

Letter home

He sits cross-legged, pencil stub in blackened hand. Wonders what to write to his distant bride whose pillow-soft lips he left in Dundee town. He could tell of ugly Crimean mud that wanders each crease of his scarlet coat caking to crumbs, his daily bread; or else of horses, four or five each night whose knees give out for lack of oats. Or should he speak of shells that howl like dogs in his head, or name the sergeant-major whose shout as arm was ripped from epaulette, became his horn from hell? No. Eyes half-closed he sees her kneel, bury small hands in peaty soil. Writes her: spring has dressed the battlefields with drifts of hope, a white regiment to soothe broken hills. Ending, encloses a bulb for her garden, promises he'll be home.

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