

# The Legend of Verdun, 1916

English 8

Donley

## Introduction

You are sitting in one of the hundreds of trench lines in the Verdun Salient watching through a small slit in the makeshift machine gun bunker as the enemy is preparing their advance on their enemy's trenches for *Das Vaterland* (The Fatherland), and you and your partner are operating one of the many small machine gun bunkers that were set up to take the brunt of the advancing force.

*"Nous tiendrons les lignes hommes, ils ne passeront pas!"* (We shall hold the lines men, they shall not pass!) Your officer howls to the men in preparation for the bloody battle to come. You and your partner are checking your Hotchkiss machine gun for any faults before you hear your officer bellow frantically, *"Des mitrailleuses à portée de main!"* (Machine guns at the ready!).

*"Dieu nous sauve,"* (God save us) you hear your partner say. *"Ne vous inquiétez pas, nous allons attaquer les Allemands avant même de se rapprocher de la ligne!"* (Do not worry; we will be gunning down the Germans before they even get close to the line!) You reassure your partner.

*\*Fweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeet\** *"Übertrieben!"* (Over the top!) You hear from the German lines, and as they said, they went over the top. You start firing your machine gun at the mass of German infantry as they sprint through no-man's land. Some sprint with inhuman speed and then finally drop down into cover, dead or alive you cannot tell.

*"Artillerie! Prendre couverture!"* (Artillery! Take cover!), you hear this being cried from hundreds of men as three rush in trying to find good cover to take. You begin to hear the explosions and then darkness...

You wake up a long while later to hear German voices outside and your partner and the three soldiers dead. *"Ich werde diesen Bunker überprüfen."* (I will check this bunker.) You hear this from one of the German soldiers you hear outside.

When the soldier comes in, you lay still but even then he notices you and prepares his bayonet to stab you. He hesitates and crouches in front of you instead, and says, *"Ich fühle mich schlecht für dich, wenn ich diesen Krieg durchmachen muss und geträumt werde, auch wenn du noch am Leben bist, werde ich dich ersparen, weil ich nicht in der Lage wäre, mit mir selbst zu leben, wenn ich einen unbewaffneten, hilflosen Mann töte, Feind oder nicht, ich werde ersparen, wo meine Kameraden nicht, Abschied nehmen werden."* (I feel bad for you, having to go through this war and being thought to be killed even when you are still alive, I will spare you because I

wouldn't be able to live with myself if I killed an unarmed, helpless man, enemy or not. I will spare where my comrades will not, farewell.)

As he leaves, you think that the other soldiers probably would have killed you, but nevertheless you wait until night and sneak out and try to find your way back to allied lines...