Auen's office. She stares directly into his face, impatient and angry. Auen looks up from his desk at her, knowing good and well who she is and why she has come to see him. He waves off his secretary, expressing no enthusiasm at all to Leni's visit.

AUEN
Fraulein Riefenstahl?

LENI
Herr Auen.

AUEN
Would you care for a seat?
LENI
I won't stay long. I have a great deal of work to do.

AUEN
Suit yourself.

LENI
As I'm sure you are aware, I am making a film by commission of the Fuhrer for the Reich Party Day.

AUEN
Yes, I am aware.

LENI
I have written you two letters and you have yet to respond.

AUEN
Yes, I did receive your letter about Herr Schuneman.

LENI
I would like to know why this matter has not been taken care of.

AUEN
Fraulein--

LENI
You must realize that I need as many cinematographers and cameramen as I can get for this project. It is a massive, important project given to me by order of our Fuhrer.

AUEN
Yes, Fraulein, I am aware of this--

LENI
I do not appreciate being told that Herr Schuneman feels it is beneath his dignity to work with me.

AUEN
Fraulein--

LENI
"Beneath his dignity." This is a degradation of the Fuhrer's wishes. I felt it was my duty to inform you about this and your
duty to act upon it.

AUEN
Fraulein--

LENI
Have you acted upon it?

AUEN
Fraulein, if I may, please? I contacted Herr Schuneman right after I received your letter.

LENI
And?

AUEN
Have you any idea the serious threat your letter posed to him?

LENI
I don't see how I threatened him.

AUEN
You could have gotten him into a great deal of trouble with some very high officials.

LENI
And so he should be.

AUEN
You misunderstood what he was trying to say. Herr Schuneman did not object to the Reich Party Day film. In fact, he said he would be honored to make a film for the party.

LENI
It's me then. I thought so.

AUEN
He finally admitted, he could not work under the artistic direction of a woman. That was what he considered beneath his dignity.

LENI
I see. And you accept this?

AUEN
I understand his reluctance.
LENI
Do you?

AUEN
Yes, and you are going to run into this again, Fraulein.

LENI
May I point out to you that the Fuhrer obviously does not find it beneath his dignity to entrust me with this artistic direction. This commission will be impossible to carry out if there are more workers out there who share Herr Schuneman's views. I think the Fuhrer should know this. If you won't tell him, then I will. Good day, Herr Auen.

AUEN
But, Fraulein--

LENI
Good day, Herr Auen.

EXT ZEPPLIN FIELD AT NUREMBERG--DAY

Leni and architect, Albert Speer survey the grounds of the Rally site. He tells her of his plans for the site, pointing out different locations to assist her in her plans for camera angles and locations.

SPEER
Originally, I planned on replacing those bleachers with a long staircase enclosed by a long colonade.

LENI
That would be gorgeous.

SPEER
It would be twice the length of the baths of Caracalla in Rome.

LENI
Beautiful.

SPEER
Beautiful . . . but, not enough time. Don't worry though, the grounds will be in excellent condition by September.

LENI
Where will the speaker's platform be?
SPEER
Over there.

LENI
I wonder . . . I might need to dig some pits down here in front. That way the camera can move around and be out of the way.

SPEER
I don't see any problem with that.

LENI
How many people are expected?

SPEER
I don't know. Million . . . Million and a half.

LENI
My god! I'm going to need some aerial shots, that is impressive. I don't suppose . . . maybe you could build me a lookout tower, could you?

SPEER
Not enough time.

LENI
Damn!

SPEER
You can't rush an architect any more than you can rush a film maker.

LENI
I need something to show all those bodies. It would make a great shot. How about an elevator on that flagpole?

SPEER
That could work. But you'd be taking a risk at such a height.

LENI
Oh, I'm used to heights. Flagpole can't be much worse than a mountain. Besides, that's the beauty of direction--I can delegate that job to someone else.

SPEER
You'll have to get the final okay from
Hess, of course.

LENI
Of course. Go ahead and build it though. Then he can't refuse.

SPEER
I think I'm going to enjoy working with you, Leni.

LENI
Thank you.

SPEER
You've got style and nerve, that's for sure. I've been a big admirer of your work for sometime.

LENI
You seem to be the only one who doesn't mind my being here.

SPEER
You're bound to run into a few conflicts. A lot of these men don't like being contradicted, and especially by a woman as self-assured as you are.

LENI
I know how to bend their little world to suit my purposes. I just know what I want, that's all. And I know how to do it my way. And if all else fails—but only as a last resort—a sniffle or two is always good for a melted heart. The only problem is, some these hearts are hard to melt.

SPEER
Just as long as you realize that there are some who might do just about anything to keep you out of the Party.

LENI
I'm not a member of the Party. I have no intentions to join either.

SPEER
Why not?
LENI
I keep my independence that way. That's what Goebbels can't stand. I do things because I want to, not because the Party tells me to.

SPEER
There are other reasons to be a part of the Party.

LENI
Let's just say I'm not in the Party business. Here, before I forget. I want to show you something. (she pulls a newspaper clipping out of her purse) I saw this in the paper about three years ago.

SPEER
It's an article about me.

LENI
I've saved it.

SPEER
Whatever for?

LENI
For future reference. I read the article and was fascinated by your work. I think you'd make an ideal subject for a film.

SPEER
You're kidding.

LENI
I just want you to know, I'm really glad to meet you.

SPEER
I'm glad to meet you. (points out another area) Now, this whole area will be filled with spectators.

LENI
I'll need plenty of cameramen down here then. One thing Victory of Faith taught me, the real animation is in the faces, the expressions of these people. Hitler may say he's going to save Germany, but the faces make you believe him. It's
incredible, they worship him.

SPEER
This Rally has all the makings of a spectacular event.

LENI
Does he have a title for the Rally yet?

SPEER
Triumph of the Will.

LENI
I like it.

EXT STREETS OF NUREMBERG--DAY

Tourists and spectators arrive to Nuremberg in preparation for the Rally. At the site, people watch Speer and his crew adding the finishing touches and setting up for the big event. On the outskirts of town, the Hitler Youth group arrives and sets up its tents. There is a good deal of excitement and horseplay among the boys—they are playful now, not the soldiers they soon will be. At the site, Leni watches her crew set up cables, lights, microphones, etc. She wears a long, white raincoat, and looks through a view-finder at the surroundings, framing and focusing on the buildings, the faces, the platforms. She is completely business, a woman obsessed with perfection and detail. With her crew she is commanding and exhaustive, wanting everything just so.

EXT CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

Leni assembles her crew into the conference room for their nightly lecture and assignments. She looks tired and slightly drawn, but is in complete command. Her crew gives her their full attention.

LENI
I'd like to thank all of you for coming and giving me your support on this project. As you have realized already, this is a massive, massive project. And it has already just begun. On the sheets I have passed out is a map of the Rally and parade area, and a schedule of the events that will take place.

HANS
(remarking on the length)
Good God!
LENI

Yes, it will go on for quite some time. So forget everything else. This is your life, here and now, for the time being, or until I say otherwise. Please note on the second page, I have marked where your assigned position will be, as well as what lens I want you to use, the focal length, the filters, everything. I have thought this all out very carefully and thoroughly. Do not change a thing. Before we begin shooting, I will meet each and every one of you in your spot to see if there are any complications or questions. And, incidentally, when I come to see you at your spot, you'd damned well better be there.

Nervous laughter around the table. The crew continues to look over the papers and papers of instructions.

LENI

Questions? Now the nine aerial cameramen will be taking photographs from dirigible D/PN 50, piloted by Captain Rolph Hanasch (points him out in the crowd), and from a Klemmer plane flown by Anton Riediger. Sepp Allgeier will have the overall direction of the thirty-six cameramen and assistants. If you have any questions and I am not around, please direct them to Sepp. (thinks about that a second) But try to find me first.

She looks around the table to see that she has the full attention of everyone and waits until she feels she does.

LENI

You must wear the SA uniforms that Herr Himmler has provided. This will assure the crowd will not interfere with your work. If there are no more questions, I'll say good night and I will see you in the morning.

Seeing there are no questions, she leaves the room. The crew waits for her to close the door then begins talking amongst themselves about how hard they have been working and the enormity of this project. Their respect for Leni is apparent.
CAMERAMAN
I don't see why Goebbels was trying to talk me off this project. I think she knows what she's doing.

EXT RALLY SITE--DAY
Finishing touches are put on the equipment for the Rally. Leni and Hans set up the elevator on the flagpole and test it.

INT CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT
Leni meets with her crew once again for the final conference before the Rally begins. Her manner is very serious.

LENI
My friends and co-workers. Tomorrow we begin the hardest work we've ever done. We will work around the clock, seven days and seven nights. Now I cannot be with you at all times, but I trust your intuitive judgement. Each one of you is your own director. Always remember that this is the basic rule we work with. Let no man be bogged down with unimportant details, but leave nothing out! Go after those real events as if you are possessed. There can be no 'stop' and no 'impossible.' Everything that happens out there must be caught in a split second, by you, in your camera.

EXT STREETS OF NUREMBERG--DAY
The streets fill with people on the day of the Rally, awaiting Hitler's arrival. The anticipation is strong, much stronger than the Rally before. Young women giggle with excitement, waiting eagerly for a glance at his face. The Hitler youth play around as young boys will. The SA and the SS ready themselves for inspection.

Leni helps Hans set up the camera. He wears an SS uniform as do all the members of the crew. She wears her white raincoat, with huge pockets filled with notes and cables.

Hitler arrives and the crowd goes mad. People wave and salute as he stands erect in his jeep riding through the city. The worship for this man is phenomenal.
EXT ZEPPLIN FIELD--DAY

Hundreds and thousands of people assemble to the field as Leni's cameramen shoot from rooftops, cars, the grounds and in a special pit dug in front of the platform. Rudolph Hess steps up to the podium as the first speaker. Leni watches from the pit beside Sepp who runs the camera. She peers in the view-finder of the camera and focuses in on Hitler, beaming at the audience as he listens to Hess' speech.

HESS
I open this, our sixth party congress, in respectful remembrance of Field Marshal and President von Hindenburg.

The crowd listens and watches attentively. Cameramen capture every breath and expression as they pass through the crowd.

LENI
Keep the camera on Hess. We'll have plenty of Hitler later.

HESS
Mein Fuhrer! Around you are gathered the flags and banners of this National Socialism.

Leni looks up and around at all the flags and banners above her head. She runs to one of her cameramen in the crowd and instructs him to shoot footage of them.

HESS
Only when their cloth has worn thin will people, looking back, be able to understand fully the greatness of this time and conceive what you, Mein Fuhrer, mean to Germany.

The crowd breaks into thunderous applause and cheers. Leni smiles and applauds as well, watching Hitler continue to beam at Hess who turns to direct the rest of his speech to the Fuhrer.

HESS
Mein Fuhrer! You are Germany. When you act the nation acts. When you judge, the people judge. Our gratitude to you will be our pledge to stand by you for better, for worse, come what may. You have guaranteed our victory and you are now guaranteeing our peace. Heil Hitler! Seig Heil! Seig Heil! Seig Heil!
The crowd joins him in cheering Hitler and saluting him. Hitler stands, salutes, walks to the podium and salutes.

EXT ZEPPLIN FIELD--SAME DAY

Hitler addresses the men of the Labor Service. 160,000 members of the Labor service mass, armed with shining shovels. The entire event moves very smoothly. The workers handle their shovels in unison. Hitler steps forward to address the men while Leni and crew huddle together to plan shots.

LENI
I want a shot of Hitler from every angle. (she points to the men, giving direction) Close-up and long distance, from the front, side and back. I want to see every expression, every smile, that cute little twinkle he gets when he knows he's impressed everyone. Everything! The rest of you, get shots of the audience. I want faces, expressions. And you, get pictures of flags, the banners, the swastikas and all the other decor. Now move! Go! Go!

They scatter out as Hitler begins his speech. Leni walks up to Sepp positioned in front of Hitler again.

LENI
Shoot either full close-up or medium shots. Try to avoid showing him full figure.

SEPP
Why?

LENI
(chuckles)
Because there's not much there.

EXT HITLER'S ADDRESS TO THE SA--MORNING

Hitler walks down the long aisle of SA men to the podium to give his address to the SA. Behind the podium, Leni and Hans adjust the elevator attached rather crudely to the flagpole.

HANS
You sure this is safe?

LENI
We'll soon find out.
HANS
Working for Fanck was never like this.

LENI
Now, I want to take advantage of this. I had to throw myself on top of it to keep Goebbels from tearing it down. Film as much as you can. I want to see everything. The expansiveness, the masses. Fill the frame completely—I don't want any empty spaces. Ready?

HANS
Think so.

They guide the elevator up slowly. He clutches onto the railing as the ground gets farther away.

LENI
Don't drop that camera. Hold onto the camera, not the railing. Hans! You drop it, you don't come down!

He reaches the top and focuses the camera of the crowd. His mouth drops open in amazement at the sight. The view is incredible. So many people gathered in one place with Hitler standing apart from the crowd makes him stand and stare in awe.

LENI
(screaming up at him)
Don't just stand there!

HANS
Are those really people down there?

LENI
Hans! Film!

HANS
Leni, you've got to see this!

LENI
Maybe they'll let us do it again? No, probably not.

EXT STREETS OF NUREMBERG--DAY

On the final day of the Rally, the parade gets underway. Leni huddles with her crew again as the crowds of people mass to get a look at the Fuhrer.
LENI

Now listen, this is one of those events that is potentially monotonous on film. Let's put some excitement into it. Don't just shoot straight parade--this is a film we're making, not a newsreel. Look at details and for God's sake, keep moving. Try to go deeper into everything than the average spectator will and don't be satisfied with long shots. Look closely. Explore!

The cameramen scatter to their positions and she moves about quickly to check their locations. On rooftops, towers within the parade and inside window arcades of some of the buildings. Leni smiles having checked everything and moves alongside the parade.

INT LUITPOLD HALL--NIGHT

Hitler delivers his final and longest speech of the Rally to this hall jammed with people. Leni stands up front with Hans as he films. She looks very well groomed and smartly dressed, but a little tired all the same.

HITLER
The sixth party congress of the movement is coming to its close.

HANS
(under his breath)
Thank God!

LENI
Hush, Hans.

HANS
You've got to admit, it's about time.

LENI
I'm tired too. We can all rest when it's over.

HANS
At least it's almost over.

LENI
Almost, hell. I still have to edit this monster.
HANS
How much footage do you think we got?

LENI
Roughly I'd say about sixty hours worth.

Hans gasps. Leni puts her hand over his mouth and looks up at Hitler.

HANS
Sixty hours! My God, Leni!

LENI
Know anyone who wants to sit through a sixty hour movie?

INT Lени'S EDITING ROOM--NIGHT

For hours upon hours Leni edits the incredibly huge amount of footage. Very tired, she continues to work diligently. Hans comes in the room with a cup of tea for her. She looks up at him, startled.

HANS
Eighteen hours in the dark? I was beginning to worry.

LENI
Hans, this is the hardest work I've ever done. And I love it.

HANS
Why is it so tough? Aren't you just following the schedule of the Rally?

LENI
Dull, Hans, dull. No, I'm not looking for a chronology. If you ask me, Hans, there are two important things to documentary film making. I used to think it was just point and shoot, but there is so much more. Much, much more. First, we have the construction . . . or architecture. You understand, you've studied architecture. The pieces are there, waiting to become a whole.

HANS
What's the second thing?
LENI
Ah, the second thing is the sense of rhythm. It can't be just thrown together. It needs structure. I want to bring some of the events into the front and put the rest into the background, because not all things are on the same level of importance. No, there must be movement. Controlled movement of successive highlight and retreat. Like music. Climax, retreat, climax, retreat.

HANS
You know all about rhythm from dancing.

LENI
Exactly, it's just like dancing.

HANS
You're really enjoying this documentary business.

LENI
I've adapted rather well, thank you. But don't think I've given up on my fairy-tales. I still plan on doing Tiefland. I still plan on that when all this is over with. So don't go planning on anything else.

HANS
Back to work immediately? Sounds healthy

Leni leans over the editing table and begins studying her film. Hans watches her.

HANS
What happened to all the material Ruttman shot?

LENI
Oh, Hans. It was utter chaos. He'd show a newspaper headline and then the wind would come from nowhere and blow it away--poof! I think he was trying to copy Eisenstein, but you can't create history with paper like that. I couldn't use a meter of it. But, I may use his titles for the opening. He writes good titles and dialogue. I do pictures.
And I can't wait for you to see my opening.

EXT THE UFA-PALAST-AM-ZOO--NIGHT

A very well dressed crowd assembles outside the theatre where _Triumph of the Will_ premieres. A big black limousine drives up to the front of the theatre and Leni steps out to the cheers of a loving crowd. Dressed in a low-cut, white evening gown and a white fur coat, she greets the adoring crowd with waves and blown kisses. As some of the public tries to reach over the ropes to touch her, she smiles and signs autographs, then turns and takes Hans' arm and enters the theatre.

LENI
I'd forgotten what being an actress was all about.

She waves as she moves into the theatre.

INT UFA-PALAST-AM-ZOO--SAME NIGHT

Inside the theatre, the audience stands and applauds upon seeing her. As she and Hans enter the theatre, they hear a huge receptive cheer outside.

LENI
What's that?

HANS
Hitler just pulled up.

LENI
Hitler! He's not a movie star.

HANS
He is now.

He leads her to her private box, where she smiles and waves to people and takes her seat.

EXT SAME

A black mercedes pulls up outside the theatre and Adolph Hitler steps out. The crowd cheers instantly, almost as wildly as they cheered for Leni, giving him the same celebrity status given to her. Hitler stands and gives the Nazi salute, then walks into the theatre at a quick pace.

Out of the next limousine steps Goebbels. The spectators
watch him as he walks into the theatre, applauding respectfully, but not with the same magnitude of Leni or Hitler.

INT UFA-PALAST-AM-ZOO--SAME NIGHT

Leni watches as Hitler finds his seat in the audience. The theatre goes dark and everyone's attention is directed toward the black screen. Suddenly a statue of an eagle appears, clutching a swastika. Large letters spell out the film's title, followed by Leni's credits:

"Produced by order of the Fuhrer ... directed by Leni Riefenstahl."

The music of Herbert Windt accompanies the titles:

"Twenty years after the outbreak of World War I, sixteen years after German woe and sorrow began. Nineteen months after the beginning of Germany's rebirth ..."

Shots of cloud banks appear. As the clouds drift apart, the city of Nuremberg appears below. The orchestration becomes the anthem for the Nazi Party ("Das Horst Wessel Lied"). Hitler's plane appears over the city and the titles continue:

"Adolph Hitler flew to Nuremberg to review the columns of his faithful followers."

The audience applauds. Leni glances over to Hitler's box to see his reaction. He smiles proudly toward the screen. She sits back in her seat to watch the rest of the film.

INT SAME

Leni strolls out onto the stage amid cheers and applause following the film. The audience gives her a standing ovation and she smiles, waving and bowing. Standing, gazing at the sea of praise, her eyes fill with tears. Hitler walks onto the stage with her and presents her a bouquet of roses. She smiles and takes them from him. They stand side by side, arm in arm, waving to the cheering crowd.

Among the cheering crowd sit Generals Blomberg and Himmler who are not applauding. They look around at the crowd, rather disgusted by the whole thing.

INT ITALIAN EMBASSY IN BERLIN--NIGHT

Bernardo Attolico, the Italian ambassador hands Leni the
Italian Film Prize—an engraved gold and bronze bowl resting on a marble base. Again, Leni is very smartly dressed and beams with delight over the praise she is receiving. Goebbels stands to the side with Countess Ciano.

ATTOLICO
Fraulein Riefenstahl, Countess Ciano, Mussolini and myself take great pleasure in presenting this award to you for your triumph, the *Triumph of the Will*. Congratulations.

Countess Ciano hands her a bouquet of roses with ribbons of the Italian National colors.

CIANO
Congratulations.

LENI
Thank you.

She turns and smiles for photographers. Goebbels jumps up and hurries to her, giving her a kiss on the cheek for the benefit of the photographers.

INT BERLIN FILM AWARDS--NIGHT

Goebbels stands at the podium presenting the best film prize. Leni stands at the wings of the stage awaiting her entrance.

GOEBBELS
It gives me great pleasure to present this year's film prize to Leni Riefenstahl for her masterpiece, *Triumph of the Will*.

The audience cheers and applauds. Leni takes a deep breath, then walks out onto the stage, smiling. She and Goebbels exchange strained smiles as he hands her the award. They stand side by side, at least a foot apart, then both notice Hitler in his private box motioning them to stand closer. They move closer, then Goebbels kisses Leni on the cheek, much to her surprise. She steps to the podium to give her acceptance speech, but Goebbels steps ahead of her.

GOEBBELS
I am so moved by this film! It is a grand vision of our Fuhrer, who is shown here on the screen for the first time in the most impressive manner. It is a monumental film based on iron principles and shot with creative passion.
The audience applauds. Goebbels steps back and stands next to Leni who is rather stunned by his speech. He takes her arm and leads her off the stage.

INT THE HOME OF RUDOLPH HESS--DAY

Leni has been asked to attend this meeting with Hitler, Hess, and General Blomberg. The army is very upset with the small amount of footage devoted to them in Triumph of the Will and have complained to Hitler. Although he remembers his original agreement with Leni, Hitler asks her to make a third film.

LENI

No.

The men stare at her and each other with raised eyebrows.

BLOMBERG

No?

LENI

No. I've made other plans. And besides, we had an agreement. I'm sorry. I can't, and won't make another film.

BLOMBERG

You don't understand, Fraulein Riefenstahl.

LENI

I understand very well. You don't understand. Triumph of the Will is completed. My job is done. Now if will excuse me, I have my own career to get back to.

BLOMBERG

There is just not enough footage in your film about the army. I am sure the Fuhrer would agree we deserve as much attention as the SA or the SS.

LENI

And I'm sure the Fuhrer would agree that a deal is a deal. I have fulfilled by obligations.

HESS

I think the problem we have here is, quite simply Fraulein, you just do not
understand these matters.

LENI
I do understand these matters, Herr Hess, and, as I explained before, I did shoot footage of the army. But it was a cloudy day and I personally was not satisfied with the quality of the film. Now I defy you to blame the weather on me.

BLOMBERG
What do you mean, 'not satisfied'.

LENI
Quite simply, the light was not right, it was too . . . (realizes he is not understanding anything technical, and seeing the opportunity to be patronizing toward him) It didn't look good.

BLOMBERG
And who are you to determine whether or not the quality is satisfactory?

LENI
The film maker, the one chosen to do the job to the best of her abilities, And gentlemen, that is exactly what I have done.

HESS
I don't understand what difference lightness or darkness of a few minutes of film--

LENI
If one frame of film is not up to quality, it can destroy the whole film. I cannot sacrifice the whole of a wonderful work of art for the petty jealousies of some petty egomaniacs!

HITLER
Alright--

LENI
It would reflect on me. It would look as if I didn't care. That I had just thrown it together. If you wanted something like that you should have hired someone like
Walter Ruttman. But no, you wanted a work of art and you got it.

HITLER
That's enough now, Leni.

LENI
I'm sorry, General Blomberg. I cannot do less than my best. Nor can I present work that is less than perfect. The mere suggestion just makes my skin crawl.

BLOMBERG
Your ideals are no excuse to devote only ninety seconds—a minute and a half—to the Wehrmacht!

LENI
Ninety seconds—I cannot deal with a man who is going to sit through a film counting seconds.

HITLER
That's enough! Now both of you, I think we can come up with a compromise.

LENI
Not interested.

HITLER
We will decide that, Leni.

This lack of support takes Leni by surprise.

HITLER
I do not want you to replace that portion in Triumph of the Will. I do not want you to change that film in any way. It's perfect the way it is.

LENI
I'm glad to hear someone recognizes perfection. Thank you.

HITLER
(charming her again)
So don't change a second of that film.

LENI
I won't.
HITLER
Just take that unused portion of the Wehrmacht and make a third film. (stopping just as she is about to protest) It will be easy for you because it is already done. The army will be included and everyone will be happy.

LENI
It's not that easy.

HITLER
Why not?

LENI
Because I can't use that footage.

BLOMBERG
Why not?

LENI
Because I threw it away.

BLOMBERG
You threw away the German Army?

LENI
(liking the notion) Uh-huh.

HITLER
Then you are just going to have to make a new film.

LENI
I told you, no.

HESS
Throwing away the Wehrmacht! Mein Fuhrer, I told you she was the wrong choice for this film. Too much is riding on this. She doesn't understand what is important. She's only interested in pretty pictures. How could we possibly expect a woman--

LENI
Now just a minute!

HESS
Goebbels should have made this film.
LENI
And you would have gotten what you deserved.

HITLER
I did not want Goebbels to make this film.

HESS
She doesn't know what she is doing.
She's not qualified.

LENI
I think the success of *Triumph of the Will* is proof enough of my qualifications, Herr Hess. And as for not understanding, I most certainly do know what is and what is not important. You think I would go into a project like this unprepared? I am the only one who is capable of such a job. Your Fuhrer could see that! I would also like to point out that since I am so capable, I have other commitments. Now if you will excuse me, I have a crew waiting for me in Madrid.

BLOMBERG
Back to fairy-tales?

HESS
This woman is obsessed with fantasy.

LENI
It was my obsession with fantasy and "pretty pictures" which got me this position. You, gentlemen, just don't understand the components of film making.

HITLER
I have a suggestion . . . a compromise. It will satisfy the General as well as be done quickly so you can get back to doing—whatever it is you do.

LENI
No.

HITLER
(about to lose patience)
Just listen. It's a good idea. All
you have to do is line up all the overlooked Generals in a row and have the camera slowly move down the row. That way, each general will be shown and everyone will be happy.

LENI
That is precisely the type of garbage I worked so hard to avoid all through Triumph of the Will. It's stupid, it's boring, it's just no good.

HITLER
You are a very obstinate woman. I only wanted to help you.

LENI
You just don't know what you're talking about.

He turns away from her, then spins around to face her, slamming his fist down on the table.

HITLER
Have you forgotten who you are talking to? (he takes a deep breath) Now you listen to me. You may not have a grasp on what is happening here. I need these men. I need their help and support. And I need yours too. I have to do whatever I can to accommodate them, and you must accommodate me!

Leni stands staring at him. Her eyes widened with the shock of seeing Hitler behaving this way towards her.

HITLER
If you act like an ass, I promise you, you will have enemies. You will make this film because I tell you to make this film. No other reason! I want it! It is important to me!

Leni stands very still, watching Hitler breathing heavily after this outburst. She does not move, does not speak, does not dare look at Blomberg or Hess. She is seeing a side of Hitler that is not new, but before she only saw it on film. He is dramatic, out of control. After his tirade he does not look at her and she cannot stand to look at him.

LENI
(very quietly, almost as a secret)
All right.
EXT OUTSIDE HESS' HOME--SAME DAY

Leni leaves the house, stunned, angered and saddened by what has occurred inside. She stands at the door thinking it over, then walks to her car at a brisk pace, as if trying to sneak away. Hans waits for her in the car.

HANS
You alright?

LENI
(unsure)
Yes.

HANS
You sure?

She looks around, still confused, then wraps her arms around him, holding him close.

HANS
Leni, what happened in there?

LENI
I'm not sure. (pulls herself back, takes a deep breath, and is completely business again) Okay look, we're going to do this and get it over with.

HANS
What?

LENI
Another film for the army.

HANS
Another film?

LENI
Just to appease them. At this point I don't care what it looks like. I just want it over with. I'm getting out of this mess.

HANS
I'm sorry. But I'm not (puts his hand on her neck, rubbing gently, then pulls her toward him)

LENI
(pushing him away)
Get back to the studio. Call Sepp and
and Heinz and whoever else you can think of. See if they can spare me a few hours.

HANS
You say a few hours, you mean a few days.

LENI
Whatever, Hans. I'm not in the mood to debate.

HANS
What about you?

LENI
I'm going to walk. I need some air.

She looks back at the house. Hans kisses her on the cheek and gets in the car and drives off. She turns and faces the house, then turns her back to it and walks away.

EXT MOUNTAINS OUTSIDE OF BERLIN--DAY

Leni walks a mountain path high above the city. The day is perfect. A cool breeze blows through her hair, the sun shines gently upon her. It would be a wonderful scenario for one of her films.

She stops at a curve in the path and looks down at the city. Soldiers are marching in the streets. The quiet, peaceful, cobblestone streets are filled with brown shirts, saluting, and marching. She frowns at the sight. Then looking up at the mountain, she continues her climb to the top.

INT WORKROOM IN THE BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

Among the athletes working out in the stadium, Leni does her gymnastics. She hears in her head the music from a Herbert Windt score—one of the ballets she did in her youth. She moves with grace. Her workout clothes reveal the body of an athlete, with the smooth curves of a ballerina.

She turns and dips to the music. People gather in the stands, athletes stop their workouts to watch her. The audience pleases her and takes her back to performance.. She remembers the lights, the music, her beautiful costume, how she moved, soaring through the air. She lands on a point, then remembers the pain of her twisted knee all too well.

She collapses on landing. The people around her gasp.

LENI
Damn!
A small man in his mid-fifties rushes to her aid. She recognizes him as Carl Diehm, head of the International Olympic Committee, here to look over the stadium for the upcoming Olympic games.

CARL
You all right?

LENI
Physically, yes.

He helps her to her feet. The room breaks into applause.

CARL
You were doing so beautifully.

LENI
Until the end.

CARL
Even so, it's good to see you active again.

LENI
It feels good to dance again. My film work uses a whole different set of muscles.

CARL
You forgot about your knee?

LENI
It was so long ago. I told the doctors then it was only a sprain. It comes back to haunt me though. Brings back memories.

CARL
For me too. I was in the audience that night when it happened.

LENI
Really?

CARL
I saw you perform many times. You were always outstanding, but this night you were extra spectacular. You leapt high over everyone else. The dancers, the audience, the orchestra—even the set. I wondered if you would ever come down.

LENI
I should have stayed up there.
CARL
If you could have found a way, I'm sure you would have.
You floated down, like you were under water. Then when you touched, you buckled just a bit. (Leni grimaces remembering the pain). Everyone around me gasped. My heart stopped. Everything stopped. But you rose up, lifted yourself to your toes, and delicately left the stage. Even from the balcony I could see the tears streaming down your face. But you were smiling. The audience cheered your strength and courage. You were beautiful.

LENI
The pain was so intense, but I knew I could not give in. It still gives me trouble when it's cold, but I've learned to live with it. Have to avoid jumping and leaping, though. I forget I can't do it.
That night changed my whole life. The doctors told me I would never dance again. I was heart-broken, it was the only thing I ever wanted to do. Then when they told me they were going to send me away for extensive surgery, I was terrified. I wanted time to think. And escape. I wanted to be away from everyone, everything.

CARL
And so you went up to the mountains.

LENI
No, I went to the movies. And they took me to the mountains. The lights went down, the music swelled, and there it was, on a big, enormous screen, The Mountain of Destiny. Oh, what a film!

CARL
One of Fanck's?

LENI
I wrote him that night and told him what his film meant to me. How wonderful it was. And here I was, maybe never able to dance again. The next thing I knew, Dr. Fanck was at my bedside with a script he
had written just for me. He took me
to the mountains and he gave me a screen-
test. I'll never forget that day. I was
up higher than I had ever been before.
Way up in the clouds. Everything was
shiny and blue. And the cameraman was
possibly the most luscious piece of
man I had ever laid eyes on.

CARL
Hans Scheenberger?

LENI
No, it wasn't Hans. It was . . . now
who was that? Well, it doesn't matter.
(stands, looks around the stadium and
stretches) You know, I have always
thought of trying for athletic
certification for the Olympics.

CARL
You want a Gold medal to add to your
list of achievements?

LENI
What do you think my chances are?

CARL
With your knee? (laughs) You usually
get just about whatever you want.

LENI
Only because I deserve it.

CARL
In just less than a year, Leni, this
room will be filled with gymnasts and
weight lifters--athletes from all over
the world.

LENI
I hear you're in charge of the festivities.

CARL
That's right.

LENI
Congratulations.

CARL
I saw the Games in Los Angeles in 1932,
That was nothing compared to what ours will be. This is going to be a lavish event.

LENI
The Fuhrer wouldn't hear of anything less. All those strong, healthy bodies. Working together in motion. There is nothing more beautiful than physical strength.

CARL
I want you to film the event, Leni.

LENI
Me? No, thank you.

CARL
Why not?

LENI
Another documentary? No. Not me.

CARL
You did wonders with the Nuremberg Rally.

LENI
(firm)
I do not work for the Party, Carl.

CARL
I'm not here on behalf of the Party. This is the Olympic Games. You've always wanted to be in the Olympics. I see a film of spectacular proportions. A massive event. Like Nuremberg, but international.

LENI
It could be pretty incredible. What about funding?

CARL
It will be funded by the Olympic Commission. At worst, the person you'd have to answer to is me.

LENI
You say that now, Dr. Goebbels will have other plans.
CARL
I don't think you have to worry much about Dr. Goebbels. Besides, Hitler's on your side.

LENI
He does like me. Says I'm the perfect example of an Aryan woman. But . . .

CARL
What is it?

LENI
I don't know. Something is happening to him.

CARL
What do you mean?

LENI
I saw a very strange transformation come over him. It was . . . instantaneous. He really scared me for the first time. The man has never been anything but kind to me and the next thing I knew he was ordering me around like a mad man. He even gave me an ultimatum.

CARL
He's been under enormous stress.

LENI
It was like there was a demon inside that leapt out at me. At me! And that's not the worst part. I keep hearing things.

CARL
What things?

LENI
Just . . . different things.

CARL
What have you heard, Leni?

LENI
That there are places . . . labor camps. And they're more than just prisons. I also heard that black and Jewish athletes are going to be excluded from
the games. Is it true?

CARL
That would be going against the spirit of the games. They won't be excluded. Helene Mayer will be in the fencing competition. And Rudi Ball is on the ice hockey team.

LENI
Albert Speer keeps telling me I'm going to see and hear a lot of things I won't understand.

CARL
You will.

LENI
But that I should keep in mind that they know what they are doing and what is good for Germany.

CARL
He's absolutely right, Leni.

LENI
I don't want to get involved.

CARL
Then just keep making your films.

LENI
I just hate to see it affect Adolph so. He doesn't seem like the man he was.

CARL
Don't let it change your opinion of him.

LENI
Oh no, that could never happen. He supported me when I needed it. I will always support him. Besides, he's the Fuhrer. I think he's a good, kind man, but he surrounds himself with all these small, petty . . . gangsters.

CARL
You are privy to a side of the man that so few people have the opportunity to see.
Something a great number of people envy you for, Leni. You will hear things. Just take them for what they're worth. You know best.

LENI

Of course.

EXT OUTSIDE THE STADIUM--DAY

Leni walks Carl back to his car. He's still trying to talk her into making the film. She still says no, but is beginning to give in.

Carl

You don't think you can do it?

Leni

Oh, I know I can. Actually, I'm probably the only film maker in Germany who can pull it off. A massive event spread out over several days and nights in many different places all at the same time. It's got the makings of a Riefenstahl film. It shouldn't be a newsreel, promise me that, Carl. No, it has to capture the spirit, the emotion as well as the physical reality. It has to be a work of art to show that the body is a work of art. A beautiful, magnificent work of art.

Carl

Well, it's a big opportunity for someone. Triumph of the Will made you nationally known. This one would write your ticket all around the world. There hasn't been a successful attempt yet to record the games on film. Ever. This would be the first of its kind. And you know the Fuhrer wants it to be a ceremony of pagentry. But, if you're not interested... What is it you're working on now?

Leni

I'm trying to get a film version of Tiefland together.

Carl

Yes, Goebbels told me about you and your fairy-tales. I suppose I'll have to give him a call now.
LENI
And ask him to do the Olympic film?
Oh, my God, Carl, you've cut me to the quick! Please don't settle for Goebbels.
He will destroy it. He'll make the Olympic Games a lecture on morality by the People's Enlightenment and Propaganda. To him a body is something to be covered up and never discussed. I guarantee you, no one will want to see the film if he makes it.

CARL
Well, who then?

LENI
Let me think about it a day or two. I'll call up some old friends. Any of those who are still around. Oh, Eugen Rosenberg would be perfect, but he's a gaffer at Universal Pictures now.

CARL
He left for America?

LENI
Yes, missed a golden opportunity. Let me think on it. I'll find you someone.

CARL
Yes, you think on it.

She stands in the road and watches him as he drives off. Turning to walk back into the stadium, she stops and stares at it. She moves her head to catch different angles, then holds her hands out in front of her to better frame the picture.

INT HITLER'S OFFICE--DAY

As Leni enters the office, Hitler is in a heated debate with Speer, Goebbels and State Secretary Pfundtner. They all stand over a skeleton design of the stadium. No one, not even Leni, bats an eye to his tirade. They've seen it before--many times. Leni looks very formal and business-like, and she doesn't stand off in the background, she walks directly up to the group to stand among them. Hitler takes a moment out of his rantings to nod a smile to her. Speer turns and motions a hello, obviously happy to see her. She then looks at Goebbels who looks away.
HITLER
I will not step one foot in that . . . thing. I refuse! We might as well call the whole thing off. If Germany can't make an impression then I refuse to participate.

PFUNDTNER
But Mein Fuhrer--

SPEER
Mein Fuhrer, I'm sure Herr March will correct this for you--

HITLER
No, he will not correct it. You will correct it.

Me?

SPEER

HITLER
Yes, go home tonight and get to work. I expect a sketch of your plans tomorrow.

SPEER
Tomorrow!

HITLER
Tomorrow.

SPEER
But--

HITLER
I will not step into that glass booth! If I have to open the games, you will have to redesign. They can't open the games without the Chief of State, and if you do not do it, there will be no Olympics.

SPEER
Mein Fuhrer, begging your pardon, but you are being unreasonable.

HITLER
(tantrum)
This is important to me!
SPEER
Even if I could design the stands, the stadium does not have the right proportions for the Olympic Games.

HITLER
It doesn't matter. Don't you see? In 1940 the Games will be held in Tokyo. But thereafter, they will take place in Germany for all time to come. And then we will determine the measurements of athletic fields all over the world. And you, Speer, will build it for me.

SPEER
I cannot possibly design a stadium in one day.

HITLER
I have confidence in you, Speer.

SPEER
It takes time, inspiration. Fraulein Riefenstahl understands.

LENI
I'm sure being in the presence of the Fuhrer has been inspiration enough, Herr Speer.

Albert gives her a "thanks a lot" look, then gathers his things together and leaves. Pfundtner follows. For a moment, Leni, Hitler and Goebbels stand looking over the stadium design, then Leni and Hitler look over at Goebbels. He takes his cue, rolling his eyes, and stomps out of the room.

LENI
As before, I must have complete control.

EXT GREECE--EARLY MORNING
Leni pans her camera past the temples and ancient statues of Greece. She settles on a nude man standing in the position of Myron's famous statue of the discus thrower. He remains still for a moment, then comes to life as he slowly spins around and throws the discus.

EXT SAME
She moves from the discus thrower to the javelin thrower. then-
EXT  SAME

She films the shot-put thrower.

EXT  BEACH--DAY

In a large clearing on the beach, several nude dancers perform in the hot sun. Leni shoots several different angles of the dancers as they turn and bend gracefully. She pulls back her focus as--

EXT  SAME

A torch bearer runs down the beach holding the Olympic flame up high. He runs barefooted alongside the water followed by other marathon runners. Leni and Heinz Jaworsky follow alongside the runners in her black Mercedes convertible, driven by another crew member. Leni points angles and shots out to Heinz.

LENI
Did you get plenty of the dancers?

HEINZ
Yes, Leni, from every angle.

LENI
You're sure?

HEINZ
Yes, Leni. But I still don't understand what all this has to do with the Olympic Games.

LENI
Heinz, this is where it all began.

HEINZ
Goebbels is going to have a fit when he sees the nude dancers.

LENI
That's why he's not going to see it until it's shown in the theatre. (points out a shot) Get that background!

They drive through the herd of runner. Leni looks them all over appreciatively, noting their muscles and legs, and the great ease with which they move. Among the group she sees a blonde runner. He is the epitome Greek Adonnais-type. She studies his tan, his muscular build, his handsome face.
LENI
Heinz, get a shot of that one.

Heinz looks up from his camera at the runner, then turns his camera to him and focuses.

HEINZ
How much?

LENI
Until I say stop.

HEINZ
Why?

LENI
He's gorgeous. I want his every move.

HEINZ
You sure?

LENI
Don't miss a movement. He's got the face of a Greek god.

EXT  BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

Arriving at the Berlin Stadium after shooting in Greece, Leni reclines in the back seat of her car drinking a cool drink. Next to her is the same tanned runner, wearing a nice new suit. Jaworsky sits up front next to the driver. Three of her cameramen, Leo, Otto and Georg wait for them outside the entrance of the stadium. As they stop, Heinz gets out to unload, Leni stands inside the car and talks with the crew.

LENI
What are you doing out here?

LEO
We can't get in.

LENI
Why not?

LEO
All the press and film crews have passes. we don't.

LENI
Where'd they get the passes?
LEO, OTTO, GEORG  
(together)  
Goebbels.

LENI  
Did you talk to Carl?

LEO  
No.

LENI  
Damn it, Leo, why not?

LEO  
You know these people better than we do.

LENI  
Have you at least looked over the site?

LEO  
No, we decided not to do anything until you got back.

LENI  
What in God's name for? I didn't hire the best crew in Germany to spoon feed you. Now if you're not going to cooperate, I won't waste time with you, so quit now. Got it? Where's the sound camera?

LEO  
Goebbels confiscated it.

LENI  
Why?

LEO  
He said the noise would distract the runners.

LENI  
What does he know?

LEO  
He's the boss.

LENI  
I'm the boss! You got that? Now, get it back.
LEO

How?

LENI

I don't care! Just get it back! I'm going to keep that camera if I have to sit on it.

She looks at each man individually. They look around at each other and down at the ground. Heinz closes the trunk after unloading.

LENI

Now, I've got some business to take care of, and I've got to get Anatole settled. Walk around, at least get a feel for the place. Do something! I'll be back later.

She sits in the car and commands the driver on. The crew stands and watches her drive off.

OTTO

(sarcastic)
Yes, Ma'am!

LEO

Your highness is more like it.

HEINZ

Stop it, Leo. She hasn't had much rest.

GEORG

Well, I see she has a little side interest now. Maybe she won't be so temperamental.

LEO

You think our fearless leader is embarking on a love affair?

GEORG

Guess things smoldered with her and her sugar daddy Adolph.

HEINZ

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

OTTO

Come off it, Heinz, how else would
she have gotten this cushy commission.
Everyone knows they're having an affair.

HEINZ
No, everyone doesn't. Leni's right.
If you're not going to cooperate you'd better quit now. Save us all a lot of trouble.

He turns and walks away from them.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

The ceremonies begin. Leni and her cameramen set up in various spots throughout the stadium. The Hindenburg flies overhead with Heinz inside filming overhead shots. Throughout the ceremonies, Leni wears her famous white raincoat again. Stuffed in the huge pockets are notebooks that she periodically refers to, and around her neck are cords and light meters. Surrounding her are her crew members, all wearing black raincoats. Whereas during the filming of Triumph of the Will, they wore the uniforms to fit in the crowd, she is determined to make them all stand out now. She is more of a celebrity than a good many of the athletes in this production, and she is enjoying her preferred status.

EXT OUTSIDE THE STADIUM--SAME DAY

Outside the stadium a long train of black Mercedes convertibles pulls up. Hitler steps out of the first one dressed in a brown SA uniform and high black leather boots. He stands at attention, gives the Nazi salute and then enters the stadium, smiling at Leni as he passes.

Following him are the King of Bulgaria, crown princes of several different European countries, Mussolini's sons, and finally, Goebbels, wearing his usual white suit. As he enters the stadium, he is all smiles, pomp and circumstance at the excitement and majesty. He turns and sees Leni standing next to the camera man. She salutes, then breaks the salute into a wave in an act coy sarcasm, knowing he has tried to block her entrance and the sight of her is an unpleasant surprise. His smile fades and he turns away.

EXT INSIDE THE STADIUM--SAME DAY

The dignitaries take their places in the stands, and the athletes march into the stadium and past the Tribune of Honor. As the countries march by some give Hitler the Nazi salute, others dip their flags in respect. The United States team passes and does neither, an action Hitler frowns upon.
After the march has passed, Hitler stands to give the opening announcement.

HITLER
I announce that the Games of Berlin are open, celebrating the eleventh Olympiad of the modern era.

The crowd cheers and the trumpets blare. A young runner bearing the Olympic torch enters the stadium. He runs up the steps to the marble dais and dips the torch into the brazier. Leni points out the shot to Leo and through his camera he catches the silhouette of the flame as it blazes up against the sun. Leni smiles at the sight and at the beginning of the games.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

Gisela Mauermayer, discus thrower for the German team spins slowly around before throwing the discus. Leni stands behind cameraman Hans Ertl, holding a reflector to cast some light on Gisela's graceful body. Leni bends down to Hans.

LENI
Overcrank the camera. I want this in slow motion.

Hitler watches the tense moment from his seat. Gisela spins around, then thrusts the discus into the sky. The audience cheers. Hitler smiles and slaps his knee with his hand. Leni watches him from below.

LENI
(to Hans)
Catch his reaction.

ANNOUNCER
The winner at 156 feet, 3 and 3/16 inches, Gisela Mauermayer, Germany.

Hitler beams with pride. Leni sets down her reflector and runs to shake Gisela's hand.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

The women's 440-relay begins. The women line up at the starting point, stretching and warming up. The moment is very tense.

WALTER
The 440?
LENI
Our women's team is dominating the track and field competitions. We're sure to win this one.

Ilse Dorffeldt, of the German team, steps up to the starting line, breathing heavily. The gun sounds and the race begins with Dorffeldt far in the lead. The crowd begins cheering. Walter follows her with the camera as Leni bounces up and down in excitement. Alongside the track, an automatic camera is led with a pulley to catch the runners in motion.

At the final exchange of the relay, Dorffeldt, maintaining the lead over the American contender, suddenly stops, staggering stiffly. She hides her head in shame and disgust and she shrieks with agony.

WALTER
What happened?

LENI
(moaning with stunned disgust and disappointment)
She dropped her baton!

Walter looks up at the stands at Hitler.

WALTER
My god, look at that!

Hitler glares at Dorffeldt with a frozen, horrifying frown.

LENI
Get the reaction.

WALTER
Her head will be presented on a silver platter tomorrow.

They watch as Hitler turns to discuss the event with Goebbels sitting next to him. He is apparently very angry and distraught.

WALTER
What a bad sport!

LENI
He wants to win.

EXT AQUATIC SPORTS COMPLEX--DAY

Leni stands with Hans at the ladder of a high diving board.
Dressed in a wetsuit, he gathers all his equipment together and Leni helps him strap it on. She pulls her notebook out of her pocket.

LENI
Now remember, just like we practiced it. You dive down with the diver. Keep shooting when you hit the water and change your focus when you hit the bottom.

HANS
Don't worry, Leni. You made me practice thirty times.

LENI
This could be a wonderful effect if it works.

HANS
I'll get it for you.

LENI
Just don't get so confident you blow it.

HANS
Kiss for luck?

LENI
The things I do for art. (kisses him)

He climbs to the top of the ladder and focuses on the diver. The diver stands in position. Hans takes a deep breath with the diver, concentrating on his every move. Then they both simultaneously fall to the water. Hans follows the diver down to the bottom, then sits and changes his focus quickly to follow the diver back to the top. Leni waits for him at the surface.

LENI
Well?

HANS
Simple.

LENI
How did the camera casing hold?

HANS
Worked beautifully.
EXT AQUATIC SPORTS COMPLEX--DAY

Leni sits in a rubber raft with Hans. The swimmers take their marks and prepare to jump in for the swimming competition. The gun fires and the swimmers jump into the water. Leni runs the camera which is attached to a frame on the side of the raft--eye level with the swimmers--so she can get a close-up of their faces. Hans pushes the raft along with a pole so as not to cause any extra waves in the pool.

EXT ATHLETIC FIELD--DAY

Hundreds and thousands of athletes do push-ups and various warm-up exercises before the day's events. Leni captures this from high atop a lookout tower. She fills the frame completely with the tiny bodies, all working in unison.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

Leni attaches a camera onto a large rubber bag of feathers. Guzzi Lantschner rides up to her on his horse, camera propped on his shoulder.

GUZZI
What are you doing?

LENI
When we did the test shot there was too much vibration. This should soothe it some. Now, you run alongside with the runners.

GUZZI
I don't understand.

LENI
Guzzi, we've got camera right angle and left angle. Shots from behind and in front of. We've got every point of view but the riders point of view.

GUZZI
We're watching the event. Why do we need the rider's point of view?

LENI
To make the audience feel like they are there.

GUZZI
You sure this will work?
Sure. Maybe. Maybe not. Won't hurt to try. It's just costing us a few hundred meters of film.

She finishes strapping the camera and rubber pillow to the horse's saddle. As she hands the reins to Guzzi, she feeds the horse a sugar cube and strokes his nose. She looks up at the sky.

LENI
There's only one thing bothering me.

GUZZI
Just one?

LENI
(looks through her notebook)
Well, I've strapped cameras onto horses and rafts. Had them dive with divers and run with runners. I need a good, overhead, moving shot of the crowd and the stadium. The shots Heinz took from the Hindenberg just won't do.

GUZZI
No?

LENI
Just a bunch of boring pan shots. I need soaring, gliding movements.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY
Leni sets a small automatic camera gently down into a little balloon basket. She looks at the other two balloons and smiles, very proud of herself for thinking of this. She winds up another camera.

LENI
Now Walter, do not release these until after the race begins.

Anatole, her young, beautiful runner, approaches her with a sandwich.

WALTER
Leni--

LENI
What?
ANATOLE

Leni--

WALTER
You're going to catch hell for this.

LENI
Why?

ANATOLE
Leni--

LENI
(annoyed)
What!

He jabs the sandwich at her. She shakes her head and turns back to Walter.

LENI
Why?

Anatole protests in his very thick, rapid Italian. Leni tries to ignore him.

LENI
(as if to a pest)
Go away!

WALTER
I just think it's a bit excessive.

LENI
I've thought it all out.

ANATOLE
You have not eaten all day.

LENI
Anatole, I'm working here.

ANATOLE
But, Leni darling--

LENI
Anatole, when I am working, don't shove food in my face and don't call me darling!

ANATOLE
But, Leni--
LENI
All right! (Grabs the sandwich and takes a large bite) Happy?

He turns away, rolling his eyes. Leni watches him leave, then stuffs the sandwich in her pocket.

LENI
Remind me to get that kid a job or something, he's becoming a real pest. Now, what's your problem?

WALTER
Have you spoken to the Olympic committee about this?

LENI
About what?

WALTER
Balloons!

LENI
No!

WALTER
Why not?

LENI
What could they possibly find wrong with a few balloons?

WALTER
They're going to be mad, Leni.

LENI
You just have to know how to talk to these people.

INT CARL DIEHM'S OFFICE--DAY

Leni sits in Carl's office, curious as to why she has been asked here. A bit rushed to get back to work, she still wears her raincoat with stuffed pockets and cords around her neck.

Carl looks over the list of expenses she has made, not happy with the excessive amount. Leni sits and stares at him wide-eyed. Throughout the conversation she is unbelievably coy, thinking the way to get what she wants is the little girl method.

CARL
Balloons?
LENI

Yes sir.

CARL

You set three balloons with cameras inside--

LENI

Automatic cameras.

CARL

--automatic cameras--you set them loose, free to fly all over Germany?

LENI

One of them just hovered over the stadium.

CARL

Leni... what were you thinking about when you did this... and how do you expect to get the cameras back?

LENI

Oh, I thought of that. We ran ads in the paper everyday, so people would know when the balloons came down where to return them.

Carl puts his head in his hands.

CARL

And have you gotten these cameras back?

LENI

Of course.

CARL

Good.

LENI

I never doubted--

CARL

(raises his head)

How much film was shot?

LENI

A few thousand meters.

CARL

How much of it can be used?
LENI
About ten.

CARL
Ten meters?

LENI
But they were ten beautiful meters.

Carl puts his head in his hands again. He shakes his head, moaning, then looks up at her.

CARL
One more thing. (thumbs through the papers on his desk) Is there any reason why you've ordered so much film from so many different companies?

LENI
I find experimentation essential.

CARL
Which stock are you going to use?

LENI
All of them.

CARL
All of them?

LENI
I have found that Kodak takes very good pictures of people's faces and bodies, but I've also found that Agfa is best for buildings . . . (she stops, noticing the look of dismay on Carl's face) I won't sacrifice quality for a low budget.

CARL
Can you just hold it down a bit?

LENI
Carl, you said yourself, a successful film about the Olympic Games has never been made. 'The first of its kind', I believe your words were. Now, Dr. Fanck made an attempt awhile back which was a commercial failure. Mine will pay off.

Carl knows she is probably right, the film will be a success
because Leni will make it a success. But he also knows that he has orders from higher up.

CARL
I'm vetoing the balloons.

Leni gives a small whine, like a child whose toy has been taken away.

CARL
I'm sorry, Leni, but you are going to have to start submitting some vouchers for the remainder of this project.

LENI
Vouchers? Carl, I am not a businesswoman. I can't figure out things like that.

CARL
Goebbels' orders.

LENI
(becoming herself again)
Goebbels?

CARL
It's time for you to become a businesswoman, Leni. This is serious. Now it's not hard to do. I would be more than happy to work privately with you if--

LENI
(annoyed, the mask is off)
Don't talk down to me, Carl.

CARL
(realizing her game)
Goebbels has been trying to cut off your funds for a long time now.

LENI
I thought the worst person I'd have to answer to was you. I thought I was working for the Olympic Committee.

CARL
At this time the Olympic Committee is run by Germany and the People's Enlightenment and Propaganda.
LENI
(recites with him)
. . . Enlightenment and Propaganda.
Oh, Carl. I knew he would make his presence known. It was all going too well.

CARL
Now the funding--

LENI
I don't want to know! I don't care where the money comes from. Adolph Hitler wants a great Olympic film, he shall have it. You just tell that to the Propaganda Minister.

INT  CONFERENCE ROOM--NIGHT

Leni and her crew view the rushes of the film up to this point of shooting. It is very late, everyone is very tired after working all day and watching hours and hours of film, but they all study it quietly. If anyone dares make a sound, Leni shushes him immediately. The film ends and she turns on the lights.

LENI
(to her personal, male secretary)
Rewind it, please.

she takes a seat and glances over her notes.

LENI
Overall, I'd say it's going well. I'm very pleased.

HEINZ
You going to keep it straight, newsreel fashion?

LENI
Lord no. It's going to take days to put some life into those events. I don't know (thinks a second), I may have to reshoot that pole vaulting scene in the studio. I didn't like how it turned out.

HEINZ
Reshoot?
LENI
We might have to. The lighting is crummy.

HEINZ
But it’s already over.

LENI
I don’t think the athletes will mind doing it again.

HEINZ
(protesting)
Leni!

LENI
Well I won’t change the ending.
What’s the problem?

HEINZ
I don’t know. It’s sounds so unorthodox.

LENI
Great, my daily morals lesson.

HEINZ
Well, it’s definitely unconventional.

LENI
No, it’s not. Documentarists do it all the time. If we do it right, no one will know the difference.

HEINZ
Well, I don’t like it.

LENI
Well, you don’t have to.

She sits up suddenly, noticing a crew member who has fallen asleep at the end of the table. She throws a pen at him. He jolts awake.

LENI
(pounds the table)
Hey! In three weeks you can sleep—-not till then! (to her secretary) What’s on the schedule for tomorrow? (looks over the list) The marathon, the 200 meter—ah, the grueling events. Does everyone remember your assigned camera placements?
(sees no response, everyone looks around. She raises her eyebrows, mildly threatening)
You'd better! Remember your places, your film stocks, your lenses. Remember we can't guess what will happen and there's no such thing as take two (to Heinz)
Unless I say so. Shoot every single shot as if it may be the highlight of the film. Use your best judgement, I trust your instinct, but I also have the final word.

She looks around the table at each one of them.

LENI
I'll see you tomorrow.

The crew stands and leaves. She takes the reel off the projector, puts it in the can and marks it with the amount of footage and the date. She takes it down the hall to her editing room to file. Her editing room is a huge, immaculately clean and organized room full of glass partitions and equipment. She sets the can gingerly onto the stack of cans already there, then stops and looks around the room. She's very proud of her editing room, and she knows it will soon be her home away from home.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

Leni and Walter set up the cameras for the 220-yard dash. The male athletes warm up nearby in the cold, rainy weather. A crowd of onlookers gather around the camera set-up.

WALTER
You're getting to be as popular as the athletes.

LENI
(loving the attention)
You really think so?

She looks around at all the male athletes around her warming up and stretching. She smiles at their strong bodies and muscles shimmering in the sunlight.

LENI
Now this is the part I like.

She wanders away from the camera and observes the warm-up. She watches awhile, then turns back to Walter.
LENI
Get some shots of them getting ready. I want everything on record. Their nerves, their tiny beads of sweat, their muscles and . . . just get some shots of their bodies.

She wanders among the runners and stops when she comes upon the American contender, Jesse Owens. He is a very young, handsome, strong, black athlete. He grins at Leni when he notices the interest she is taking in him. Walter approaches her with his camera.

LENI
(not taking her eyes off Owens)
Now here is the perfect example of a male body.

WALTER
(taken aback both by Leni's enthusiasm and Jesse's color)
Him?

LENI
So strong . . . so . . . get a lot of him.

WALTER
But Leni, he's . . . he's . . .

LENI
Perfect.

Runners get into place as the race begins. The gun fires and they are off. Leni watches from the side as Owens takes the lead with enormous ease. As he runs the final 220 meters around a curve to the finish line, finishing first, she jumps with excitement.

LENI
(to Walter)
Please tell me you got all of that!

WALTER
Got it!

She jumps up and down, applauding with the rest of the cheering crowd.

LENI
I knew he was a sure winner!
ANNOUNCER
A triple winner! Jesse Owens coming in first at 20.3 seconds, breaking Eddie Tolan's record of 21.2!

Leni runs up and congratulates Owens. She runs back to Walter after the announcement.

LENI
Did he say triple winner?

WALTER
Yeah, I think he won the 100-meter and--

LENI
The broad jump, right? Did we get it all?

WALTER
Yes ma'am.

LENI
We might just have a star for this film after all.

EXT BERLIN STADIUM--DAY

At the winners' circle, Owens stands beside Robinson and Osendarp to receive his Gold medal. He salutes as the band plays the National Anthem. During the anthem, Leni smiles at the solemnity with which Owens stands. Hitler frowns at the victory and the man. He leaves the stands in disgust, thinking the Americans should be ashamed of this non-Aryan contender.

As the anthem ends, Leni walks up to shake Owens' hand again. He is genuinely pleased with the attention she is taking to him. Walter records it all on film.

LENI
(to Walter)
Get reaction shots.

Walter sets up and aims his camera into the stands. He looks up for a second, puzzled. Then looks around.

WALTER
Where's Hitler?

LENI
Right up-- (points up into the crowd and sees he is gone). Get the rest of the crowd.
INT  LENI'S EDITING ROOM--NIGHT

Leni sits in the darkness of her editing room with the light of the film from her viewing machine flickering on her face. She stares into the screen wide-eyed, completely absorbed by the images. Occasionally she grins proudly at a particular shot or camera movement, and makes a notation in her log book. Her work is interrupted by a light tap on the door. She tosses the log book on her table, and rolling her eyes at the annoyance, answers the door.

Hans Scheenberger stands in the doorway smiling. She smiles and embraces him.

LENI
Hans! It's so good to see you. Shame on you for running off to do a movie with someone else right in the middle of my film.

HANS
I did your diving sequence.

LENI
But you left me without a cameraman.

HANS
I heard you had several. And what happened to your cute little Greek God?

LENI
(laughs)
Poor boy, thought I was crazy.

Hans laughs and hugs her, then looks at her editing table and the incredible amount of footage surrounding them.

HANS
I see you're still spending your evenings in the same exciting way.

LENI
My favorite way. (she kisses him, then moves back to her table) Listen, I thought Triumph of the Will was a challenge. I've got over 400,000 meters of film here. It took me ten days just to look at all the footage we took.
HANS
It's going to be a very long film.

LENI
I'm thinking, actually, of making two feature-length films instead of one enormous product.

HANS
It looks like you've got it all under control. Still disgustingly organized.

LENI
I have to be.

HANS
You're doing this alone?

LENI
I've got people splicing and filing, but there is no way I'm going to let just anybody do the actual piecing together. I know what I want, I just am not quite sure how to get it.

HANS
No script?

LENI
No. I didn't even try to write one. I realized pretty early on that this is a film to be created in the editing room.

She runs some film through the viewfinder.

LENI
I've got some wonderful effects. Let me show you how I did the diving sequences.

HANS
Wait a second, rewind that a bit.

She rewinds it to the shots of the nude dancers.

HANS
Has Goebbels seen this yet?

LENI
No. Nobody touches this film until I am done with it. And only then to show it.
He looks at the film and smiles.

HANS
It's really beautiful, Leni.

LENI
They symbolize the ancient Greek temple dancers. The keeper of the flame. Watch.

She runs it through slowly, and Hans watches as one of the dancers dissolves into the next shot of the flame of the Olympic torch.

HANS
(awestruck)
Nice.

She runs the film through until she reaches the diving sequence.

LENI
I started on this one last night. The idea just came to me. I was up all night cutting it just right.

The diver stands in position on the board, makes his approach and jumps. At the moment he is suspended in air, other bodies one by one appear silhouetted against the sky. In slow motion they glide down to the water and then the speed of the film increases as the last diver falls through the water and then gracefully arcs his way to the top.

Hans' mouth hangs open as he watches the sequence. As it ends, he grins at Leni. She smiles at him, proudly.

HANS
Leni, it's beautiful.

LENI
Thank you. It was so simple when I figured out how I wanted to do it. I can't wait to see it with the music behind it.

HANS
Well, I think you've met your match, Leni. Your life.

LENI
I think so too, Hans. I love it.
HANS
You're going to be a very lonely woman.

LENI
Oh, no, I don't think so. It's what I love to do. And I don't mind spending days and nights in this beautiful room with my work to keep me company. It's not a life marriage would tolerate, but then, I'm not the type who would tolerate marriage. (she smiles at him again) So, how was working with Dr. Fanck again?

FANCK
He's kept me busy. I tell you, what I did love working on this last film, Ernst Udet taught me how to fly.

LENI
Really? I've always wanted him to teach me.

HANS
It's beautiful up there, Leni. You'd love it. It's like skiing, only better . . . you're up there, suspended from the world. Like your divers. I tell you, the temptation to fly away--to just be up in the air and keep right on going--

LENI
You wouldn't . . . really leave here, Hans.

HANS
I'm thinking about it, Leni.

LENI
Hans, no.

HANS
Leni, the situation here is getting out of hand.

LENI
Where would you go?

HANS
America.
LENI
Do you know how many Germans go to America a week? And how many come back because they can't find work there? You've got a good position here. Why trade it for a mediocre job over there?

HANS
Leni, the situation here--

LENI
(turning abruptly back to her film, cutting him off)
I don't want to hear about it.

HANS
Leni, you've got to.

LENI
Not interested.

HANS
Leni, I don't know how you can keep doing this with your eyes closed.

LENI
My eyes are not closed.

HANS
To what you want to see.

LENI
That's enough, Hans.

The door flies open sending a huge beam of light into the dark room. Goebbels stands in the doorway.

LENI
I knew I was in for another intrusion. How fitting it would be you.

GOEBBELS
I must speak with you, Fraulein.

He stares at Hans, who stands to leave.

HANS
Just remember when you're staring through that lens, there's a whole other world that doesn't quite fit
in the frame. (looks at Goebbels, then back to Leni) I'll be in touch. Don't chain yourself to that machine.

LENI
Good bye, Hans.

He closes the door behind him. She looks at Goebbels a second then resumes her work.

LENI
You don't mind if I work while we talk? I have a lot of footage to view.

GOEBBELS
Fraulein--

LENI
Just tell me one thing. What right have you to barge into my editing room and throwing--

GOEBBELS
I have every right. It is for the good of the film.

LENI
I'll be the judge of that.

GOEBBELS
I couldn't help but notice at the games, you seemed rather impressed with the American contender, Owens.

LENI
He was rather impressive.

GOEBBELS
Are you intending to include him in the film?

LENI
I don't see how I could make a film about the 1936 Olympics and leave him out. He did win three events, or didn't you notice?

GOEBBELS
If you don't cut him out altogether, I think it would be for the good of the film--
LENI
What are you saying?

GOEBBELS
Just listen to me, Fraulein.

LENI
You want me to treat him like just another athlete, don't you? No. He's not just another athlete. I will give him the coverage he deserves.

GOEBBELS
He's not an Aryan, Fraulein.

LENI
So? He's a triple winner.

GOEBBELS
For the good of the Party--

LENI
This is not about the Party! This is a film about some damned good athletes competing together as a whole. It I were to leave out Jesse Owens, it would defeat the entire purpose of the film.

GOEBBELS
The Fuhrer wished for these Olympic games to show the pure race. The German race, and how strong we are, and how no one can defeat us.

LENI
I've got news for you, Dr. Goebbels, we lost the games. Now if Hitler wants to show superiority of the German people, he's got another film in mind. I show it as I see it.

GOEBBELS
For the last time, as Propaganda Chief, I order you to eliminate any footage you intend to use on Jesse Owens.

LENI
For the last time, no.

GOEBBELS
You leave me no choice. I will place
immediate sanctions on this film!
Your funds will be cut off!

LENI
That comes as no surprise, Dr. Goebbels. You've tried to do that all along.

GOEBBELS
Your film will not be released.

LENI
You think so? I'll tell you something, I've only just begun to edit and I can tell already, this is going to be the best film I've ever done. You think the Fuhrer won't show it off to the rest of the world? You want to talk about German superiority, it's right here.

He looks at her, then at the viewer with the film flickering through.

LENI
Now, if you will excuse me, I have a film to complete.

She turns and begins editing again. Goebbels stands behind watching her, then turns and leaves the room. As the door closes, Leni leans forward in her chair and buries her head in her hands.

INT     EDITING ROOM--DAY

Leni continues to hermit herself from the rest of the world while she edits her film. During this time, several events occur in her country of which she is not aware.

EXT     STREETS OF AUSTRIA--DAY

In the streets of Austria, German soldiers march in. Swastika banners appear and badges are sold on the streets. Street demonstrations occur and the Nazis storm the Town Hall and fly the swastika flag.

While--

INT     EDITING ROOM--NIGHT

Leni sits in the dark by her editing machine, her face illuminated by the light through her viewfinder. She hangs long strips of film onto the glass partitions, letting them hang down to the
floor. Her face is tired, but content.

While--

EXT  TOWN HALL, AUSTRIA--DAY

Hitler addresses the people in the newly invaded Austria.

HITLER

Years ago, I went forth from this
town--I bore with me precisely the
same profession of faith which today
fills my heart . . . to restore my
dear homeland, Austria, to the German
Reich. I have believed in this mission,
I have lived and fought for it and
I believe I have now fulfilled it.

While--

INT  EDITING ROOM--NIGHT

Leni files and catalogues her film. She sits at the viewer
and runs a scene through. Then she runs it through again.
Then again. She tries it in different speeds, different rhythms.
She is a woman obsessed, and with great patience, not cutting
or splicing until she has it just exactly right.

While--

EXT  TOWN HALL--DAY

Hitler continues speaking to the troops.

HITLER

One day the world will have to
pay attention to our demands!

Soldiers march in the streets, saluting as they pass Hitler,
who stands in his car overlooking the men. Throughout the streets
the Nazi theme, "Horst Wessel Lied" is sung.

INT  EDITING ROOM--NIGHT

Late in the evening, Leni continues her work. She takes a
moment to yawn and stretch, but always resumes her position at
the editing table over her massive footage of film. There's
an abrupt bang on the door and Hans and Heinz walk in. The
light streaming in from the hall blinds her.
HANS
This is your lucky night, Fraulein Recluse. We two gorgeous men are here to take you out for a night on the town.

Leni leans back in her chair and laughs, rubbing her tired eyes. Heinz spins her chair around and wheels it about the room.

HEINZ
It will be a night of dining, dancing, merriment for all.

LENI
(laughs)
My lucky night. Really?

He stops wheeling her about and spins the chair around to face him. She smiles at the two men, then shakes her head.

LENI
No, thank you.

HEINZ
Why not?

LENI
I've got a lot of work to do.

HANS
Leni--

LENI
Got to finish, You know that.

HEINZ
We thought we could take you out for a little dinner and maybe take in a movie.

LENI
A movie? You mean there are other people out there in this crazy business?

HANS
Come on, Leni. We're getting a little worried about you. You know what people are saying about you in here at night all by yourself?

LENI
The day I start worrying about what other people are saying about me, is the
They look at her forlornly. Sad that she won't go out with them and genuinely worried about her.

LENI
Really, thank you for your concern, but I'm all right.

HANS
Leni, it's been a whole year now. How long can you edit a film?

LENI
With this much footage? A long time. And I've got a long way to go still.

HANS
But so much has been happening. There's a whole other world out there.

LENI
I'm sure there is, Hans. And I'm sure it would please you to no end to tell me all about it. You know I could rush it if I wanted to, but it wouldn't be the best then would it?

HEINZ
I take it, then, the answer is no.

LENI
All personal life is temporarily put on hold.

HEINZ
Somehow, we suspected as much.

HANS
(hands her a sandwich in a paper bag)
Here. You shouldn't edit athletes undernourished. And here (hands her a newspaper). In case you forgot what the world is like out there.

LENI
You are both very dear. (she kisses both of them) Thank you. Now get out of here.
Heinz leaves. Hans lingers in the doorway awhile looking at her. He is very concerned.

LENI
(anxious to get back to work)
Bye now.

He leaves. She walks over to the doorway and stands in the hallway watching them as they walk down the hall. She pulls the sandwich out of her bag and takes a bite. She walks back in and closes the door, glancing at the newspaper. She takes another bite of her sandwich, tosses the newspaper in the waste-basket and gets back to work.

INT EDITING ROOM--NIGHT

Leni puts the finishing touches on the final edit of Olympia. The last shot is another of her famous flag shots, with the flags of all the participating countries billowing in the wind side by side. Slowly the shot dissolves into the final shot of the film--the Olympic flag. Leni looks at this sequence of shots proudly, then sits back in her chair and muses her achievement.

EXT UFA-PALAST-AM-ZOO--NIGHT

Leni's name appears in big letters above the marquee with the titles Olympia: Festival of the People and Festival of the Nations. The crowd gathers outside the theatre awaiting the arrival of the stars.

Leni steps out of the mercedes to greet the cheering crowd. Alone this time, she's not as bubbly as she was before. She's a professional director and business woman now, and is more serious than she was for the premiere of Triumph of the Will. She acknowledges the crowd and walks into the theatre lobby.

INT THEATRE LOBBY--SAME NIGHT

The crowd parts as Leni enters the theatre walking straight to Adolph Hitler. She takes his hand.

LENI
Happy birthday, Mein Fuhrer.

Photographers surround them and take pictures.

HITLER
You have presented me with the perfect gift. You've been away for awhile.
LENI
Working on your perfect gift, yes.
I hear you had a nice little success in Austria.

HITLER
Yes.

LENI
Congratulations.

HITLER
Thank you.

The theatre lights flicker indicating the show is about to begin. Hitler extends his arm and Leni takes it as they head for the theatre, smiling and waving at photographers. The sea of smiling, praising onlookers is interrupted by the frowning Goebbels. Leni blows him a kiss, waves and walks into the theatre.

EXT   LENI'S HOME OUTSIDE OF BERLIN--DAY

Leni and Hans sit on the deck of her home overlooking the mountains. Looking over several different newspapers, Hans rattles off a list of the many honors Leni has received from Olympia. Leni glows at the thought of world success, feeling at last that the whole world is in the palm of her hand. Almost the whole world.

HANS
The Grand Prix in Paris, the International Festival in Venice. World's Best Film of 1938. I'm impressed.

LENI
Don't forget the award by the Olympic Committee.

HANS
You got your gold medal?

LENI
Well, no, it's a certificate. But it's the equivalent of a Gold medal.

HANS
You've finally done it, Leni.

LENI
Oh, and did I tell you about the
letter I received this morning
from the Russian Ambassador? Stalin
loved the film. He wants me to visit
Moscow at once.

HANS
Making films for Stalin now?

LENI
He might ask.

HANS
What about the Winter Olympics, you doing
that too?

LENI
No. Even if I wanted to, Goebbels
got to it first. He wants it to be
done by a party member. So he's going
to take all the qualities I instituted
and all the techniques which I developed
and turn them into one big mess. I
guarantee, it's going to be an awful
film.

HANS
I still don't understand how you got
the financing for this film.

LENI
What's to understand?

HANS
I thought Goebbels put sanctions on
it. Cut you off.

LENI
He did.

HANS
Then how--

LENI
Hans, don't worry about it.

HANS
The whole thing is very fuzzy.

LENI
Leave it that way. What I don't know
won't hurt me.
HANS
But Goebbels--

LENI
Hans, please. It's a beautiful day. Let's not discuss that horrible little man. Slimy, disgusting, little man.

HANS
Why, Leni, I think you're in love with him.

LENI
Hans, don't even joke about that!

HANS
Rumor has it the two of you are having an affair.

LENI
What?!

HANS
But then, rumor has it you're having an affair with Adolph Hitler, too. But then, rumor has it you're sleeping with half the Third Reich.

LENI
What kind of an idiot do people think I am?

HANS
A very active one.

LENI
People who spread rumors like that just don't understand my position.

HANS
I think they understand your position pretty well.

LENI
That's not funny, Hans. They think the only way I could have come this far was to sleep my way to the top. Oh, the implications just make my skin crawl!

HANS
It's not true is it? About you and Hitler?
LENI
Don't be crazy, Hans. Of course it's not true. Hitler wouldn't consider me for a mistress anyway. I'm too loud, too public—he doesn't care much for strong women. He likes soft, cowlike women like Eva Braun.

HANS
Ah, the Mystery woman of the third Reich.

LENI
He wants someone who he can hide away in a house up on a mountain. Who never argues and is never seen in public. I wouldn't stand for an arrangement like that.

HANS
I can imagine you wouldn't.

LENI
I think he thinks it makes him look weak to actually be seen with a woman he cares about. It's silly.

HANS
The rumors probably got started because you're seen in public with him so much.

LENI
It's really not that much. I know very little about the man.

HANS
If you've read Mein Kampf you know all you need to know. (Leni is silent) You have read Mein Kampf haven't you? (Leni remains silent) Haven't you? Leni?

LENI
Well, I started it. But I just couldn't get through it. It was terribly tedious. It's lucky for him he's a better performer than he is a writer.

She stretches back in her chair.

LENI
So good to be outside again.
HANS
Are we going back to Tiefland again?

LENI
Soon as I get back.

HANS
Where are you going?

LENI
America.

HANS
Good God, why?

LENI
Would you believe Olympia has won all these wonderful awards and it hasn't even been released there yet? It's been previewed and as far as I know, was very well received. So I'm going to see what the problem is.

HANS
What can you do?

LENI
You know how persuasive I can be. And since I'm a businesswoman now, I'll just have to go and distribute and promote myself. Maybe even call up a few old friends while I'm there.

HANS
I don't think that's such a good idea, Leni.

LENI
I think it is.

HANS
Somehow I just don't think the American people will share in your non-interest of certain things.

LENI
Such as?

HANS
Politics.
LENI
I'm just going to distribute my film.

HANS
Still, they are liable to ask all kinds of questions. Many of which I'm sure you're not going to be able to answer. American people . . . I don't know . . . they speak their minds rather freely.

LENI
And I'll tell them honestly what I do and don't know. Besides, I won't be around people like that. I'll be with fellow film makers, actors, artists who understand my work. Besides, my film can speak for itself.

HANS
I don't even think you can get out of the country right now. Citizens aren't allowed to leave without approval of the government.

LENI
Nonsense, Hitler thinks it's a wonderful idea.

EXT  EUROPA LINER--DAY

Leni waves from the deck to Hans. He stands staring at her, hands jammed in his pockets, very worried about her. He knows she is unaware of what she is going into. He knows her trip will be an eventful one, but not a positive one. He also knows he will probably never see her again.

She smiles and waves, looking forward to taking another country by storm.

INT  HITLER'S OFFICE--DAY

General Muller reads a report about he death of third secretary Ernst von Rath. Goebbels, Heidrich and Goering look on as Hitler frowns, staring down at his desk. A seventeen year-old Polish Jew has shot von Rath in his office in Paris in revenge of the death of his father.

Muller finishes the report. Hitler's eyes move rapidly as he sits in silent rage. All watch, afraid to speak.
HITLER
And Rath?

MULLER
He died this morning.

Hitler stands, banging his fist on the desk, and gazes out the window with his back to his men.

MULLER
He was apparently trying to kill the ambassador. He kept crying out over and over again that he was avenging the death of his father.

HITLER
(inspecting out the window)
Insanity. (then announcing, still looking out the window) I want a message sent out to all Gestapo agents.

MULLER
Yes, Mein Fuhrer!

Hitler turns and begins pacing as he speaks.

HITLER
Aktionen against all Jews, especially against their synagogues, is to take place throughout all Germany. If any important material is found in their possession, it is to be taken into safekeeping. Severe measures are to be taken if anyone finds weapons of any kind. (stops pacing and stands at his desk) Make preparations for the arrest of all Jews in the Reich. Wealthy ones in particular. There is to be no interference by the police. (he takes a deep breath, then says passionately) Gentlemen, we are the pure race. We must wipe out any who try to force us down once and for all.

MULLER
Yes, Mein Fuhrer. Anything else?
HITLER

I will make a formal announcement at the Burgerbraukeller in Munich on November ninth that a spontaneous demonstration is to take place. I will give more instructions later. Thank you, gentlemen.

EXT STREETS OF BERLIN--NIGHT

The events of the infamous Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) occur. Synagogues, homes and shops go up in flames. Men, women and children run screaming out of the burning buildings into the streets only to be shot or beaten. Others are herded onto trucks to be taken to concentration camps. Screams and yells pleading for help are heard as people are beaten and women are raped in the streets. Officers of the Reich stand by and do not interfere.

INT HITLER'S OFFICE--MORNING

Heydrich reads the statistics in a confidential report to the Party members. Hitler listens with no expression on his face and no comment. He feels justice has been done.

HEYDRICH

The extent of the destruction of Jewish shops and houses cannot possibly be verified at this time. A total of 815 shops were destroyed, 171 houses were burned or otherwise destroyed, 20,000 Jews were arrested. At this time, 36 deaths have been reported and those seriously injured also stands at 36. All those killed and injured were Jews.

GOEHRING

The extent of the property damage is enormous. I think each Jew should be responsible for his own property.

There is a general mumbling of agreement by all present.

GOEHRING

German Jewry shall as punishment for their abominable crimes have to make a contribution for one billion marks. (chuckles to himself) The swine won't commit another murder.
The group begins to break up. Happy group chatter and patting each other on the back all around.

GOEHRING
Incidentally, gentlemen, I would like to say that I would not like to be a Jew in Germany today.

The men chuckle amongst themselves. Then turn as they are about to leave to salute Hitler.

ALL
Heil Hitler!

EXT streets of Berlin--morning

The sound of the salute echoes over the sun rising on the deserted, smoldering city. The cobblestone streets are filled with rubble and glass. Swastikas are painted on the walls with blood. The town is unbearably quiet.

EXT Europa Liner--day

Leni stands on deck, basking in the sun awaiting arrival in America. Unaware of what has occurred behind her, she is ready to accept the triumph she thinks is waiting for her in a new country. The ship nears the great continent. She looks at the Statue of Liberty with high hopes. Suddenly, she looks very small and very alone.

EXT New York harbor--day

The Europa Liner pulls into harbor. Leni stands poised on the deck waiting to step to shore. She looks around, smiling at all the people and reporters.

REPORTER
(pointing at her)
There she is!

She smiles and waves to the cluster of press people approaching as she walks down the plank eagerly anticipating appreciation. Within seconds she is surrounded by flashbulbs and notebooks.

REPORTERS
(overlapping)
Miss Riefenstahl!
Over here, Miss Riefenstahl!

REPORTER #1
Any comments on the latest case
of Jewish persecution in your country, Miss Riefenstahl?

LENI
(taken off guard)
Excuse me?

REPORTER #2
They're calling it Kristallnacht.
(hands her a newspaper) "The Night of Broken Glass." Over 2,000 Jewish people were killed by orders of your friend Adolph Hitler. Any comment?

Leni reads the newspaper wide-eyed. She looks the paper up and down, vigorously shaking her head. The reporters continue their questioning.

REPORTERS
(overlapping)
How do you feel about Adolph Hitler now?
Are you here in the U.S. to stay?
Are you really Adolph Hitler's mistress?
Are you a Nazi, Fraulein Riefenstahl?

LENI
(in a daze)
What? No!

REPORTER #3
How do you feel now after glorifying this regime?

LENI
I'm sorry . . . (pushing her way through) No comment.

The reporters follow and keep questioning. She turns back to them.

LENI
I cannot . . . and will not make a statement until I know the facts.
I cannot condemn my homeland until . . .
I know more. (shakes her head in disbelief) I can't believe it.

She walks off.

REPORTER #4
But Miss Riefenstahl--
LENI
Excuse me, I have a plane to catch.

REPORTER #5
Have you any idea how the people in Hollywood feel about you now?

INT LENI'S HOTEL ROOM--DAY

Leni stares out the window at the people who have gathered in protest of her visit. Disgusted and angered by the demonstration, she is also too afraid to walk out and face it. She walks over to the bed and lies across it, looking at the newspaper again and weeping to herself.

LENI
It can't be true.

She reaches up to the phone and dials a number, sitting up on the edge of the bed, very anxiously. She waits after dialing.

LENI
Hello, I was wanting to speak with Mr. von Stroheim, please. (waits)
Leni Riefenstahl, I called yesterday.
Thank you. (waits) Erich? (listens)
Oh, I'm sorry. He's not in? Do you know when he will be? Could you ask him to return my call--again? Thank you, goodbye.

She looks at the receiver, thoroughly dejected. She knows very well he will not return her call. She sighs deeply, then hangs up. As she does, there is a loud thump at the door. She jumps at the sound, then places her hand on her heart and chuckles to herself, dismissing her reaction as paranoia.

LENI
Who's there?

Nobody answers. She rises from the bed, approaching the door with caution, and presses her ear against it. She hears nothing and opens the door. The empty hallway is dark and quiet. She sees a wadded newspaper on the floor and picks it up. The headline reads "No Room in Hollywood for Hitler's Honey." She turns to re-enter her room and is stopped by the sight of a large black swastika painted on the door.

INT RESTAURANT LOBBY--NIGHT

Leni strolls into a posh Hollywood restaurant with two old
friends from Germany. Happily she chats with them in their native tongue. The maitre d' looks up from his podium as they enter with mild annoyance. As Leni approaches him, he resumes his writing in the reservation book and doesn't acknowledge her. She waits a moment, then speaks.

LENI
Excuse me. (he doesn't look up)
Excuse me. My name is Riefenstahl.
I have a reservation.

He thumbs through his book. She looks to her friends and smiles.

LENI
(to one of her friends)
Have you gotten many parts since you came here?

FRIEND
No. No luck yet.

LENI
That's such a shame. You had such a promising career back home.

MAITRE D'
(who by now has looked up from his book and is annoyed with their conversation)
Excuse me.

LENI
(to her friend)
You ought to come back. (turns to the Maitre D') Yes?

MAITRE D'
I don't see anything for you.

LENI
But I made the reservation three days ago.

MAITRE D'
Well, I have nothing for you now.

LENI
Could you check again? The name is Riefenstahl. R-i-e-

MAITRE D'
I know how it is spelled.
LENI
Well, could you check again?

MAITRE D'
I have nothing for you.

FRIEND
It's okay, Leni.

LENI
No, it's not okay. I have a reservation.

MAITRE D'
Then I suppose it's been cancelled.

He turns to another couple who have just come in.

LENI
How dare you turn us away!

FRIEND
Leni, it's all right. Let's go somewhere else.

Leni is very used to having her own way and is not ready to settle for less. She is not used to be treated this way.

LENI
I don't want to go somewhere else! I want to eat here!

An exiting couple walks by and stares. Leni is beginning a tirade which is very similar to those by Hitler. She is garnering attention and is quickly discovering she will not get her own way this time. The exiting wife whispers to her husband.

WIFE
That's Leni Riefenstahl.

But the recognition is not pleasant and Leni know it was not meant to be. Her face goes white with fear. She looks around the alien environment realizing she is not only an outsider, but an unwelcomed one at that. She cringes and turns to her friends.

LENI
I'm sorry, I don't feel very well.

FRIEND
You all right, Leni?
LENI
I want to go home.

INT WALT DISNEY STUDIO--DAY

LENI
This studio is incredible! All this space. It's so wonderful of you to show me around like this, Mr. Disney.

DISNEY
Walt, please.

LENI
Walt. You are the only person who has been so gracious to open his home to me like this. I really appreciate it.

DISNEY
I'm sorry if your stay has been so unpleasant.

LENI
Well, it hasn't been a total loss. I haven't gotten to see any other studio, but Max Roach had me over for dinner last night. It was nice, but not very many people came.

DISNEY
Do you have many friends here?

LENI
Yes, I've seen a few. Neither Marlene nor Erich von Stroheim have returned any of my calls. I've seen an interesting side of Hollywood. I know I'll be glad to get home.

DISNEY
Well, I had to meet you before you left. I simply had to meet the woman whose athletes won the Venice Film Festival Award over my little dwarfs.

LENI
From what I hear, they put up a pretty stiff competition.

DISNEY
You mean you haven't seen it?
LENI
I don't see many cartoons.

DISNEY
(grimaces)
Please. Animated feature.

LENI
Sorry.

DISNEY
No harm done. You should have seen the look on the distributor's faces when I told them. They said it would never work. No one would want to sit through a feature-length cartoon, they said.

LENI
Don't you love proving people wrong?

They laugh together, and Leni takes his arm. As they walk through the corridor, they pass a bulletin board. Leni stops when she sees a notice posted on it.

No Room in Hollywood for Hitler's Honey
(to all studios, please post:

Hitler's no. 1 film maker,
Leni Riefenstahl is here in Hollywood to promote her film Olympia.
Close your doors! Lock them.
Let her know we will not allow Naziism in America.

Leni stares at the notice. Disney, noticing she has stopped, turns, sees the notice and rips it off the board.

DISNEY
I thought I got all of these.

There is an awkward pause between them. Leni clears her throat and musters a smile.

LENI
So ... animated features. How are they done?

INT DISNEY'S OFFICE--SAME DAY

Leni and Disney sit at a drafting table looking over the
sketches from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Some of the sketches are from the very beginning when the idea was first conceived. There are blonde Snow Whites and brunettes as well as several different versions of dwarfs.

**DISNEY**

In the original story, the dwarfs had no names. They were just little men who lived in the woods and found a beautiful woman one day. I felt it was important to give each his own individual character.

**LENI**

The detail is amazing.

**DISNEY**

It's a lot of work. I won't settle for anything remotely representational.

Leni looks through the sketches, coming to the final drawing of the prince carrying Snow White off into the sunset.

**LENI**

Oh, I love fairy-tales! Happy endings are wonderful!

**EXT DISNEY LOT--SAME DAY**

Disney walks Leni to the front gates of his studio explaining the art of animation to her.

**DISNEY**

Then when you stack the cels, it creates the third dimensional effect.

**LENI**

I am going to have to try this sometime.

As they walk, a photographer appears over the wall and snaps a photograph. Leni ducks down when she sees him, hiding her face. Disney shields her from view. The photographer disappears after the picture has been taken.

**DISNEY**

You all right?

**LENI**

(still hiding her face) Is he gone?
DISNEY
I think so.

LENI
For now. I can't wait to get home. I swear there are two men who have been following me ever since I arrived here.

DISNEY
Why would they follow you?

LENI
I don't know! I don't understand any of this. Why are the studios shunning me? Why won't anyone talk to me?

DISNEY
Shulberg got to them.

LENI
Shulberg?

DISNEY
Budd Shulberg. He's a writer here in Hollywood. He's organized a boycott against you. I guess people are taking it seriously.

LENI
I don't even know this man. Why has he done this?

DISNEY
To him you represent a man who is a Nazi and a monster.

LENI
But he's not a monster! Really, he's a very good man. Very idealistic. He seems so sincere when you listen to him. And he brought Germany out of a terrible depression.

DISNEY
Well, in light of what's been happening lately--

LENI
I just can't believe those reports. None of them! (thinks a second) What does it have to do with me anyway?
DISNEY
You don't understand, do you?

LENI
I don't know. It looks as if I'm not going to get Olympia distributed this time around.

DISNEY
That is a shame. It's a beautiful film.

LENI
I know. If people would just look at it, they would see.

DISNEY
You'll find many doors closed to you, Leni.

LENI
But not yours. No, you and your dwarfs are kind to strangers. Thank you for the tour, Walt.

DISNEY
Good luck, Leni.

He watches as she walks down the sidewalk past the studio. She puts on her sunglasses and walks straight ahead, not making eye contact with anyone. She slows her pace and looks around, thinking she hears someone behind her. She starts walking faster, then slips around the corner and waits. Two men stroll past, taking no notice of her. She watches as they pass, not knowing whether or not they are actually following her, but suspecting so just the same.

INT AIRPLANE--DAY

Leni sits alone on the airplane from Hollywood to New York. She stares out the window at the town which has rejected her. The experience forced her to face many things--all of which she tried in vain to turn away from. She heads for home to seek the truth, realizing she most likely doesn't want to know it, because she is leaving a truth behind her now. As a fellow passenger passes her in the aisle, she avoids eye contact, cringing and putting her sunglasses on. She looks out the window again, pulling the curtains closed.

INT HITLER'S OFFICE--DAY

Leni walks into Hitler's office as soon as she arrives back in
Germany. The room is empty except for a young courier about age 18. He's an attractive young man, tall and blonde--the perfect Aryan. As the door opens he comes to attention.

LENI
I was hoping to find Hitler here.

COURIER
The Fuhrer is not in, Madam. May I help you?

LENI
No, thank you. I need to speak with him. (she sits in a chair facing his desk and takes off her gloves, making herself as comfortable as usual) Where is he?

COURIER
I am not at liberty to say, madam.

LENI
Just tell me where he is. I must speak with him.

COURIER
But, madam--

LENI
You don't have to 'madam' me. My name is Riefenstahl.

COURIER
(thrilled to meet her)
Fraulein Riefenstahl. This is an honor.

LENI
Thank you, where is he?

COURIER
Our Fuhrer is busy preparing to lead us to war, Fraulein.

He speaks as if excited by this announcement. Leni frowns at him.

COURIER
May I tell you how much I loved your film, Triumph des Wliens--so inspiring!
Leni looks up at this young man and frowns, seeing in the flesh the use Hitler has made of her film. She holds up an American newspaper for him to read.

**LENI**
Is it true what they say in America about the Jews?

**COURIER**
One of our men died at their hands. Disciplinary action had to be taken once and for all to show who the pure race is.

She wads up the paper and slams it on the desk. Albert Speer walks in. She looks up at him and runs into his arms.

**SPEER**
Leni!

**LENI**
Oh, God, Albert. It was awful!

**SPEER**
Hitler has a big reception planned for your return. Does he know you're back?

She buries her head in his shoulder and bursts into tears. Albert looks up at the courier.

**SPEER**
You can go.

**COURIER**
Heil Hitler!

**SPEER** (quietly)
Yes, Heil Hitler.

Leni looks at the courier in disgust and then at Albert, surprised at his response.

**LENI** (handing him the paper)
Is it true? (he looks at the paper and sighs, a silent acknowledgement of the truth) The whole time . . . I told myself it was all lies. That it couldn't be true.
SPEER
The reports are true, Leni. Admittedly, things got a little out of hand. But the ones who were responsible were punished.

She looks at him, imploring.

LENI
Oh, Albert, are you sure?

SPEER
I promise.

LENI
Thank God! You don't know how much I wanted to believe in him. I knew he couldn't have changed so much over-night. (takes a deep breath and collects herself) You don't know what it was like there--they just don't understand. They only hear the bad news, they don't know what a really good man he is. (she repeats it, somewhat unsure, but wanting to make herself believe it) He is. (suddenly realizing) Albert? Was that boy right? Are we going to war?

SPEER
The Fuhrer has ordered troops to invade Poland.

LENI
Oh, my God. (suddenly realizing again) My men! My film crew--what will happen to them?

SPEER
They will be called upon to serve their country, Leni.

LENI
Well, I can't have that at all. I have work to-do. And I must have my crew.

Stands and begins gathering her things.

LENI
I'm going to have to have a little chat with Adolph about this.
SPEER
I doubt you can do anything about this, Leni.

LENI
Of course I can. I can't have my boys fighting and maybe lose them. I've got to keep them out of danger. (leaving the room) Tell Adolph to call me as soon as he gets back, okay?

She leaves the befuddled Speer standing in Hitler's office.

EXT THE POLISH CITY OF KONSKY--DAY

Leni, Walter and Georg pull up in a black mercedes to the deserted city. All are dressed in uniforms, resembling SS uniforms but not as official. Leni wears shoulder straps and a holster with a pistol with her uniform.

WALTER
I wish we didn't have to film so close to the front.

LENI
Listen, I went to a lot of trouble to keep you from fighting on the front--this was the only compromise I could make.

GEORG
All those other cameramen got stuck working in the studios.

LENI
I keep my favorite ones in the film unit with me.

WALTER
Somehow, I'd rather fight on the front.

LENI
Do either one of you know where Hans and Heinz ran off to? I haven't been able to reach either one.

WALTER
Hans was working for Fanck for awhile.
GEORG
Making films for the party.

LENI
You're kidding, propaganda?

WALTER
Yes, can you believe it?

LENI
Maybe Fanck can deal with Goebbels. I wish him all the best. I'm sure Goebbels prefers working with him. (looks around) Well, boys, let's get this over with. (They get out and begin unloading the equipment) God, I hate this. It's noisy and dirty. The equipment is primitive. I don't even know if I can film a straight newsreel on purpose.

WALTER
So our first job is occupied Poland?

LENI
Lucky aren't we? Not many scenic shots around here.

They carry their camera and equipment into the city. It's quiet and desolate.

GEORG
God, where are all the people?

They look in the bombed out windows of shops and houses.

WALTER
(looking out to a clearing)
Oh, God. Leni?

She runs over to where he's standing. In the clearing away from the town a group of German soldiers stand pointing their guns into a ditch. People are inside the ditch digging at the dirt with their hands. The moans and cries of the people can be heard from where Leni and Georg are standing.

LENI
What the hell?

She runs toward the gathering.
GEORG

Leni, don't!

Walter approaches him.

WALTER

What are they doing?

GEORG

Digging their own graves.

As Leni approaches the scene, the people scamper out of the hole and begin to run aimlessly. The soldiers open fire. Leni stops and shrieks in horror as she watches the people writhe in pain and scream in agony. She feels helpless and unable to move as she just stands and screams at the massacre. As the shouting stops, she falls to her knees, crying helplessly.

Georg runs to her and tries to help her up. She breathes hysterically, then pushes him away and runs for the car. She jumps in and starts it, leaving Walter and Georg behind as she races down the road, tearing the shoulder straps from her shoulders.

INT   HANS' HOME--DAY

Leni enters Hans' home quietly. She steps gingerly on the floor peering around the room as if afraid she will be caught. Her eyes are swollen from crying. She looks like a woman who is broken and very much afraid. She smiles at the familiarity of the room. On his desk she finds a picture of herself and Hans. She picks it up and, holding it to her chest, weeps quietly. Behind her, a door closes.

LENI

Hans?

Heinz enters the room, very meek and afraid.

LENI

(bursts into tears upon seeing him)

Heinz! (she runs to him and they embrace) I've been looking for you everywhere. Where have you been? Where is Hans? Has anything happened to him?

HEINZ

He deserted, Leni. He left the country when he heard that Hitler was going to invade Poland.
LENI
When?

HEINZ
A week before you got back. He tried to wait, Leni. He said he kept hoping you would stay in America. Leni, why didn't you stay?

LENI
Don't be foolish. This is my home.

HEINZ
He tried to wait for you.

LENI
He's a fool. He'll be killed if he's found. Why didn't he just wait? This can't last long.

HEINZ
I heard you were making newsreels for the party.

LENI
(laughs)
I barely lasted a day. It just wasn't for me.

HEINZ
What happened, Leni?

LENI
Things became very clear. I turned in my camera, my shoulder straps, and my gun, and told Adolph Hitler I never want to have anything to do with him again.

HEINZ
(realizing she must be heartbroken)
Oh, Leni. (sits across from her, very serious) Leni, I'm afraid.

LENI
What?

HEINZ
They found out my grandmother is Jewish.

LENI
(realizing the severity)
You keep your head down low. Keep quiet. Don't draw any attention to
yourself whatsoever. You understand me?

HEINZ
(weeping on her shoulder)
Oh, Leni.

LENI
Between the two of us, we'll just have
to wait this out. This can't last long.
There's no way we can possibly win. We'll
just have to wait.

She holds his head on her shoulder as he weeps and gently rocks
him back and forth.

EXT LENI'S HOME IN KITZBUHEL--DAY

As the war continues throughout the world, Leni sits on her
deck looking out to the mountains, listening to the drowning
sounds of Wagner, remembering, daydreaming. On her walls
are pictures from her films, her framed honors, and photographs
of her with Hitler and other members of the Reich. Displayed,
not prominently, but casually, in spite of all that is happening
around her.

On the day Hitler's death is announced, she sits with the
paper in her lap, not reading it. The wind blows over the
lake in small ripples. She looks at the mountain in front
of her, breathing deeper as she shifts her gaze upward. In
her mind, she is reaching the top of that mountain, just
as Junta did before her light was taken from her and she
fell to her death.

Behind her she hears movement and voices as the American
soldiers infiltrate her house. She turns her head to the
direction of the sound, not confronting it, just recognizing
it. She has very little fight left in her.

SOLDIER
(voice-over)
There's somebody out here.

SOLDIER #2
(voice-over)
She's not moving. Is she dead?

Leni looks up from her chair to an American soldier standing
before her in full uniform.

SGT. BYRON
Who are you?
LENI
(calmingly)
I live here. This is my home. Who are you?

SGT. BYRON
Sgt. Byron. 42nd division. We have instructions to take over this house as a rest center and take all German citizens into custody for questioning.

LENI
(still very calm)
But I am Leni Riefenstahl.

BYRON
Never heard of you.

Her lip quivers as she stands in astonishment, letting the newspaper fall to her feet.

BYRON
You have to come with us.

Leni looks in her living room as the soldiers make themselves at home and Sgt. Bryon reads her the charges.

BYRON
You will be taken into custody and investigated by the Seventh Army interrogation center on charges of being a member of the Nazi Party, its divisions, organizations or unions.

LENI
But I am not a Nazi. (he takes her arm to lead her away) I am not a Nazi! (becoming more hysterical) You can't do this to me! I make films. I haven't done anything wrong! (Byron keeps a firm grip on her as she becomes more hysterical) I don't have anything against Jewish people!

The officers stand and watch her cower. Byron nods to another soldier to help him take her away. She struggles against being handled, flailing her arms and crying her protests. On the way through the living room she knocks several pictures off the wall. One of her accepting roses from Adolph Hitler falls to the floor and cracks.
INT KRANSBERG CASTLE--DAY

Leni is taken to Kransberg castle where she is held for denazification hearings. Among her are other prominent German citizens who are tried in preliminary hearings. The serious criminals are then taken to Nuremberg.

Her room is in the dungeon of the castle. She sits alone beside a very tiny window and looks out. Her hair is mussed with streaks of gray, she looks remarkably well for 43 but very tired.

She writes scripts and diary entries during the day, reads, plans new projects to take on when she is released. The routine of the prison is rather unstructured. During the day the inmates are allowed to walk the grounds and socialize, but Leni keeps mostly to herself, reading and walking.

INT KRANSBERG CASTLE--DAY

Leni sits on her bed reading. There is a knock at the door. She opens it to find Albert Speer. She is very happy to see a friend. They embrace and she invites him in.

ALBERT
I heard a rumor you were down here.

Leni attempts her coy smile, but fails as she is tired of smiling now.

LENI
What will they do with us?

ALBERT
Nothing. Just ask us a few questions. See what you know, who we knew. Really you should be honored. This is where they've gathered all the specialists.

He sits at the table and she makes him some tea. He glances at the books on the table and at her writing.

ALBERT
Looks like you've made yourself right as home.

LENI
I can't stand wasting this much time.

ALBERT
You know the crazy thing? I rebuilt this place back in 1939.
LENI
Really? You did a wonderful job. Little did we know then.

ALBERT
Very little did we know then.

LENI
Everything seemed so right. We could have anything we wanted.

ALBERT
(looks at her books)
Green Hills of Africa?

LENI
Hemingway. It's a good book. I remember reading someplace that more than 50,000 African citizens are kidnapped each year and sold into slavery in Arabia. Did you know that?

ALBERT
No, I didn't.

LENI
Well, it's an outrage. They're uprooted from their homes, they have no rights. It's an ideal subject for a film. Sort of a documentary feature.

ALBERT
You never stop do you?

LENI
What?

Albert sees her stubbornness to remember the past they way she so chooses. She has no idea why she is here and he knows the interrogators aren't going to get anything out of her. Even in prison, she refuses to face the truth and is only ready to get out and begin work again.

ALBERT
(exasperated)
Leni--(hands her back the book)
Just tell them what you know.

LENI
That's nothing which would interest them.
Then maybe they'll let you go. (he starts to leave, then turns and faces her again) But, Leni, these people will not give in. Try not to lose your temper.

INT COURTROOM—DAY

Judges Hans Wallenberg and Ernst Langendorf look through Leni's file of papers, letters, telegrams, and newspaper clipping. She sits across from them, bored and disinterested. She is outraged that they have her life in a file before them, and is slowly getting angrier. She stares straight ahead with a frozen frown on her face. Ernst and Hans look up at her, then at each other, realizing what a difficult witness she is proving to be.

ERNST
Could you tell us, Fraulein Riefenstahl, what was your relationship with Adolph Hitler?

LENI
(matter-of-fact)
He was the Fuhrer.

ERNST
Yes, but what was your personal relationship with him?

LENI
(taking offense)
Personal?

ERNST
You knew him outside of a political sense, yes?

LENI
(hesitates)
Yes.

ERNST
How did you know him?

LENI
We were friends.

ERNST
Friends.
LENI
But at no time were we ever intimate.
I was never his mistress. He was always polite and supportive to me.

HANS
Did you admire him?

LENI
Of course I admired him. He was the Fuhrer.

They whisper to each other and make notations. She notices this and jumps to her defense.

LENI
If that is considered a crime, then may I point out that many people are guilty. Many people--even in democratic countries--committed that same crime during those years. He could be very charming ... very persuasive. You Americans, you only saw the wild man side of him. (sadly) He wasn't always like that.

ERNST
Fraulein Riefenstahl, I have two telegrams here. Do you recall sending either of them?

LENI
No.

ERNST
Could you at least look at them?

She takes them and glances over them shaking her head.

ERNST
The first one is from you congratulating him for the troops marching into Paris. The second is a thank you note for the roses he sent you on your birthday.

LENI
They are obviously fakes. This one isn't even on official telegram stationary. And the one about the roses ... I don't remember. Someone is trying to set me up.
HANS
You did receive roses from him, didn't you?

LENI
I don't recall. I don't see what this has to do with anyway. Surely you're not holding me here because of a bunch of lousy roses.

ERNST
We're only trying to establish a relationship here.

LENI
There was none.

ERNST
There had to be. What was you knowledge of Hitler's policies during those years?

LENI
Never thought much about it. I wasn't the slightest bit interested.

ERNST
Then what interested you in making propaganda films for the party?

LENI
My films were not 'propaganda'! That word is cheap, dirty. My films were works of art. You want to talk to propagandists, talk to Walter Ruttman, Dr. Arnold Fanck. Talk to Karl Jinner! He made propaganda films and was a member of the Nazi Party. Why waste your time with me?

HANS
Jinner has left the country.

LENI
Whoever excuses himself, accuses himself. I have done nothing.

ERNST
Whether or not you made Triumph of the Will or any of the other films as propaganda, surely you realize they became very powerful tools in Hitler's political machine.
LENI
I can't be held responsible for how people view my films. I only made them. If they made a lasting impression, that is good. But I can't determine what that impression will be. Gentlemen, I had no intention for my films to be used as propaganda. Hitler asked me to make a film, and I did so to the best of my ability. I didn't know enough about the Party to speak for it. How was I to know what was to happen in the next few years? I was an awfully young girl at the time.

HANS
(rather amused)
Personally, I would consider thirty-one well beyond adolescence.

Leni stares at him, realizing she has been caught in a lie in an attempt to exonerate herself.

HANS
Do you want us to believe, that the thought never crossed your mind that you could use the Party and Adolph Hitler, in his high position for your own personal gain?

LENI
Young man, I was a popular actress and film maker well before Adolph Hitler.

ERNST
Then did the thought. cross your mind that Adolph Hitler and the Party could use you in your high position for his personal gain?

LENI
I don't think that one viewing of Triumph of the Will would make the average personal instantly want to become a Nazi. I thank you, gentlemen, for bestowing me with so much influence and power, but I just don't think it is so.

ERNST
It's a very impressive film.
LENI
Thank you.

ERNST
So impressive, it's frightening. And self incriminating.

INT HALLWAY OUTSIDE COURTROOM--DAY

On the way back to her room, Leni and her escorts pass Speer being led out of the building. She calls out to him. He turns to look at her and she sees he is handcuffed. She pulls away from her escorts and runs to him.

LENI
What is it?

ALBERT
(tears in his eyes)
I'm going to Nuremberg.

She gasps in shock and watches as he is led away.

INT COURTROOM--DAY

HANS
The Olympic games of 1936.

LENI
Youth, strength, beauty. A beautiful film.

HANS
Political statement?

LENI
How?

HANS
The shots of swastikas, eagles, Nazi banners, Hitler.

LENI
Germany was the host. Adolph Hitler, the chief of state. It would look odd to leave him out. Once again, I filmed it as I saw it.

HANS
The focus was the purity of the Aryan race, was it not?
LENI
(smiles to herself)
No. (thinks of Owens) I don't think so. The only problem with Olympia, gentlemen, is the time and place in which it was filmed. If you have any doubts, I suggest you look at it. Its intent can speak for itself.

She takes a deep breath and faces them.

LENI
If I have a conviction, then it is expressed in my conception of the art to which I have dedicated myself and for which I have lived.

INT COURTROOM--ANOTHER DAY

HANS
When you returned to Germany following your trip to Hollywood, Leni, the country was preparing for war.

LENI
Yes, that is correct.

HANS
You did newsreels for awhile--

LENI
One day. I left after I witnessed the massacre at Konsky.

HANS
What did you do after that?

LENI
I tried once again to finish my dream project Tiefland. That film was doomed from the start. I couldn't get locations. My funding was cut off. Even though Dr. Goebbels had the war to keep him busy, he still managed to get under my skin. I had to recreate nature in a studio. Imagine! Casting was impossible. People were either gone or fighting. I sent one of my people out to get extras and I don't know where he came up with these people but they were disgusting! They were all skin and bones, like they hadn't had a
decent meal in months. Honest to God, they looked like corpses.

HANS
(realizing where these people came from)
Oh, my God.

LENI
I had to fatten them up before I shot the scene.

HANS
Oh, Leni. Do you know where these people came from?

LENI
(quickly)
I don't want to know! I didn't want to know then and I don't want to know now. They served my purpose. Tiefland was not the film I hoped it would be. I had a miserable time trying to get it distributed. Seems people don't much care for fairy-tales anymore. I don't really know what happened. It was as if everything just went kaput. Everything in Germany had come to a complete stop.

HANS
Was it then you heard that your brother had died?

LENI
(tears in her eyes)
Yes. He died a hero's death in honor of his country.

Ernst starts to say something, but Hans stops him. Leni gazes out the window, the tears streaming down her face.

HANS
That will be all for now, Leni. Why don't you go back to your room?

She doesn't look at them, just nods and heads for the door. Hans stands and opens it for her.

ERNST
What is it?
HANS
Her brother was a member of an Anti-
Nazi organization. He was taken to
Russia and killed as a traitor.

ERNST
Surely she knows that.

HANS
I think she does. She couldn't save
him.

EXT GROUNDS OUTSIDE THE CASTLE--DAY

Leni walks the grounds outside the castle in the morning sun. Some of the other inmates play a small game of soccer in an adjoining field. They call out to her. She turns and waves, then continues her walk in the quiet countryside. She sits under a tree and reads awhile, then walks some more up to the top of the hill. She stops at a look-out point and gazes at the sky and around at the view. She is stopped suddenly by a sight below her in the distance.

It appears to be a factory of some kind, but its primitive and morbid appearance as well as its remote location confuses her. She frowns at the fences and barbed wire surrounding it.

A guard approaches her from behind.

GUARD
Miss Riefenstahl? You've walked a long way from the castle.

Leni continues to stare and does not respond.

GUARD
We need to get back. It will be getting dark soon.

LENI
What is it?

GUARD
You're kidding.

LENI
(turns to face him)
Concentration camp?

GUARD
You've never seen one?
LENI
I heard rumors.

INT COURTROOM--DAY

It has been four years since the judges began their interrogation of Leni. Today they give their final report. Leni gazes straight ahead throughout the reading. She is a very broken woman. Reporters and photographers converge on the scene as Ernst reads their decision.

ERNST
It is difficult to say whether we find the statements Leni has made here reliable, as she has committed several distortions in facts throughout her testimony. But whether or not the public agrees, we find she gives an impression of honesty. It is possible she was unaware of what was going on, but that is her sin of omission. This appears all the more serious since she herself had many opportunities to get the truth.
I don't think Leni Riefenstahl is a fanatical Nazi. She is, however, a product of their moral corruption. We have looked at films, photos--some wonderful images here. Some so wonderful, they are truly frightening. It is by their quality, Leni herself has implicated herself. Fraulein Riefenstahl dreamed a life fully dedicated to art. It was this art that Adolph Hitler supported and protected her from the political clutches around her. She gives the impression that she never saw how by dedicating her life to art she helped to glorify his regime. Again, we feel this is her mistake and one she will have to live with and face. We, however, find her not charged.

The press people and committee members leave the room and Hans and Ernst gather their papers. They look up into the empty chairs and see Leni still sitting.

HANS
You're free to go now, Leni.
LENI
(not comprehending)
Free?

HANS
Yes.

LENI
You've held me here and questioned me for four years and now you tell me I am free? To go where? Out there? Where I am still a Nazi? My home has been taken away from me. I don't even know Germany anymore.

HANS
Here. (hands her a piece of paper)
This is your clearance. It explains everything for you. Just carry it with you.

LENI
(taking the paper)
You mean to tell me that I have to carry this thing around with me all the time to explain who and what I am?

HANS
Some would say you're lucky. Others had to wear a star.

INT LENI'S HOME IN KITZBUHEL--DAY

Leni returns to what was once her home in Kitzbuhel. She looks around the living room, hardly recognizing it. All her belongings have been moved out. She moves from room to room in search of some recognition.

Down in the basement, she finds some old boxes of her things which have been stored. She looks around, fearing she is being watched, then moves to a loose panel in the wall. She removes the paneling, revealing a small wall safe. She thinks for a second, remembering the combination and says a little prayer in hopes the contents are still inside. She opens the safe and with great delicacy, removes her hidden cans of film.

She holds the reels in front of her and wipes the dust off the covers. She looks at them, happy and proud to have them again in her hands. She wraps her arms around them, and holding them tightly to her chest, weeps quietly to herself.
In the four years since Leni's incarceration, Germany has begun to rebuild itself. The winding, cobblestone streets are still much the same. The town still has the scenic look of a fairy-tale—the fairy-tale she had intended to write.

In the Nuremberg stadium, where Leni had captured Jesse Owens' victory in the 1936 Olympic Games, the Nazi War criminals are hanged by the neck. Citizens try to forget their past, but there is an overwhelming need to understand as well.

EXT CONCENTRATION CAMP OUTSIDE KITZBUHEL--DAY

In large numbers German residents travel to the concentration camp. Tourists come from all over the world to see the actual truth of what has only been witnessed in newsreels.

Leni watches the people from an adjoining mountainside as they conglomerate on the grounds. The camp has been cleaned up, the area around it has grown green and, ironically, scenic. Children play outside and adults pose for pictures.

She looks at the camp with disinterested curiosity. Hans and Ernst had said she was free. Free. From the interrogation? From her past? She knew it was neither.

Now she is left to begin her life again. The triumph she had wanted to badly had come and gone before she knew she had had it. It was not the attention she had hoped for, but she did have world-wide recognition. She had to live it down in order to gain it again.

She knows her innocence. She has been cleared by the army, but not by the public. She will have more interrogation, and to have triumph, she will have to begin again.

She puts on her sunglasses and turns away from the camp, heading home. The sun shines on her as she climbs her way up the mountain. Somehow, it seems bigger today.
EPILOGUE

In the years following Leni Riefenstahl's release from prison, she has met with interrogation again and again. After the Seventh Army cleared her, she had been tried and acquitted by the French and by her own people in a denazification court. By 1952 she had been cleared of all charges. She was to find, however, that there was no public absolution.

To the public, Leni Riefenstahl represents silence and ambiguity. To question what she could have done in those years before the war is to question what anyone could have done--but did not. She has become a scapegoat for the period.

In 1946 she trusted a reporter to tell her story and discuss her films. He came to her home in Kitzbuhel, drank her tea, listened to her stories, all the while noting her "fading beauty" and her "queer" and "clearly designing" smile. The ensuing article, "Nazi Pin-up Girl" appeared in the Saturday Evening Post and can only be described as a hatchet job. The author, Budd Schulberg, is the same man who organized the boycott against her during her visit to Hollywood in 1938. His intentions were clearly not to defend the artist but to denounce the "woman who glorified Hitler":

... when Leni slid down from her profitable glaciers, (she) wrapped her trim figure in a swastika flag and energetically went to work on a series of films dedicated to a man with a lock of hair over his forehead and a cloud of hate over his mind. (11)
It is unfortunate that this article is a common source of research on Riefenstahl. Dissatisfied when she insisted on ignorant innocence and would not admit to guilt, Schulberg painted a picture of a woman who was a manipulative phony.

Cleared by the courts and denounced by the press, Riefenstahl has kept very much to herself since the war. She chooses not to discuss the past; and, in doing so, shows a tendency to distort the facts to her benefit. She is willing to discuss her films which she considers works of art. Still, in the years since her release, her luck has been limited.

On a trip to Africa in the mid-fifties to scout locations for her prospective film version of Green Hills of Africa, she stumbled upon a primitive tribe. These people, the Nubas, became a passion with her--her vision of strength and beauty personified as it was with the Olympic athletes.

She lived among these people, photographing their rituals, learning their language, appreciating their celebration of the body and spirit. This was to be her re-entry into the film world: a documentary of an uncivilized people who survived by will alone.

A jeep accident in Kenya, however, left her hospitalized and the project temporarily abandoned. Funding ran out and the resulting film, shot in 16mm, was not up to her standards. It has never been released.

Her passion for Africa and its people is illustrated in two photography books, The Last of the Nuba and The People
of Kau. Her work as a still photographer is well-known, including photographs of Mick and Bianca Jagger for the Sunday Times of London, and a third book, Coral Reefs, illustrating her love for scuba diving (a hobby she took up at the age of 72).

Today at the age of 83 she lives in Munich. Olympia is fifty years old. Much time has passed since the days of Party Rallies and day-long speeches in Nuremberg. But if people remember Riefenstahl at all, that is what they remember her for.

In 1972 at a film festival in Telluride, Colorado, protestors carried signs calling her a "faithful servant of Naziism." That same year David Wolper, in cooperation with the Bavarian Studios in Munich, served as producer of a film on the 1972 Olympic games. Of the ten internationally famous directors he asked to contribute to the project, Leni Riefenstahl, the one who set the standard for filming sports events, was not among them.

Her films remain her defense and her crime. Inherent in each of them is Riefenstahl's firm belief in the endurance and dominance of the human spirit and the conflict between the individual alone against the crowd. Little did she know in 1934 that she would personify these values in her later life.
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