

On Deaths Road

A poem of an Australian Soldier by Jazmaree Dawson.

He dresses in his uniform,
And stands at the docks,
I shake his hand and hold back tears,
I've been doing this a lot.

I can feel his pain and excitement,
His feelings absorbed through me,
I try to smile as he walks away,
God please let him be.

I mirror his pain,
When a bullet wounds his chest,
I cry late at night,
Hoping his soul is safe at rest.

I'm only seventeen,
Underage but fit,
They're getting desperate in Gallipoli,
Men are dying to quit.

I'm in the Light Horse Brigade,
A young stockman by work,
My father believes it's the highest honour,
But I can see the shadows in his eyes lurk.

They shove a gun in my hand,
A hardhat on my head,
Whisper words of legends
That I know will surely end.

The ship is filled with blurred faces,
Not a single person smiles,
I've lost count of all the rats I've seen,
As we travel the ocean for miles.

We land at our training camp,
It seems to have wilted away,
Most men are tired and weak here,
As we march and fight everyday.

The time has come for me to fight,
After being trained for only two weeks,
We board another ship filled with more rats,
I am comforted by their constant squeaks.

You see these rats will keep me sane,
On this journey to ANZAC cove,
They remind me I'm not drowning,
I feel like a cattle on a drove.

We head to smaller boats,
And row to the shore,
I can hear the guns already,
They seem to endlessly roar.

My feet hits the gravel dirt,
And I'm immediately told to run,
I hit the beach at a sprint,
Trying to keep hold of my gun.

I glance over my shoulder,
As I near the first camp base,
A boy has already fallen dead,
I'm starting to dread this place.

I arrive at the gloomy camp,
With slaps on my back for not getting shot,
I seemed to have passed the first test,
To earn some respect from this lot.

I'm ordered into the trenches,
A man without his horse,
I'm told of the plans to attack The Nek,
They believe we'll get it with sheer force.

I write a letter to my mother,
Telling her I'm okay,
I know she'll cry when she reads it,
So I assure her I'll be home someday.

I think of my brother then,
On the evening before our attack,
A wonder if he felt the same,
Always afraid to turn his back.

Sure the friendships are good,
But that's only if you know anyone,
I'm too scared to make new friends,
I don't want to say goodbye to everyone.

It's cold and damp down in the trenches,
A personal battle to sleep,
With the battle cries still calling,
I struggle not to weep.

How can I fight at a time before dawn,
I long for the sun against my skin,
I don't want to die in the darkness,
Please lord let us win.

Countless hours before the planned attack,
We are told to line up,
I know I don't have enough ammo,
I've finally had enough.

I find a knife,
And use it to stab my last letter to the trench wall,
It's addressed to everyone I love,
I decided to say goodbye to them all.

It's nearing the time to charge now,
All the men are getting nervous,
My finger doesn't leave my guns trigger,
At least I'll be doing my country a service.

We leap over the trench,
I call out his name then,
"For Charlie!" I scream,
As we charge into the Lion's den.

My story ends rather suddenly,
With a bullet to my head,
A flash of white and then it's gone,
I'm proud I never bled.

I walk the shadows now,
On Deaths Road,
A soldier of Gallipoli,
A tale I am owed.

*Based on the Battle of The Nek which took place on the 7th of August 1915,
Lest we forget.*