

Sample Screenplay Coverage

TITLE:	Raiders of the Lost Ark	AUTHOR: Lawrence
SUB:	Ark of the Covenant	Kasdan
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LOG LINE: On behalf of the United States Government, Archaeologist Indiana Jones goes on a quest to find and prevent Hitler's Nazi soldiers from obtaining the Lost Ark of the Covenant, an ancient artifact that is said to possess the power of God.

SYNOPSIS:

In a Peruvian jungle in 1930, Archaeologist Indiana Jones and his Peruvian assistant Satipo enter a cave that is used as a temple. Indiana steals a small, golden statue deep inside the temple and dodges booby traps there, barely escaping alive.

Outside, in the jungle, he runs from his adversary, the French archaeologist, Belloq, and escapes by plane.

Later, at a college in the United States where Indy teaches archaeology classes, his colleague, Marcus Brody, arranges for him to meet with Army Intelligence Officers Eaton and Musgrove--men who have questions about the information in an intercepted Nazi communiqué. Indy tells them that it indicates Hitler's desire to find the Lost Ark of the Covenant, an ancient chest that is said to possess the power of God.

That night, Marcus tells Indy: "They [Eaton and Musgrove] want you to get a hold of the Ark before the Nazis do..."

The next day, Indy travels by plane to Nepal. There, he visits the saloon of Marion Ravenwood, the daughter of his archaeology teacher, Abner, a man who possessed an artifact that could be used to find the Ark: the headpiece of the Staff of Ra.

Indy stops a group of Nazis from taking the headpiece from Marion and leaves Nepal with her, traveling by plane to Cairo, Egypt.

In Cairo, Indy meets with his friend, Sallah, a skilled digger who has been hired by the Nazis to find the Ark of the Covenant. Indy asks him for help in deciphering the markings on the headpiece of the Staff of Ra. Sallah says he knows someone who can do that.

Later, in a "busy Cairo street," Indy and Marion are pursued by German agents and their Arabic cohorts. Indy fights the Germans and Arabs off, but Marion is abducted by them and possibly killed in a truck explosion.

Shortly thereafter, in an Arab bar, Belloq approaches Indy and tries to recruit him for the excavation of the Lost Ark. Indy refuses the offer and is escorted to safety by Sallah's children.

That night, at the house of Imam, an interpreter of ancient artifacts, Imam deciphers the markings on the headpiece of the Staff of Ra, showing Indy how long a staff to use with the headpiece when trying to locate the Ark.

The next day, at an excavation site in Tanis, Egypt, where the Nazis are digging, Indy enters a newly uncovered ancient map room and uses the staff and headpiece in conjunction with a beam of sunlight to find the location of the Ark.

Later, while disguised in an Arabic robe, Indy sneaks past the Nazis into a tent and finds Marion there. She's been tied up and is being held hostage. To escape detection by the Nazis, Indy leaves her there.

Shortly thereafter, at dusk, Indy and Sallah dig up the entrance hole to the Well of the Souls, a snake-filled underground chamber that is the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. Sallah helps him remove the Ark from the chamber, but the Nazis see this being done and imprison Indy in the chamber, throwing Marion inside before sealing the entrance with a stone cover.

Indy uses giant statues to crush the back walls of the chamber, enabling him and Marion to escape.

Outside, he stops a group of Nazis from using a plane to take the Ark from Egypt. He then stops another group of Nazis from using a truck to ship the Ark. He seizes their truck and transports the Ark to a ship, which then leaves the port.

The next day, the Nazis seize control of the ship and capture Marion. They load the Ark onto a submarine, taking Marion with them. But, Indy secretly hitches a ride on the submarine, traveling to a nearby desert island that serves as a Nazi supply base.

On the island, Indy threatens to blow up the Ark with a bazooka, but Belloq persuades him not to do so. As a result, Indy and Marion are tied up by the Nazis near an altar prepared by Belloq for use in a ceremony involving the opening of the Ark.

During the ceremony, Indy and Marion shut their eyes to avoid looking at the uncovered Ark.

Belloq opens the Ark, releasing the Angel of Death, which kills him and the Nazi soldiers

standing nearby.

The next day, in Washington, D.C., Army Intelligence Officers Eaton and Musgrove tell Indy and Marcus that the Ark is being studied by experts in a secret location. Indy won't be allowed access to the Ark.

In the closing scene, we see the crated Ark being wheeled down a long aisle in a giant warehouse filled with thousands of numbered crates marked "Top Secret."

COMMENTS:

Raiders of the Lost Ark uses the style of serial adventure films known as cliffhangers. This style involves a hero being imperiled by a dangerous situation, and then avoiding certain death and saving his girlfriend from a similar fate by finding an ingenious method of escape. The author of Raiders uses these techniques but unifies them by making individual cliffhanger sequences part of the hero's single-minded quest for the Ark of the Covenant.

The character of Indiana Jones is well-defined because we see that he wants to emulate the career of his mentor, Archaeologist Abner Ravenwood. Just as Abner sought out the Lost Ark, so too does Indy seek it. The author further defines the character of Indy by showing that the love relationship between Indy and Abner's daughter, Marion, creates conflicts for all the characters and is part of the quest for the Ark.

The dialogue supplements the visuals by providing us with background information we wouldn't effectively get from observation. For example, when Indy meets with the Army Intelligence officers, he tells them about the history of the Ark of the Covenant. *Showing* this history with visual imagery would have unnecessarily extended the length of the scene and slowed down the pace of the story. So, the author made the right choice in giving us information through dialogue in this scene.

The plot is tight and dramatic. It uses the best elements of Greek tragedies, such as the idea of the chorus and the curse. For instance, the story depicts several different characters acting as members of a chorus, commenting on the actions of the hero, Indy. These comments involve their mentioning a curse in which anyone who seeks the Ark may be killed by its God-like powers.

The story is fast-paced, using the structure of cliffhangers to keep the audience captivated and on edge.

The resolution is brilliant. It shows that the pattern of events leading to the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant in ancient times has repeated itself in modern times, resulting in the sacred object being hidden away in a warehouse, once again becoming the Lost Ark of the Covenant.

RECOMMENDED FOR PRODUCTION