

The back of his head was ice cold. Inches deep in a hot, red puddle. He was fading, in and out of life. Senses disappeared from the rest of his body and focused on the cold damp sensation where the skull kissed the ground. An explosion rattled death from his bones. He still couldn't move, only Glance around the trench and at those claimed in the bomb's blast. Friends made along the trenches at the soldier's feet. His ringing head and refusal to accept their fate kept names from his mind.

Beams of light raced across the sky like lightning. People shouting. The crack of weapons ringing in his ears revived his tired muscles and he pulled himself to his knees. Figures ran towards him from deeper within the trenches. Fellow soldiers checking for survivors. A few men carried an injured few back into the depths. A soldier with a scruffy beard, half shaven, approached.

"Mate, grab an arm and man the trench! We ain't gonna lose this line. Avil, get this man a rifle! Avil?"

Another soldier dropped off a ladder they just leaned against the trench wall. They fell backwards, dragging themselves to the opposite wall. Face filled with fear.

"Sir, it– Death– Monroe, it's back. Monroe the devil is back!"

"Avil, you stow that cowardice and help this man to his feet." Monroe barked, making his way up the ladder in Avil's place.

Before the wounded soldier could grab something to help him stand, the sky above him went white, casting the dirty trench in geometric shadows. Screeching gave way to ringing, then silence. Those higher in the trench were cast in black shadow. reduced to burnt carbon. Limbs below the opening caught fire, tumbling down only to be covered in ash.

He was frozen, warm blood dripping off his matted hair.

It lasted only a moment, then the sky was again a dusty blue. The screams of those who survived began drowning out the ringing. He scrambled to the top of the trench, clambering through ash and dirt.

The sky lit up again, across the no man's land. He could see it now. The walking incinerator of death. A robust oxen figure seemingly made of stone; shining, proud-stanced. Four powerful legs dug into the rubble as it positioned itself for another volley. Empty eyes scanned the environment. Her mouth opened wider than any natural thing could. With an inhale, the beast again spat out a bright beam of destruction. Wild hair dancing around its perfect, human face.

And on angel wings, it disappeared. Perhaps to another battlefield. Perhaps back to hell.

No one would ever believe him, no one would believe any of them.