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My Dearest Edward,

It's been a while since I've last heard from you. I can only assume you are still alive for I have not received any sort of notice telling me otherwise. You've been there on the Western front for almost 3 years now, but I still remember you leaving for Salisbury Plain as though it was yesterday. I was rereading the letter you wrote me while you were training there - all the mud, the cold, the hunger! Though from what I've heard, compared to the trenches, the training looks like nothing more than child's play.

I've started helping out at the hospitals that have been set up for the soldiers that have returned home. After the battle of Passchendaele, there were quite a few soldiers returning. The stories some of them have told me are haunting me daily, because I can't help but picture you in every one of them. They told me about the tanks that our troops have continued to improve and to use and the huge number of casualties the battles have provided. Absolutely horrible! One chap watched his best friend be blown to bits by an artillery shell - the same attack that caused him to lose both his legs. I'm sure though you've experienced many of the dangers I've merely heard about. And the mud! Oh the mud I heard was horrible. Is it true that soldiers have drowned in it? I've always heard drowning is one of the worst ways to go...but drowning in the mud must be that little bit worse. Everything about this war is so cruel. It tears my heart out every time I look at the men I am treating. Amputations are common here; the really unfortunate ones are those who have so many shards of artillery shell embedded into their flesh that it makes it impossible to get rid of the damage. It frightens me to see what war does to these men, not just physically but emotionally also. Remember our old friend Sam who lived up the road? He's back home due to an amputated arm, but I swear he's a changed man. He looks 20 years older, at least, and he no longer has that same bounce in his step. I guess that's what war does to a person. He's told me about the trenches and the conditions they brought. I think what bothered him the most were all the rats chewing on all the dead bodies around him, so even when there were no gunshots or moaning of dying men, he could always hear the vermin. "Couldn't they just let our comrades rest in peace?" he asks me every now and then. He was also perturbed by how little ground both sides are gaining. Seems to me there are fewer and fewer enrollments in the war after every story told and every doubt cast.

Though the people here on the home front are still doing everything they can to help. The government has imposed an income tax just until the war ends, and we've all invested in Victory Bonds. Even our son has been doing what he can to help out. He's taken your job at the general store and has even helped out on the field. Johnny and the rest of them helping out have been given the nickname 'soldiers of the soil'. I'll admit though it hadn't been easy without you. It doesn't help that our food has been rationed and we eat more fish these days than meat. Johnny doesn't like fish too much, though he's a good sport for eating it anyway. He understands that it helps the soldiers and he's trying very hard to no let you down. He misses you very much.

Christmas this year may be a quiet event for the family. Even with the help from the Canadian Patriotic Fun and Johnny doing more than his share of the work, it hasn't been easy to make ends meet. All of Halifax will probably have a similar Christmas though, after the explosion and all. I know it has been a year now, but it has taken forever to get our house back in a decent condition. We were fortunate enough to have a few of the locals help us with restoring the last of it, but it has been a great burden both financially and time-wise. It's devastating how long it took to get everything back together.

By the time you received this letter, I assume Christmas will have already passed. I'm hoping yours included some peace and rest. Please know that I think about you constantly and miss you greatly and worry about when I will see you again. Don't you spend too much time worrying about us. We will be fine. You have a task to focus on and we are behind you. Be careful.

We'll be here when you get home,
With all my love,

Catherine
Love Forever and Always

Hi Daddy,

How are you? Are you killing lots of Germans? Mommy says you will be home soon. Is that true? I hope so. I think Mommy misses you. I got a bike for my birthday it was red. I also help at the store. I'm not so good with numbers though. Mr. Brooks is helping me practice. I love you Daddy. Will you please come home?

- Johnny

