

24th October 1914

Dear Diary,

The smell here is damp and chilling. I stand knee-deep in mud and cat-sized rats rush around me. At night I don't sleep, I simply sit awake, shaking, terrified that at any second I could die. I play out every possible scenario in my head, each worse than the last, trapped in my own bone shaking imagination.

Few people remain healthy, most suffer from trench foot while others are being eaten alive by rats.

We get given stale bread and beer, but even if I had a full proper meal, like the ones from home, I'd still be lacking. I lack the lost feeling on joy and hope, the feeling of being full after a meal, the feeling of love.

I came here thinking I was a hero, but right now, I feel like the victim. I long to be back home, away from this place. Sometimes the longing is so harsh, I am tempted to jump out, suicidal, and get shot. I'd rather be dead than be here.

It's rainy and dark here and even in the daytime, there is little-to-no light. Living in a few layers of thick, slimy mud, you'll see the odd toe floating and swimming around.

I feel as though there is a hole in my stomach, and empty pit that nothing can fill. I miss my family so much, my wife, my two daughters, my parents. I haven't heard from them in a few weeks.

Living here is like living in hell, but here is worse. The trenches are like tunnels of torture, you never know what to expect and every surprise is a bad one.

My only friend here is gone, we joined together hoping to finish together, but it looks like he finished early. On his last day, a huge bomb hit, he was at the front row. Tons of people died and he had to watch their suffering, he couldn't do anything, they just dropped. He spiralled into a panic, shaking and trembling. He had been staring into nothing, trapped in this nightmare. He had been screaming, shouting and trembling all at the same time, he started hitting and kicking, the other soldiers panicked, not knowing what to do and shot him dead. My own friend. Dead.

Life right now is at its worst. The only thing keeping me going is knowing that my family is back home waiting for me. I just hope their waiting won't be for nothing.

All around me is noise, the worst noise possible at that. My eardrums feel as though they could burst as noises of bombs, blasts and gunshots fill them.

It'll be my turn soon, to go on duty as the Sentry. It's a terrifying and dangerous role. I wish I didn't have to go. Those who've taken that role so far are mostly injured and in pain, some have died but others... I'd rather not say.

Right now, in my mouth, I taste metal, I can taste blood. It hurts too. Earlier, I was diving for safety and I broke my tooth. It's quite sharp and jagged now in my mouth, I've cut my tongue a lot. But this is nothing compared to some of the other injuries my friends have gotten. Here I am complaining about a stupid tooth when people are out there, dying. Still though, it's easier to ramble on about little things than great big things, but now I sound like a coward.

Anyway, I've got to go now, for duty. To think, these could be the last words I ever write...

If you're reading this, my dear wife, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have signed up. It was all that stupid propaganda. Goodbye.

Love,  
Caleb

By Aili Bielicki, Year 8L