

A Prisoner's Love

based on the book

I'LL WAIT FOR YOU MY DARLING

by
Karl Kern

adapted for the screen by
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We see a cross-section of a waterlogged ditch with a dirty and terrified man lying in it. It is KARL KERN. The gas mask on his back appears above the ditch.

EXT. A DITCH - DAY

It is cold and the air is misty around the landscape of the Netherlands. AMERICAN SOLDIERS are circling Karl Kern from a distance. Every now and then Karl moves, only to be shot at from two different directions. We fade in to blackness...

American voices are heard. Then Karl appears still lying in the ditch but the sky a deeper shade of blue and his lips chattering slightly as the cold water makes every bone in his body ache. He crawls slightly forward. Shots ring out and Karl abruptly stops where he is. He cautiously removes his gas mask....

EXT. THE DITCH - MORNING

Karl awakes to feel warm rays of sunshine on his cheek. He can hear the voices no more and cautiously climbs out of the ditch. Covered in mud, Karl drags himself out and slowly walks through the trees toward where he thinks his fellow German troops are. Suddenly, a sound of gunfire is heard and Karl leaps behind a tree. (He yells in German with English subtitles.)

KARL

Nicht schießen! Ich bin Deutscher. (Don't shoot. I am German.)

The shooting stops, and again he says

KARL

Nicht schießen! Ich bin Deutscher. (Don't shoot. I'm German.)

Again, blackness. Then....

INT. NIJMEGEN, HOLLAND - DAY

Karl wakes up in a small, makeshift tent swarming with German soldiers. He is given a cup of hot drink while snuggled deep in his blanket enjoying the warmth and rest. But things take a turn for the worse again and soon....

EXT. TRENCH - EIBERGEN, HOLLAND - TWILIGHT

It is a cold gray morning as Karl's division is camouflaged by shrubs in a densely wooded area. We see Karl in a trench along with other SOLDIERS and his best friend, WALTER, who is next to him. The division is being surrounded by Canadians this time. Morale is low as shown by the dirty, wearied expressions on the men's faces. One man, the lieutenant, is still barking out orders.

LIEUTENANT I

Karl, go and tell headquarters of our position.

KARL

Walter, I have to keep communications open with the battalion headquarters and report our new orders to our company lieutenant.

WALTER

Stay safe, my friend. Don't let the Canadians see you. We don't want you dying in this meaningless war.

Karl replies with a weak smile and makes his way to headquarters.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EIBERGEN, HOLLAND - DAY

Karl is walking cautiously along a dirt path when a grenade whizzes past him. He immediately breaks in to a run and dodges the flying grenades.

EXT. HEADQUARTERS - TWILIGHT

Karl is admitted by a soldier as we see a small collection of tents that make up the German base.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - TWILIGHT

Karl stands in front of the Lieutenant in a tent lit by a single oil lamp.

LIEUTENANT II

Withdraw via the only road still open.

The lieutenant opens up a large map on his desk and points to the road.

LIEUTENANT II

Whatever happens, you must deliver this message if you want your men to make it out of there alive.

EXT. TRENCH - EIBERGEN, HOLLAND - NIGHT

We see Karl running up to Walter who is still lying in the trench doing his best to keep himself warm against the biting wind and first signs of drizzle.

WALTER

I'm glad you're back. Our lieutenant jumped on to one of the last tanks leaving the area and deserted.

KARL

But who's going to get us out of here?

WALTER

Him.

He points to a small, scared looking man overseeing the soldiers as he says...

WALTER

Second-in-command.

Karl walks over to him.

KARL

We have orders to withdraw. Lead the men out of this place

The second-in-command looks up at Karl with frightened eyes and manages to stutter.

SECOND-IN-COMMAND

I - I don't think that's possible, really because we are many men and these Canadians are really, really surrounding us...

KARL

And you're going to stand around and wait for something to happen?

The second-in-command looks down in shame as we hear a scream from a soldier now dead on the ground.

KARL

Look. We can't go on much longer. There are inadequate supplies, hardly enough food to go around, and our leaders are deserting us. For the last three weeks, we have done nothing but huddle in holes, make a stand, retreat, regroup and do it all over again. We have more casualties than we can count. Sometimes, we don't even know who our enemies are.

The second-in-command looks around him, avoiding Karl's glare.
Beat.

SECOND-IN-COMMAND

Tell me what to do.

KARL

Right.

EXT. OUTSIDE EIBERGEN - DAY

The men are now regrouped outside of the city as Karl has successfully led them to safety. However, we see Canadians rimmed around the group and the first shot of a machine gun is fired. All hell breaks loose. We see the area of turmoil from a camera above. Men are falling and the ones that aren't dead are being taken prisoner. We still have our eye on Karl who motions to his friend, Walter to follow him. They dash through the forest as guns shoot at them. Karl spots a river and they both jump in, covered in water up to their shoulders.

KARL

Well this is familiar.

The two hold on to willow branches as the sun sets and the cold sets in to their bones.

EXT. A FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Walter raps on the door of a small cottage that is opened by an elderly, scared looking man. (They speak in German with English subtitles)

WALTER

Do you speak German?

Instead of answering, the man looks around nervously. He then motions them to come in.

INT. THE FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

FARMER

I'll give you shelter for the night. You can hide in the loft above the barn. There is a door facing the back. Leave whenever you need to. I'll get you some food.

The farmer turns around where some sausage and bread is sitting on a table. A BOY rushes in talking excitedly in German. He halts as he notices Karl and Walter.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

The pair are lying on hay and though they are squashed, they are happy to be safe.

KARL

So we leave at midnight, make our way north along the coast.....

WALTER

....And then back to Germany. Good. Sleep.

Before we know it, Walter has rested his head and is sleeping soundly. Karl looks at him and does the same thing.

INT. LOFT - MORNING

There is a knock on the farm house door. Karl and Walter stir as they realize what time it is and that they had missed their chance of getting away during the night. They hear a booming voice coming from the doorway. (Spoken in German with English subtitles).

CIVILIAN MAN

Macht auf und kommt heraus. Sie werden gut behandelt.

(Open up and come out. You will be treated well.)

WALTER

It wasn't the farmer that gave us away. It was the boy.

Karl nods.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Karl and Walter make their way down the loft steps where they are greeted by a German civilian with an armband and five Canadian soldiers. They are put in handcuffs and roughly pushed out of the house.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

KARL (V.O)

The only thing I dreaded all through the war had come about. All the time I was engaged in combat I was never afraid of being killed, but I had an awful feeling about being captured.

Karl and Walter are both searched by guards. The one searching Karl finds his military pass with a picture of Hitler glued on to the back. As Karl is trying in vain to show the officer he didn't want the picture there, he was only ordered to, the officer turns red with anger, rips out the picture, and slaps him in the face.

EXT. NOORDWIJK ON THE SEA - NIGHT

We focus in on many men on a steel boat in a rough sea fighting against the wind and rain. We hear Karl say:

KARL (V.O)

A tank picked us up from the village where we were taken to a prisoner of war camp. We got loaded on to a train. We were put in another camp. We were interrogated and put on to another train. Such is life in the army. (Beat). There were rumors we would be going to Russia. We weren't.

EXT. POW CAMP - OTLEY, ENGLAND - DAY

Karl is marching up a hill with fellow prisoners and Walter by his side. At the top of this hill is a huge prisoner of war camp fenced with barbed wire and tall guard towers.

KARL (V.O)

This was Otley in the county of Yorkshire, England, the site of one of the most memorable and life-changing experiences I would ever have.

INT. POW CAMP - NIGHT

We see a tent with ten disgruntled prisoners lying down on the ground, legs crossing in the middle. Focus in on Karl lying quietly while the others are complaining.

PRISONER

Three hot meals a day, they say. Watery porridge and a cup of tea for breakfast. For lunch: one slice of bread and a cup of tea. Then, some more bread with butter and cheese that could feed one person but has to be split to feed the ten of us.

KARL

It could be a lot worse.

PRISONER

How could it be worse? We're already starving.

In reply to this, Karl curls up in to a ball to remove himself from the mess of feet in the middle of the tent.

EXT. CAMP GROUNDS - DAY

Karl is lost in thought as he strolls around the perimeter of the camp. Today is his birthday. We see flashbacks.

QUICK INTERCUTS

-Karl is a little boy, playing with his brother and three sisters in the back yard. His mother and father are looking on, sitting in chairs, sipping lemonade.

-His mother's bedroom where she is lying on her deathbed with the family looking on. She is pale and does not wear a happy face like she does in the previous memory.

-Karl's brother is valiantly flying an ME109 over clear blue skies.

EXT. CAMP GROUNDS - DAY

Karl suddenly becomes aware of himself again as rain starts to pour down and a clap of thunder is heard. A few days later...

POW CAMP LIEUTENANT

You've been assigned to a farm commando, Kern.
Here's a card that your farmer will identify you by.

The next day...

A Morris Minor station wagon pulls up outside the gates. A guard checks the number on the farmer's card and the huge iron gate is opened, letting Karl and the three men with him out. The men study the FARMER. He has a weather-beaten face with kind blue eyes under his bushy eyebrows and a medium build. The prisoners manage to say..

PRISONERS

Good morning.

..And climb in to the car.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The station wagon arrives at a medium but tidy farm. The house is modest yet appealing. The men step out.

FARMER

Do any of you speak English?

The men, save Karl, shake their heads and look around.

KARL

A little.

FARMER

Then you can be the spokesman. Alright, let me, uh, show you what to do.

EXT. STABLE - DAY

The stable is piled up to the ceiling with horse manure. Most of it dried up. The boys look at each other in bewilderment but they're eager to please their new employer. A little later, Karl is forking up a little manure and the pile is half cleared. The farmer appears out of the house.

FARMER

Take a break. Sit down.

The men sit down and the farmer stares at them, standing there.

FARMER

Where's your lunch?

The men motion that they don't have any food and flip their pockets out to show they have nothing.

FARMER

I don't understand. It says in the letter you're well fed and need not be given food.

KARL

(In broken English) We eat one slice of bread in one day.

The farmer is astonished and rushes in to the house. He comes back later with a plate piled high with sausages. Behind him, his wife carries two huge bowls of french fries.

EXT. POW CAMP GROUNDS - DAY

A soldier passes by Karl who is taking a walk around the camp.

SOLDIER

You there. You've been assigned a new commando.
Building site.

EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

A large group of the prisoners stand in front of an abandoned farmhouse with tractors, cement mixers, gravel, cement, and piles of curbstones and wooden planks around it.

INT. ABANDONED FARMHOUSE - DAY

The foreman stands in front of the men with an interpreter by his side.

FOREMAN

This whole site's going to be turned in to a housing estate. Your job is to build the roads and manholes and lay the water and sewage pipes.

The interpreter repeats it in German.

FOREMAN

Now do we have any carpenters?

Karl sits next to his trusty friend, Walter, who looks a little uneasy when Karl raises his hand and nudges him expectantly.

WALTER

I have no idea how to work with wood.

KARL

Come on, I'll show you how to do it.

Walter reluctantly raises his hand and Karl gives him a thankful smile as the foreman tells them—

FOREMAN

Bill will be in charge of you.

EXT. ROAD NEXT TO BUILDING SITE - DAY

Karl is working on a manhole close to the collection of houses nearby where a narrow road passes through the building site. He spots a young girl, possibly about seventeen or eighteen walking along the road.

The next day, Karl is working at the side of the road anticipating this girl walking past him. She does. Karl pretends to measure something as the girl approaches. Then he looks up. She is beautiful. Her blue eyes sparkle and she blushes slightly as she sees him looking at her. Her dark blonde hair falls neatly to her shoulders as she daintily walks on by. Karl's eyes follow her the whole way.

A few days later, he is working in the very same spot when he sees her again, holding a little girl by the hand. This time, Karl looks up just as they pass.

KARL

Good evening.

GIRLS

Good evening.

The two girls smile as they pass him but quicken their pace.
INT. ABANDONED FARMHOUSE - DAY

Bill is sitting at a messy desk sipping a cup of tea. He looks up when Karl coughs.

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