

Wednesday 3.00am

A quarry in Oxfordshire

When you wish upon a star
Makes no difference who you are
Anything your heart desires
Will come to you

If your heart is in your dream
No request is too extreme
When you wish upon a star
As dreamers do.

The Boy is asleep. Wrapped in a tattered piece of tarpaulin he'd found in the broken down hut he is dreaming, crying in his sleep, his thin body shakes with a mixture of terror, grief and anger. Technically he is a Deserter, but at 15 he doesn't care. His life stopped in 1940. His Dad was dead at Dunkirk, one of the last pathetic survivors of the BEF, holed up in cellars, starving under relentless pounding from artillery for weeks until finally told to surrender. The last few pitiful survivors were packed onto cargo ships and sent back over the Channel to a demoralised Britain.

His Mother was dead too. Killed by a drunken Squaddie as she tried to protect her children. He remembered her body sprawled across the bedroom floor, neck broken as his Sister screamed under the Squaddy's brutal assault. Afterwards he shamefacedly left them a few notes and some food, before leaving, not looking back.

That was when he became a Killer too. He saw the Squaddie the next day, with his unit, resting before going back into the line. He watched him break away and go behind a wall to piss. He crept silently around to see the man facing away. He jumped forward and slashed down with his knife, the one his father had given him before leaving for France. The Squaddie screamed then collapsed in shock. He grabbed the Squaddy's gun and fled. A gun was as good as money, even without ammunition. A few more days food at least.

Sis was dead now. Dysentery. He was alone at 13. No one cared. In the chaos no one noticed. Then the call for volunteers. He turned up at the recruiting centre, said he was 15, was given a gun and a few rounds and sent off to war. It had been like that ever since. No wonder he shook in his dreams. He had been one of the last out of London, fighting their way back, each street paid for in broken bodies. Building booby traps, cutting throats, shooting collaborators, looters and deserters – he had done it all.

Now it was his turn. He didn't care. As they had finally left London the squad had simply disintegrated. The last regular forces had retreated towards Oxford, while units like his had held off the invader, making them pay for every inch. He didn't care. Now, sleeping, wrapped and moderately dry and warm in a broken down hut is the most comfortable he has been since – he can't remember when.

The snow continues to fall as it has for the last three days. Only the location of the hut under a larger corrugated iron canopy prevents it from being completely buried. Even so it looks unlikely that he can escape any time soon. The path to the top of the quarry is steep and winding. It will be impossible to use in these conditions.

The Boy sleeps on.