

Mr. Alfred John Robertson
The France War Office
1st Brigade AIF
25 June 1916

Dearest Alfie

Where are you? It has been months since your last letter. Perhaps you are stationed without access to stamps? I know your duties are pressing and fancy that finding time to write home can be difficult. But please dearest, please do.

We have endeavored to keep abreast of news through the War Office, but what little we hear is only a trifle. A few short sentences were published rather unceremoniously in May, "that our troops had landed on the Asiatic to fight the Turks with decisive action".

Then silence. Then solitude.

Except for the thoughts that scream echoes of you - what you are enduring, if you are well and how far you are from us. Some relief arrived when they reported Australian Forces had advanced in Gallipoli. Then Churchill's Cheering Letter told of your battalion's brilliant achievements at Dardanelles. My heart ached with pride at your heroism.

Whenever I feel the distance consume me, I remind myself of your bravery and feel I must be too. I confess the worry stays, always, interfering with that tricky time. That hourglass beat that continues through seasons, birdcalls and autumn falls. All which provide a façade of normalcy in a world surrounded by war but hollowed by your absence.

Every week I pray your name will not appear on the Honour Roll. My breath shortens with each step to the Post Office to find the paper. My hands shaking as I open the pages to find the names of the lost. Poor Mrs Langster discovered that her William was killed last week and promptly fainted next to me upon reading his name. A few of us rushed to catch her but could do nothing for her pain apart from hold her.

Each day I stare at my growing belly and ache for the father. Each day we walk and sing and I tell our child that you are fighting for us. Each day as our baby grows familiar with my voice, I ache for the day he hears the softness of yours. I find myself dreaming of you so much that I hope our little one sees what I do.

I stare at the sky and wonder what stars you are under and what the moon looks like where you are. Perhaps it is cold, perhaps it is warm, and perhaps you also hurt. Perhaps with every heartbeat, you miss us as much as we miss you.

I've knitted you a scarf to help with the lice, which you told me about in your last letter. I hope this made it but the Post Office could offer no promises.

Pappa sends his hellos. He is still slow to remember, but I do notice him clasping your letters from time to time. I know he prays and wishes your journey well too.

Dearest, we are always beside you,

Yours always
Betty (and Baby)

About the writer:

Miriam Rule is a 30's something dreamer, mother and poet nerd.

She draws her main inspiration from expressionism, historical memory and sense of place.

A large body of her written work can be found on her blog -

*myislandhomeblog.wordpress.com
- a celebration of poetry and words on Tasmanian life.*