

EastEnders star on living life to the full

A film to be shown as part of the Yorkshire Festival of Story is encouraging people to fulfil their life's dreams. Laura Reid speaks to its creator and star Linda Marlowe.

If there is one message that writer Colin Skevington, *inset*, and actress Linda Marlowe want audiences to take from their short film *The Lossen*, it is that of the sadness in unfulfilled dreams. "It's to not live your life waiting for things to happen," 83-year-old Marlowe says.

"There are bad things and good things (in life) but don't regret that you've not done things...Don't leave something until you get really old and say I wish I could turn the clock back.

"I am old now and I don't feel like that. I feel like I have done everything I wanted to. Well, there are more things I want to do, but I've not stopped going out and doing things that I think will make my life more happy...Life is to be lived here and now. You have to keep going."

Tomorrow, *The Lossen* will be screened as part of the Yorkshire Festival of Story (YFOS), an annual celebration of the power of storytelling run by arts charity Settle Stories.

Skevington and Marlowe are both set to be in the region for the event, taking questions afterwards from an in-person and virtual audience.

Since the film's initial release in 2018, they've had feedback from viewers across the world, with some telling of how it motivated them to act on a change in their lives they'd been wanting to make.

"I think storytelling is a way for humans to reflect on their own journey," Skevington muses. "To hear that a story can change someone's life in a really positive way is really powerful and what's lovely about Settle Stories and the festival is that it's highlighting the importance of storytelling."

Film-maker Skevington specialises in particular on thought-provoking social issue dramas and wrote the script for *The Lossen* whilst staying at a friend's house in Settle in the Yorkshire Dales.

He has since gone on to write six more instalments, with hopes now of pitching the scripts to producers and streaming platforms and securing a commission to create a television series. Nearly all of the writing has been done in the Dales.

"I love Yorkshire and I find it a very in-

spiring place to be for writing, with the scenery," he says. "A lot of my ideas come from going for walks...I can lose myself in Yorkshire."

The original seed for *The Lossen*, however, grew from research Skevington did for a Los Angeles-based documentary company.

The firm was exploring ideas for a film about hospitals and Skevington became interested in differing attitudes towards death.

In the end, the documentary did not go ahead, but it had sparked within Skevington an idea to develop a film plot entwining the themes of life, death and loss.

The Lossen converges the natural and supernatural, with the mythical figure of the Lossen, the Grim Reaper's mysterious agent of death taking centre stage.

As the life of Sylvia Cappleman (Marlowe), a successful 70-year-old businesswoman, comes to an end, the Lossen (Sean Knopp) discovers a complication with her passing; her dream is unfulfilled.

The haunting figure takes Sylvia on a journey to confront her past to see what led to her drifting away from her heart's desire.

"I liked the fact there was also some humour, some very funny bits," says Australian-born Marlowe, who was approached for the role. The footage was filmed overnight, in a cold week in Bedfordshire.

"It was freezing cold. At one point, Sean and I couldn't say our lines because our mouths were so freezing. We had to stop for a bit.

"It locked our jaws, it was so bitterly cold that we couldn't speak at all."

She was driven to take part, by the film's impactful message, one she felt had real poignancy within her own family.

Her mother, she explains, had begun to follow her dream of acting, training in the profession in London, but pushed her passion to the side when she married Marlowe's father.

"He would have been perfectly happy for her to act," Marlowe says, "but she never fulfilled the thing she wanted to do in her life...She gave up on herself at an early age which was really rather sad."

Marlowe's own dream as a young child was to become a ballet dancer but after de-



LIFE UNFULFILLED: Linda Marlowe appears in *The Lossen*, which is to be screened as part of Yorkshire Festival of Story.

clining she lacked the talent of a prima ballerina, she set out to pursue acting instead. Having moved to the UK aged ten, that's what she has done professionally since her late teens.

For 25 years, she was a leading lady under Steven Berkoff, touring in his plays internationally and taking to the stage in London's West End.

Marlowe has also enjoyed an extensive career in film and television, with credits including *The Avengers*, *Midsomer Murders*, *EastEnders* and *Silent Witness* to her name.

Skevington also started young, making films from the age of 13 and screening them to as many viewers as he could gather in local community halls.

After a stint in computing, he worked in the film unit of the RSPB charity and in 2006, started Moon Watcher Media film production company.

"I don't want to do films for the sake of it. I want to do things that have a message," he says. "*The Lossen* is no exception, begging the questions of whose life are we living and is it really too late to live our dreams?"

"I remember reading an article by a hospice nurse and she said one of the regrets that most people have on their death bed is not doing what they said they really wanted to do.

"I think that really is the message from the film," he says. "Film is a really powerful tool for getting people to look at life differently."

The Lossen is being screened during Yorkshire Festival of Story, on November 18, from 7pm. Visit yorkshirefestivalofstory.com