

# The Trench

by Mikko Tirkkonen

<http://www.lilwolf.biz/>

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“Corpse bombs!”

The shout rang out from some part of the trench and made its way through it. The men repeated the warning, all knowing the deadly danger it presented. Where the warning went the stench of fear spread.

Johan pressed himself against the bag of sand that were holding up the trench wall. The smell of wet ground and fabric hit his nose strong. As soon as he turned away from the wall new smells assaulted his nose. The iron smell of blood mixed with wet mud and rotting flesh that the wind blew from the field of carnage above him.

“Get up you sack of shit and start shooting!” The lieutenant slapped Johan on his helmet as he passed by and continued down the muddy trench. Where he went similar shouts echoed as the man got the men to do their job. Johan watched him disappear behind a bend with a sour expression. He grabbed his rifle and made sure it was locked and loaded. He then slowly stood up and peered over the wooden frame that made up the top of the trench.

There was a mist covering the field. He could see clearly for a few hundred yards, but beyond that things started to be nothing more than fuzzy form. He saw broken carriages, the remnants of spiked fences, and plenty of deep holes from all the artillery fire. A weapon stuck up from the ground here and there with a hand attached to it. On the other end there was a dead body. Or no dead body. All depended on how violent the death had been.

A good hit from artillery shell and all they'd find of the body was the hand and gun.

Johan readied his rifle and took a deep breath. His hands were sweaty. His heart raced. He kept an eye out for anything moving. With the warning that had gone out he knew he needed to shoot fast and with deadly accuracy.

A figure emerged from the mist. It was running at a fast pace straight toward Johan. He didn't hesitate and fired the first shot. It hit the runner in the gut, but that barely made it stumble. It continued running towards him. Johan aimed and pulled the trigger again. This time he hit it in the head and sent the figure stumbling down. Johan quickly ducked into cover.

The explosion happened only a moment later. Dirt fell on him and as he

stood up to take a look a new crater had formed where the corpse had landed.

“Fucking corpses bombs,” Johan muttered and took his position once more. Shots and explosion were sounding off all around him. It used to be that artillery was the terror of the battlefield. The constant barrage of explosives raining down from the sky was still terrifying, but it paled in comparison to the new weapon the enemy had.

The corpse bombs.

The dead come to life with a single purpose. Deliver explosives to the enemy trench. At worst it was your mate from the last assault that ran at you, forcing you to put a bullet in their head and then watch them blow to pieces.

The reassuring noise of the big calibre machine guns firing on either side of Johan had him feeling a bit more secure, but he knew the mist made it easy for something to slip through. While he kept his eye out another figure emerged from the mist. Over all the gunfire he could hear its waling. The jerky way in which it ran made you think it would never make it across the rough terrain. It was a deadly mistake to make.

Johan put a bullet in the dead man's forehead. It fell down and a moment later it exploded, sending dirt and gore into the air.

Explosions echoed across the line. The trench stretched tens of miles. It was entirely possible one part of it had already been over run by the corpse bombs. Johan could only hope that wasn't the case. In the narrow corridors it would be a nightmare to retake any part of it.

“Bastards,” Johan muttered and readied himself for another shot. More figures emerged from the mist. He counted five, then ten, then twenty, then he stopped counting and started firing. There were so many he had no trouble choosing a target. Every one of them was closer than the next no matter how quick he shot. The explosions of the fallen ones slowed the advance some, but not enough.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck.” The last bullet left the barrel of his rifle. The shell bounced out and rolled through the air before dropping into the muddy trench. Johan fumbled for another cartridge from his belt. As he glanced up he realized there was no time. The corpse was too close. He ducked into the trench and

started running towards the bend while reloading his rifle. It went in place with a reassuring click and pulling back the bolt he could hear the first bullet load in place. He turned around and saw the corpse looming on the edge of the trench. He took aim and shot it. It fell into the trench and put some speed into his steps. He managed to duck behind the bend before the explosion happened. He could see dirt and shrapnel hit the wall to the left, opposite of him. Had he been standing there the injuries would have been grave.

He ran to the second bend. The trench continued in a straight line from there with a few crossings that led deeper into the fortification. There were men standing in their firing position, still shooting.

Johan took in a deep breath. "Breach!" He rushed towards the others and continued yelling the words none of them wanted to hear. "Breach! Keep an eye on the trench!"

He stopped after passing a few of the soldier. The shout already repeated in front of him and would move faster than he could run. He turned around to see the first corpse bomb make it around the bend. Before he could raise his rifle to shoot a bullet tore into the undead monster's skull and splattered its brains all over the trench walls. It fell down to the ground face first revealing the wiring and mechanics in its back. There were gears turning, liquid pumped around see through tubes and lights that blinked.

For a moment Johan simply stared at the mechanics that brought the horror to life. He wondered what sort of a twisted mind had come up with it. How utterly void of morale the enemy had to be to resort to such a thing. Then his instincts kicked in and he hit the muddy ground.

"Get down!" he shouted, hoping everyone had the time for it. His third shout was drowned out by the explosion. In the confines of the trench it felt like someone had hit him with a sledgehammer. His ears rang, dirt and stone bounced off his helmet, a torn piece of flesh landed in the mud in front of him. Looking over to where the corpse had been he could see the crater it had made. The sand bags supporting the trench walls had fallen in places. Some of the ground had even caved in. Another explosion happened around the bend sending more dirt falling down on him.

The first explosion had caught one of its comrades.

Looking back he saw others hugging the dirt. They were starting to move and get up. He saw one man resting his back against the sandbags. He was sitting down, or so it seemed, until Johan noticed the bit of white coming out his stomach. A large chunk of bone had hit him there. It didn't look like there was any life left in him.

“Get up! Get up!” the shouting came from the same lieutenant that had passed by Johan before the corpses had started emerging from the mist. “Get up you sack of shit!”

Johan felt the kick to his boots and clambered up. He kept his rifle at the ready and aimed at the bend.

“Let them over run you, did you?” the lieutenant demanded from next to Johan.

“There were too many, sir,” Johan replied and pulled the trigger as another corpse looked to make it around the bend. The shot hit it in the head and made it fall backward. Johan crouched. Most of the explosion was absorbed by the walls, but dirt and some fragment still landed on him.

“Thanks to you we'll need to re-take it,” said the lieutenant, not phased by the explosion. He had a finely groomed moustache and a pistol in hand. It was the prevailing style among many of the officers.

“Yes, sir,” replied Johan with gritted teeth. He wanted to protest. It wasn't his fault he had been the only one guarding that stretch of the trench. It had been the generals that had pulled away most of the unit to plug holes elsewhere on the front. They'd left behind nothing but the bare minimum. Their hopes that the enemy would not notice had not been met.

Looking around he counted five other soldiers besides him who were not busy trying to keep the corpses from crossing the field into the trench. Six soldier didn't seem enough to take back any section of it.

“Charge, you shit bag. Charge!” The lieutenant bellowed as the five other soldiers lined up behind Johan. Without even realizing it, Johan found himself leading the charge. He hesitated, but as the order kept being shouted out his training kicked in and he advanced towards the bend with his rifle ready. He

stopped by the corner to take a peek at what was ahead. He'd had the good sense to bring his rifle to bear so when the corpse bomb came to view he could pull the trigger and send the thing back to hell. He ducked behind the corner and waited for the explosion. He waited for a brief moment to hear if there were any more explosions before rounding the corner with his weapon ready to fire at anything moving. The five soldier followed him in a similar position.

The run to the second bend raised Johan's heart beat. The explosions had damaged the walls. Sand bags laid on the ground and the piles that had kept the trench walls up had lost a lot of their effect. A deep breath and he glanced around the corner.

A corpse ran straight into him.

Johan stumbled back. His long rifle not of any use in the close quarters. He smelled the rotting flesh. The groans of the dead man as it reached for his head. In a panic he pushed it back and stumbled away into the five men behind him.

Then the corpse exploded.

Johan opened his eyes. He saw the battlefield in front of him. Craters, barbed wire, smoke rising in the distance from the trenches.

"Go!" came a voice from behind him. His body moved. It was the jerky movement of a dead one. After a moment he was at full speed. The defenders started shooting at him. His mind worked slowly. There was no control over his body. By the time he reached the trench he'd come to the realization he had died. The enemy had made him into what had killed him. He saw the terrified expression on the close by defenders as he launched himself at them. He knew what was coming.

The bomb inside him exploded.