

K.I.A.

My name is Jeremy Webber and I have just been shot. I didn't think it would happen like this, being shot I mean. I thought it would be glorious, being surrounded, fighting until the last man and he might get a lucky shot. That's what all the posters back home made it seem like, that we'd be gods among men. I didn't imagine that I would be shot peeking over for a look past no-man's land, the desolate muddy wasteland full of barbed wire and littered with bodies, and trying to have a peek at the Germans.

I lay here with a searing pain in my shoulder, I begin to wonder how long it has been. Five minutes? Ten? Twenty? As I lie here time escapes me and I'm left my thoughts. I remember back to the moment when I was shot, what was really only a few minutes ago seems like a lifetime. The bullet hit me directly in my left shoulder, not grazing, like my other friends had experienced. I'm not sure if the bullet has lodged itself in my shoulder or passed through, either way it burns like fire. I wince from the searing pain that shoots down my arm and up my neck as I look over to find out. I grit my teeth and push through the pain. That's what my officer always said to my squadron, the First Battalion of Ottawa. "Push through, it'll all be over soon!" Definitely over for me. I continue to look down at my shoulder, a pool of blood surrounds my upper body, slowly creeping down the gradual slope of the trench.

The *trench*. Oh God it's terrible, mud and wood, is all it's really made of. When we're not fighting all we can do is sleep, eat, *and wait*. We have snipers located along intervals to pick off any German troops we see. Guess they had the same idea. I chuckle at this and the chuckle turns into a wheezing cough. I hear the light patter of rain around me. If someone doesn't find me soon, I'll drown here. All the water out here seems to find it's way into this damn hole. The idea of death brings more thoughts to my head. Maybe the rats will get me in the end. Seems ironic, after eating them, I'll be food for them. about that. Maybe they think we'll be killed before we are affected by the disease ridden meat. Maybe I'll be proof of that.

Dying won't be that bad I think. It'll end the miserable pain and suffering of this God damned war. I didn't read all the news reports before I enlisted. Something about an assassination, and European countries going at each other like dogs in a cage. What I know for sure is that Britain's fighting in this war, and so am I. Canada's always loyal to Britain. They could declare war on the moon and we would too.

I miss my mom, I miss my dad, I miss my brother, and I miss my friends. My parents are too old to fight, I wonder to myself what they are doing right now. Maybe they are just waiting and dreading the moment that they will receive a letter from the government telling them of my untimely demise. My brother is too injured to fight, crippled at work. I wonder to myself if that's a blessing or a curse. When I enlisted with my buddies we all had the same mindset, we'll fight this war together, watch each others backs. After all, it seems that we know each other better than ourselves. Now I don't know if any of them are dead or alive. We were all put into different squadrons for God knows why. Now I'm supposed to trust my life with the hands of people who I have I've never met before? Well, I guess they didn't do a very good job.

I'm broken from my trance by the sound of footfalls, I gaze up at the stars. Stars? I must've been out. I feel myself being lifted onto a stretcher. Someone pulls out a flask, water I presume, and pours it on a cloth.

"This is gonna hurt like Hell," he says.

And it does. I bite my lip so hard until I feel blood dripping onto my tongue.

"Drink this," says the same voice.

As my eyes focus on the men around me I see two familiar faces. The medic, I could never remember his name, Jim or Joe, one of the two. I had always just called him Doc. The other man was my commanding officer. The one who told me to hang in there. Just like I told my girl back home to do until I got back home. "Home for Christmas." I had said. It's January now. My eyes become droopy, and I have a shudder that runs up my spine.

"Get him back to med bay now!" My commanding officer says.

"Don't you die on me Webber!", he shouts. Funny. I thought he never knew my name, I always saw him a less than human. A machine, like the automobiles back home. But now I see that he's more than that. He was dragged into this war like the rest of us. He wants every one of us back home as much as I want my self back.

"Alright chief," I manage to stutter.

I'm lifted up on the stretcher and brought back to the second or third trenches, through the connecting lines.

When I awaken later it is to the sound of the doctor shuffling through a bag and pulling out a flask.

"It's water, I promise, You need to drink." The doctor says, he's British from what I can tell. I take the flask with my good arm and gulp down all the water in the container in seconds.

"Get me a pen and paper, Doc." I say weakly.

"Of course." He says, and walks away. I have a chance to look at my surroundings. From what I see around me, my injury compared to other, makes me extremely lucky. People all around me are missing limbs, have large chunks of metal in their bodies, it seems that everyone is writing letters, all preparing to say goodbye to their loved ones before a letter from the military gets to them telling them that their son, husband, boyfriend had been killed in battle.

The doctor returns with a pen and a sheet of paper, along with a clipboard to write on.

"Call me if you need anything." He says, and goes to care for his other patients. I start to write a letter to my family and my girl back home.

All I really tell them is that I love them. Not much else to tell really. This letter also sort of acts as a mini Will. I tell them where my belongings can go if I don't make it back. As I finish my letter, the doctor comes back in.

"Finished?" he asks, it takes me a second or two to realize that he is talking about my letter.

"Yeah," I say and give him the address, even though the army already knows where I live.

"I'll mail this right away." He says with a smile and leaves. As he walks away, I fall into a dreamless sleep.

When I am awoken again, it is not by the Doc. But by the sound of bombs, *shells*, falling around the area.

They are ear piercing in sound, but not a sharp sound. More like a thunderous clap that resonates through your body. Thinking it's not safe in the med bay area, I continue to try and find some better shelter. My legs are stiff and my body is sore from inactivity. Which raises the question in my head. *How long was I out?* It doesn't take long for the question to slip through my mind and I forget about it completely. I continue to walk, mud flying everywhere, the bombs definitely seem closer and louder, the sound of shells grow louder and louder, like the footsteps of a giant who grows closer and closer. I stop and look up at the sun, it's bright to my eyes that have adjusted to the dark. I cover my face and see a

note in my hand. *A note in my hand?* I rip open the package containing the letter, though it's not a letter addressed to me, it's a letter addressed *by* me. It's my letter. An explosion erupts around me and I feel nothing, my last thought is that my family will only receive the letter from the military telling them that I had died.

Jeremy Webber, K.I.A 23/01/15