

"900 Days"

written by Jan Wilson

JanWilson515@gmail.com 818-522-6191

www.900DaysTheMovie.com www.HappyFrogFilms.com

Main Characters:

Dmitri -- Male, mid to late 20s.

Even if he had wanted to, Dmitri couldn't have followed his brother into the Army. A boyhood bout of polio has left him with "polio feet." He is "unsuitable for military service". His brother Aleksei was the pride of the family after signing up and going off to fight the Germans.

Never studious or overly ambitious in school, the only path open to Dmitri was to follow in his father's footsteps to work in the shoe factory. His father claimed he was proud of him, but his father's words of proclaimed pride never matched the sparkle in his eye when Aleksei marched in wearing his uniform. And now that Aleksei has been killed in the war, Dmitri can't help but feel that the wrong son was spared.

With the city now blockaded and full of mostly women, old people and children, every passerby's glance at Dmitri screams in his head "Why aren't you out there fighting for Mother Russia?" More devastating than the hunger that gnaws at his empty stomach is the guilt that eats away at his soul.

But after Dmitri meets Marina and is enchanted by her, he realizes there is something he can do for her, for the country. He finds his own way to contribute to the war effort. And in the process, he regains his faith. But unlike everyone he knows, it is not his faith in Stalin rescuing them that has been renewed. His renewed faith is in his fellow Leningraders.

Marina -- Female, late 20s.

Marina is a member of the Russian Intelligentsia – the well-educated class of intellectuals who immerse themselves in art, music, poetry, literature and Russian culture. Though not high-born, Marina has a natural regal beauty and elegance to her nature. Before the war Marina and her husband, also a member of the Intelligentsia, regularly met with friends and other members of the Intelligentsia in small informal groups. There they ate, discussed their beliefs and theories, drank, and argued good-naturedly well into the night.

Marina and her husband often brought their young daughter Katya to the gatherings. Katya is not overly interested in her parent's leanings, but she is welcomed by the older artists, poets, writers, and musicians. Marina respects her daughter's disinterest, after all she's just a young child, but nevertheless tries to subtly instill a love of culture in her while she's still impressionable.

After her husband goes off to the front and is killed, Marina does her best to raise Katya and keep their lives as 'normal' as possible. Even after the city is besieged, and food is scarce and the winter sets in, Marina tries to keep the weekly meetings going with her colleagues. It doesn't take Marina long to realize that her skills are best used at the Radio House. With many employees off at war, dead, or physically incapable of keeping things afloat, Marina's help is welcomed and she truly feels she is making a difference.

Marina still believes that Stalin will save Leningrad and never loses her faith in him. She is filled with hope, and until Comrade Stalin rescues them she feels that it is her duty to keep the dying city alive with the only thing Hitler hasn't taken away from them: Their poetry. Their words. Their art. Their music. She is a true romantic at heart and never gives up.

Katya -- Female, 10 years old.

Katya is the ten-year old daughter of Marina. Harsh wartime conditions have caused her to learn more than a little girl should at her age. Marina and Dmitri are both alarmed by Katya's all too casual acceptance of death and suffering all around her. But this kid is smart and adaptable and tough. In fact, she is probably more tough than her sensitive mother. Marina worries that a child's demeanor could become so hardened. But this quality that steals her childhood is also what will allow her to survive until adulthood.

Katya's openness and friendliness at the Radio House is what makes factory-worker Dmitri feel welcome and comfortable in this place of high intellect and culture. She is the bridge that allows Dmitri to connect with Marina.

Sasha -- Male, mid to late 20s.

Sasha is Dmitri's boyhood friend, and total opposite of him. Sasha is goofy, carefree and he is endlessly hopeful about any given situation. This provokes more than a few good-natured fights with the more serious Dmitri, from boyhood right on up until today.

Now a soldier, Sasha has learned how to walk that fine line of making sure Dmitri has what he needs for survival but without making him feel like a helpless invalid. It's a balancing act that only a true, lifelong friend could accomplish with such ease and good humor.

Like Marina, Sasha is still devoted to Stalin, believing he will save the city. But Sasha's trust and loyalty to Stalin is not blind, not complete. Dmitri spies a tiny icon strapped to the visor of the truck Sasha drives across the Road of Life. "Your Stalin wouldn't approve of that." Dmitri says. Sasha dares to briefly take one hand off the unsteady wheel, kisses his fingers and transfers the kiss to the icon, touching it gently. "Even Stalin himself cannot take away my God."

Olga -- Female, mid 30s.

Olga is Dmitri's sister-in-law. She comes from a very respectable and highly-placed family, and perhaps married a bit beneath her when she married Dmitri's brother Aleksei. This is a fact that she keeps close at hand to hurl fiercely at someone when she becomes frustrated.

She is tightly wound and even in the best of circumstances easily frustrated when she does not get her way. But in the besieged city where rank and social standing mean nothing in the bread lines, Olga finds her world spinning out of control and starts to unravel with it. When outright rage does not get the desired results, she falls back on her false charm and passive-aggressive emotional manipulations.

But as off-putting as her methods may be, her reasons are heartfelt. She is simply a mother trying to save her two little boys as best she can and is ill-equipped to mix amongst the lower class citizens upon whom her survival now depends.

Shostakovich -- Male, 35 years old.

One day composer Shostakovich gives an impassioned speech to the citizens of the Leningrad. He tells them that he is writing his Seventh Symphony about the siege of Leningrad and is dedicating it to the citizens. He is the epitome of the idealism of the Russian Intelligentsia: "Leningrad is my native city. Here is my home and my heart. Soviet musicians, my many and dear colleagues, my friends, remember that our art is threatened with great danger. We will defend our music. We will work with honest and self-sacrifice that no one may destroy it!" (real quote.)

Marina watches from afar as he speak, with Katya at her side. "Just think, Katya, you can say you met him. The musical genius of our time. You can tell your grandchildren." But Katya is more concerned with finding scraps of food to eat than meeting famous musicians.