

5<sup>th</sup> December 2022

## In The Trenches

It was happening. The deafening wailing, screaming and shouting knocked my focus. A sea of soldiers rushed past me, frantically gathering supplies. The rapid gunshots firing every few seconds, the ear-piercing yelling of the soldiers, the heartbreaking cries as more lives are stolen, all of it, crowding my mind. Everyone lined up, prepared for the worst. I breathe in the bitterly smoke spreading over our heads, I hack and cough as it fills my lungs. I leaned against the wet, cold wood like a filthy rat. That repulsive, damp scent lingered like a never-ending fog as we cautiously stepped along the muddy duck-boards. The trenches were a river; cold, wet swamped with things best unknown. As it began to rain, the sump went into good use. Soldiers standing humbly proud as the rain trickled over their heads. The rain got heavier and was soon a waterfall, towering down and drenching us. Looking upon my team, I could see them straight-faced yet drowning in their own undeniable fear.

"Run! Gas! Put your masks on, hurry!" Soldiers leapt for their masks as if they were there their children. Those awful retching sounds. The traumatising shrieks. Panicked cries were let out as the gas swallowed them whole. Was I to die too? This haunting thought hammered relentlessly through my mind. I hoarsely wheezed in my tight mask, running from this persistent terror. Soldiers staggered helplessly as they fell behind, dropping dead left and right. The wooden boards let out a painful creak as I ran sprinted over them. The wheezing became gasping for a breath as my weak body fought the fatigue. My legs stung with agony. I gazed back to see the deadly gas rising away, being challenged by wagons, sandbags and canons. A defenseless soldier stumbled toward me, limp and ~~distray~~ ~~distray~~ distraught. With no regrets I handed

him my mask and dashed away. I thought I'd get away until I heard, "More gas! More gas!". I was cut sharp. These words making my adrenaline run. A scurry of masked soldiers fled past me. I stood, knowing my fate...

The sweet poison drifted gracefully toward me. I fought for my last breath. I was being buried in a toxic sea. I knew taking a breath would set fire to my lungs. The yellow gas was like the sun, blinding my eyes. As figures became a blur, I was suffocating on my own breath. I let out a painful exhale, realising my mistake. Inhaling the venomous, musty air, my lungs suffered an immediate shock. That infuriating smell sparked up my nose. I felt ignited with failure. My blazing organs whistled with fire. I cried out as my limp duckled knees let out. The cool, moist floor comforted my flaming body. Within minutes, the gas began to glide away; still I knew it'd make no difference with intoxicated lungs. I took my final breath. A blur of shapes approached, I felt them lift my limp body. Thud. Into the wagon, where all the rest go.