

No Man's Land

I'm laying here callin'
But no one comes near me,
maybe nobody hears me.

That's Tommy close by me
upside down in the mud,
I call him to help me and
he would if he could.
We came here together
to slaughter the Hun,
we said we would fight them all
till the very last one.

I'm laying here callin'
but no one comes near me,
maybe nobody hears me.

That's wee Geordie Nugent
layin' out bye me,
his eyes are shut tight.
He's surely not sleepin',
Get up Geordie and fight.

I'm lyin here callin'
but no one comes near me,
maybe nobody hears me.

That's Sergeant McGillion,
we call him Booty for short,
he could be a bit crabbit but
not a bad sort.
His clean boots are missin'
Oh my God. Where's his legs?

I'm layin here callin
but no one comes near me,
maybe nobody hears me.

The guns are all quiet,
there's blue in the sky.
My friends, all dead around me.
Is it my turn to die?
I'm layin here callin'
and callin'
and callin'

Then I hear mammy sayin'
Is that you callin' me son?

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They call us the *Body Snatchers*. We collect the dead from the battle fields. After the battles we can hear cries for help, but by the time we get to them it's too late. Some are still twitching as life leaves them.

We gather them up. Sometimes we have to dig them out, lifting the pieces we can identify: legs, arms, feet. Heads are the worst. The helmet protects the skull but the face is blown away exposing the jaw and baby teeth that have not grown down.

We have cudgels for the rats, some as big as cats. When they refuse to give up their feast we beat them like savages. There are days I pretend they're the enemy, other days they're generals sitting in their comfortable high class billets drinking red wine while the red blood of young men flows freely through the mud.

We do our best to match up the bodies but, how can you match up a pair of boots the feet still in them? Or three fingers wrapped around the trigger of a twisted rifle?

Their war is over now.

We will do the same again tomorrow.

***Pheme Glass** is retired and lives in Omagh. In 2013 she self published a book of poetry titled 'Seeds of Memory.' She has just finished a novel which will be published in early 2017.*