

TRULIN

Feature Film Treatment

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Format Description

A semi biographical film, "*Trulin*" is based on the true war time story of Leon Trulin.

Logline

Avoiding capture and fighting possible betrayal, a sickly 17 year old boy starts a resistance cell against the German occupying forces of Northern France and Flanders during World War One, and in doing so becomes the youngest spy in history.

Setting

Flanders, Belgium, Northern France and London during WW1.

Premise

Based on the true life story of Leon Trulin, a 17 year old auto didact cannot cope with the oppression and self-subjugation of his family, friends and country during the occupation of WW1. Escaping to London to join the Free Belgium Army he is refused due to ill health and agism. In a twist of fate it is suggested to the teenage Trulin that he becomes the eyes and ears of the resistance by carrying messages, maps and information vital to intelligence. From his home in Lille, Northern France he founds the Noel Lurtin Network (an anagram of his name), a resistance cell from which he and his friend, Raymond Derain, cycle around from Ath to Brussels and Antwerp to the Dutch border as though at play.

Main Characters

Leon Trulin. Tenacious, inventive, the scrawny seventh of eight siblings, at the age of 16 suffered an industrial injury which allowed him time to read and discover a love of art giving him the skills to draw maps for the intelligence services.

Raymond Derain, a similar age to Leon and his close friend, he is also tough and tenacious but lacks the iron core of his comrade. Is it possible he betrays Leon to the German forces?

Commander Sir, Ernest Calloway RN, 40 years old, a naval officer in the true British tradition. Stiff upper lip and Birkenhead Drill. His country comes first but he sees the ghost of his dead son Malcolm - whom he lost at sea to the German Navy - in the feisty Leon and this cracks his dauntless image.

Supporting Roles:

Madame Trulin (50), Leon's mother a true matriarch to her eight children. Long suffering and tired but with a remarkable inner strength.

General Heinrich, German Governor General of Lille (50). The man with the power of life and death. A German officer in the style of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Members of Noel Lurtin Network

Marcel Gotti (15), Lucien DeWalf (18), Marcel Lemaire (17), Andre Hermann (17), Marcel Deneque (17). Teenage versions of Fagin's gang.

Synopsis

A skinny, sickly 16 year old boy, with a mop of unruly hair, wearing his dead fathers ill fitting coarse hair suit, stands in front of a table in an upstairs room of a former public house in the north of London. This is the headquarters of the Belgium Army in Exile. It is 1914 and the boy has escaped his adopted home town of Lille, in Northern France. Belgian by birth the boy has come to beg enlistment in the army fighting the German war machine that is ransacking Northern Europe in the First World War.

He is faced with Three Belgian Army Officers and one British Naval Officer. The British officer is Commander Calloway RN, official war office liaison to the Belgian forces. Educated at the best schools, he is fluent in the French language and accustomed to getting his own way, and only too happy to remind 'his guests' that they are on British soil and as such need abide by British law.

The boy, Leon Trulin, has suffered an industrial injury in the fur factory his mother works at. As a result of that injury 8 months of convalescence was required during which Leon achieved a level of cultural literacy few of his background could boast. In flash back we are taken to this time of convalescence seeing Leon's disdain at the acquiescence of his countrymen and his mother. Striving to maintain the safety of her family of eight children and with bitterness in her voice, she urges Leon show patience and submission, however the works of Hugo and Rousseau have filled the boy with desire for freedom and autonomy.

We follow Leon as he makes his way to the Belgian city of Antwerp, where he finds passage on a fishing boat to English waters and from there transfers to a small rowing boat supplied by the resistance to take him the rest of the way.

Back in London, the board of Belgian officers refuse Leons request to enlist citing health and youth as reasons to dismiss the boy. In side bar the British Commander persuades the Belgian officers to see Leon and his friends as young and apparent innocent couriers, moving about the countryside on their bicycles like youth at play.

In best Boys own tradition, Leon heads back to Lille and forms the network 'Noel Lurtin' an anagram of his name, recruiting his neighbourhood pals as co conspirators in his war games of heroism.

The game, however soon becomes real. On a dark November night, Marcel Gotti, Raymond and Leon are spotted crossing a barbed wire border and are stopped by a

German patrol. Marcel is searched and papers are found sewn into his clothing. In the ensuing melee Leon and Raymond make their escape. Fearing Marcel will give them up through interrogation the two boys plan a bid for freedom across the channel. At their usual meeting place in Antwerp the Germans lie in wait and the two comrades are captured. Both are incarcerated and physically and mentally tortured. Slowly but surely all members of Noel Lurtin are brought to book one by one.

The resistance inform London of the capture of the network and British and Belgian intelligence deem it necessary to either free or silence all members of Noel Lurtin, or risk the entire resistance rhizome being torn apart. A team is dispatched to storm the Beguines prison in Antwerp lead by Commander Calloway who is determined to rescue the young lives rather than see them perish. In a full blown attack on the prison walls five Belgian soldiers lose their lives and only Commander Calloway escapes back to England.

Denouement

November 5th 1915... in a tableau reminiscent of the opening scene Leon and his comrades face a court martial of German high-ranking officers. Chief of whom is Governor General Heinrich, the power of life and death in his hands. He delivers the sentences. Lucian Dewalf, Marcel Lemaire and Andre Hermann are all given 15 years hard labour. Marcel Gotti and Raymond Derain are sentenced to hard labour for life. Marcel Denique is acquitted of all charges and only Leon Trulin is sentenced to death.

In the small hours in a lonely prison cell, Leon Trulin writes in his journal... "at 3am I received my death warrant... I die for my homeland and without regret. I am simply sad for my dear Mother and my brothers and sisters who suffer fate without being guilty of it"

November 8th 1915... the ditches of the citadel of Lille, Leon faces a firing squad of 12. Fade to black and the sound of the firing squad. On screen the dedication "THE TEENAGER CHARGED WITH GLORY" by Philippe Kah, former president of Lille.

Fade in to the statue of Leon Trulin near the Opera house Lille. Roll credits

The End.