



Historical Association

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Write your own Historical Fiction

William Harvey's Extreme Venture to Dunkirk

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Prologue

Hello! My name is William Harvey. I am 9 years old and live in a small town called Falmouth in the South of Cornwall near a dock off the Fal Estuary, which is one of the largest docks in the world and is used for ship refuelling, ship repair and most interestingly being part of **OPERATION AERIAL** in 1940.

I adore all boats almost as much as I love swimming! I live with my Mother, Father, Grandmother, teenage sister Dorothy and little sister Ethel. The date is 26th of May 1940 the first day of the battle of Dunkirk on the 6th week of the war between Germany and France. All our British and French soldiers are stuck on Dunkirk, and we need to get them out of there before it's too late....

Chapter 1

"Will! breakfast is ready!" Mother shouted from the cozy, old kitchen, warmed by the open fire.

"Coming Mother!" I bawled from my modest bedroom. The eerie sound of my voice echoed all around the small cottage.

I rushed down the creaky, worn-out stairs awaiting some warm, heavenly porridge.

Ethel, Dorothy, Grandmother, Father and Mother were all waiting for me in their cracked, wooden chairs and Ethel in her musty highchair. We all dug into our delicious porridge with a touch of honey.

Dorothy was sitting in her chair with her face fully submerged in her bowl of porridge.

"Dorothy. Dorothy! Wake up!" Mother shook her awake. Her head quickly lifted from the bowl, porridge covering her whole face.

"Porridge monster!" Ethel cried in fear. Her face slowly, as if it was in slow motion, crumpled into sobbing and then turned into laughter.

"Can I get adopted by a different family with no siblings?" pleaded Dorothy.

"No Dorothy. You have a perfectly fine Family here." Mother replied chuckling.

Dorothy stormed out of the room.

"Bye, bye porridge monster!" Ethel shouted after her. Dorothy looked back over her shoulder and mouthed "I'm watching you." Ethel and I laughed and she dramatically turned on the spot and stormed off again with a hair whip.

After I ate my porridge I put my weathered bowl and spoon in the Porcelain sink and ran back to my room, to my boat pictures and drawings of navel ships. *I want to drive a Destroyer one day, I thought. And maybe I will...*

Chapter 2

The next day, I awoke to the screaming of my annoying little sister at 4 o'clock in the morning. I could hear Dorothy groaning in the room next door. "Tell Ethel to stop crying! I'm trying to get my beauty sleep!"

After 10 minutes of listening to constant wailing, I just decided to turn over and put my pillow over my ears and eventually drift back to sleep.

Everything had been hectic around the house since Ethel was born 1 year and 7 months ago. Mother hadn't been sleeping; Grandmother had to cover for Father's absence because of his new job which he says is "TOP SECRET" and not to be talked about elsewhere.. and I have had no sleep at all.

For the readers who will be wondering "what does TOP SECRET mean then listen closely. 10,000 women and men worked at this place called 'Bletchley Park' which homed codebreakers that are called in to break various enemy ciphers, including the German Enigma and Lorenz Ciphers. That's all my Father told me.

"Will! Time to get ready for school!" Mother called. I let out a small groan and heaved myself out of bed. It was 7 o'clock. I'd only had 5 hours sleep because of screaming Ethel.

I quickly dressed into my itchy uniform, rushed downstairs and ate my Porridge with a touch of honey. Luckily Dorothy hadn't plunged her face into her breakfast this time!

As I grabbed my bag, said goodbye to my family and headed out the flaky door, I noticed Mother had fallen asleep on the table. Her head was resting on her arm, while her hair was in knots, and all messed up.

I also caught a glimpse of Ethel, concentrated on a small portion of porridge that had missed her mouth and plopped onto her bib.

It takes about 15 minutes to walk to school. Falmouth Grammar School for boys was rather overcrowded now following the arrival of the evacuee children from the cities.

On the way I walk next to Falmouth harbour. But this time there was a new boat there. It was mountainous and vast. It looked sooooo impressive! I looked around to see if anyone was coming and hopped on. I couldn't help myself; I would only take a few minutes.

I took a look at the stern and the Orlop. As I walked down to the bottom deck, I heard heavy footsteps and muffled voices.

"Are you sure you want to do this Frank? You know where we are going don't you?"

"Yes Hank. I know it's a dangerous place. But brothers do everything together."

"Alright then, but if you die it's not my fault. OK?"

"Ok,"

"Right, NEXT STOP DUNKIRK!"

My heart stopped. I can't be going to Dunkirk! No, no, no! I have to get out of here. I saw a glimpse of light coming from behind a few wooden crates. I threw them on the hard floor, and it made a great thump. I grimaced and continued, crate after crate. Then I finally found the light source. It was a small circular window. We were already far away from my home. If I don't return home after school, my family are going to be worried. Panic and tiredness set in all at once, maybe I'll just have a quick nap, and it will all be over soon. I hope.

Chapter 3

Two hours and 43 minutes had passed. The boat swiftly entered the outskirts of Dunkirk, and I could hear planes flying above me. Maybe there was even Spitfires flying over me!

Suddenly I heard quick footsteps above me. Then more muffled voices.

"We can only get British soldiers on this ship with no exceptions. British is the only priority at this point."

"Copy that Frank." The footsteps faded away.

Then silence.

This is my chance. I scrambled out of the heap of wooden crates and darted for the hatch of the trapdoor. When I opened the hatch a blast of dull light filled the room. I clambered on to the deck.

There was shouting and shrieking, people in the water that were splashing around as if they didn't know how to swim. There were people floating by the shores as if they were sunbathing without any sun. The beach was covered with soldiers, injured or praying to get home and hoping they wouldn't die here.

Suddenly, three German planes covered the sky and together they made a diamond shaped shadow on the restless, oily water. A few moments later, everyone around me ducked and put their hands to their heads. All you could hear was the light whistle from the bombs being dropped above us. There was a big splash of water that rose up higher than the boat a bit further away from us. There was a small stream of water on the deck, but that didn't matter, what did matter was the small fishing boat that the shell had hit, its keel was tilted on its side with no sign of the owner.

I have to get off this boat. But how? I heard more footsteps coming my way. I hid behind a stack of barrels but most of them had already fallen into the sea when the bomb had landed.

"Frank, I don't know what to do. More people are getting shot or blasted by planes every minute."

"The boats going to get barraged very soon. We need to act fast and get as many British soldiers as we can and set off."

"Ok Frank. I'll trust you on this"

The footsteps faded. I got up from behind the dripping barrels and started to walk towards the bow.

There was no one at the Helm or InControl of the boat, so I decided to explore.

There were so many buttons and leavers, it must be confusing trying to drive this large boat.

Suddenly, there was a familiar whistling sound coming from above me and gradually getting louder and louder. Another bomb! I held my head and ducked.

A loud bang shook the ship. I tried to control the boat by twisting the steering wheel, it was too stiff, so, I tried some unfamiliar buttons and leavers. It didn't work. I realised that we were slowly sinking into the dark abyss of the ocean. I heard more loud voices. I quickly hid behind the damp door to the bow.

"What are we going to do now Frank!"

"The only thing now for us to do is jump!"

"But there's oil in the water! If another bomb comes we are going to be in flames!"

"Just trust me Hank! JUMP!" There was a big splash and lots of shouting in the water.

There's only one option. And that option was to JUMP! So, there was another big splash and as I entered the oily water the thick substance covered my face and body, sticking like glue.

I looked around and saw a mountainous ship heading towards home. I swam towards it; I closed my eyes as the oil brushes past my cheeks.

I waved at the ship, and some British soldiers noticed me in the black coloured water. I quickly swam towards the ship and met their hands; the soldiers pulled me on board.

"Son, what are you doing out here?" One soldier cried, sounding concerned.

"This is no place for children!" Another soldier explained with a warning tone in his voice.

"How old are you anyway?" The third soldier asked.

"1, I'm 9," I said stuttering.

"Right, we need to get you home young lad." Another soldier reassured me. I nodded.

I looked around the ship for the first time, and the room was full of dull faced soldiers, some on med beds, some asleep or some completely covered in oil like me.

The room was dark; nurses were scattered around handing out food or caring for the injured soldiers. Everybody looked really tired and desperate to get back home. They don't want to die. Not here.

Chapter 4

A few moments later, the light whistling came again, and everyone knew what to do as they had become accustomed to it- Duck and put your hands on your head. There was an immense splash in the water and suddenly a wave of heat came rising up, the warmth hit my face like a gust of wind. We all looked at the Hull. The oil had caught fire! The flames had nearly reached the top of the Gunwale. I felt so sorry for the two men who jumped off before me. I hope they got to safety.

"Be careful if you've got oil on you, stay to the back." A soldier instructed.

I swiftly moved to the back; there were so many of us crushed together.

Bombs kept dropping, as they hit the water the boat shook, but then one hit the stern. Everybody looked unnerved. Gunshots fired from the planes and punctured holes in the rusty metal sides. Water slowly started to seep in through the holes.

"What are we going to do now?" The first soldier cried panicking.

"We have to find a way out!" The second soldier stated beyond all the chaos. Everybody sprinted to the stairs that held the exit.

I realised that there were men's bodies on med beds on the hard metal ground. The nurses must have abandoned them in the rush to get out.

The water was still coming in quickly. It was up to my shoulder. The ship had slightly turned on it's side and now the water was coming towards us. A soldier signalled towards the stairs. I put the thumbs up.

We swam against the strong current. I could see the dark light coming from the stairs. I was nearly out of breath. I increased my exhausted efforts and reached for the top.

I looked back. The soldier wasn't behind me.

Chapter 5

I struggled to the top of the stairs and saw 3 soldiers holding their arms out to me, gesturing for me to come on. I rose out of the water and took a few consistent deep breaths.

"Where's the other soldier? The one that you were with?" The first soldier spoke, looking around.

"Um, he didn't make it." I said, looking down. The 3 soldiers looked at me with disappointment.

We stood there for as long as 1 minute and nobody spoke. As if it was a moment of silence.

"Let's go." The first soldier said.

"There's nowhere to go." The second soldier supposed.

"The only place to go is the water. The oily water that will probably kill us if we get bombed." The third assumed, panicking.

"On my cue, we jump. 1..." My heart started racing. "...2" I didn't want to go back into the oily water. "...3..." Oh, no, no, no! "JUMP!" The first soldier declared. There was another big splash as we entered the disgusting water.

"Where do we go now?" The second soldier questioned covered in oil and looking at himself in disgust.

"There's no more boats around for us to board." The first soldier said disappointedly, looking around.

"The only choice is.... back to Dunkirk" The third soldier spoke defeatedly.

"We can't go back there!" The first soldier shouted looking concerned. "We've got a boy with us!"

"It's our only choice!" The third soldier explained. The first soldier sighed. Everyone nodded. "Back to Dunkirk it is,"

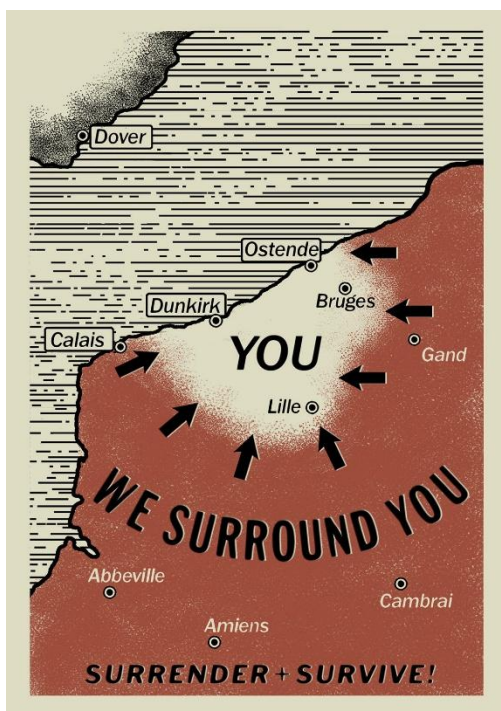
Chapter 6

We swam and swam through the endless water for what felt like an eternity until we saw the outskirts of Dunkirk. Some hope came back to us... some.

As we reached the sand everybody stared at us. They were probably thinking "why did you come back?", "Did your ship get bombed?" or most importantly "Why do you have a *boy* with you?".

We joined one of the many lines that covered the sand, we found an abandoned poster on the ground.

It looked like this:



Suddenly the soft whistling began again, getting louder and louder. We all knew what to do now. Hands on our head and duck!

There was a big boom, not too far away from us. I could taste the sand in the air and feel the loss of life.

The beach had gone dead silent. You could hear the sounds of planes approaching. Everyone looked up.

"A dogfight!" A soldier shouted out loud and pointed to the two planes battling in the sky. It was Germany against Britain.

We watched the British plane swoop and shoot the German plane down which crashed into the water. Everyone cheered.

Hour's past, with no sighting of a ship. Hope was slowly dwindling, until we heard a deep honk in the distance, it sounded like..... a ship! A ship had come to rescue us!

Once the vessel had reached the shore they announced they were only taking British soldiers. All the French soldiers shouted at the man with the megaphone. He just ignored them. The French kept on throwing curses at him.

But we could finally go home.

Chapter 7

We walked over a bridge made of crates which felt very unstable.

Suddenly, I fell straight through a crack and into the oily water. The current kept taking me out towards the open sea.

Then, there was that familiar sound. The light whistle of a bomb, getting louder and louder.

"Swim towards us!" I heard a soldier shout.

But I couldn't. The current was too strong.

The bomb landed within close proximity with a gigantic splash.

"Duck!" The first soldier cried.

I took a deep breath in and plunged my head under the water. I could see the blood red glow above me and feel the heat as the oil caught fire.

I looked down. I couldn't see the seabed. It was like a black hole beneath me. I hoped I wouldn't die down here, where no one could find me.¹

I was nearly out of breath. I needed to get some air so I desperately looked around for an area where I could resurface that didn't have that red glow. I hoped I would reach the top before my last breath and the flames caught up with me.

I closed my eyes and braced myself as I reached the surface. I took a few deep breaths, but the relief was short as I saw the flames approaching fast. I felt a sudden rush of energy and swam to my limits.

I could hear the man with the megaphone saying, "Ship leaving in 3 minutes!".

I was nearly there, I could see the bridge and the 3 soldiers, yet again, holding their arms out to me. I grabbed their hands and they heaved me out of the flaming sea just as it was about to engulf me.

"Nurse! Nurse! Over here!" The second soldier shouted. A nurse emerged from the crowd of soldiers with a med bed.

As I lay down exhausted on the bed, I suddenly felt a sharp burning in my foot. The soldiers lifted me up and took me onto the ship. And then everything went dark.

Chapter 8

I was awoken by the sound cheering. There were hundreds of people outside the train, welcoming the soldiers back.

"Finally! You're awake!" The second soldier shouted in surprise.

I looked around. To my relief, the 3 soldiers were surrounding me on the comforting train seats.

"You feeling better now?" The third soldier asked me. I nodded.

I realised that I had bandages covering my foot. The flames must have caught me just as I was heaved out of the ocean.

"We must get you home. Do you know where you live?" The first soldier said, looking at me right in the eye.

"Um, I live in a small town called Falmouth in the South of Cornwall near a dock off the Fal Estuary. 16 Albany Place" I explained.

"You really do know where you live." Laughed the second soldier. I nodded. We all laughed in unison.

As the train approached the station the soldiers became more and more excited to reunite with their families again. I watched as their loved ones came rushing towards them with tears in their eyes and they embraced each other with such force as if they never wanted to let go.

They explained my presence and the need to get me home safely to my family too. Their families reluctantly agreed, afraid to let them go again.

We caught another train from Cardiff to Falmouth. I was going home.

Chapter 9

The 6-hour journey passed quickly as I recalled my adventure over and over in my head.

"Thank you for doing this for me." I said smiling at the soldiers.

"You're welcome." The first soldier said as he picked me up effortlessly as we left the train and arrived at my familiar surroundings.

We walked slowly to my small cottage exhausted by the adventure, back to my family and back to Dorothy and Ethel. I defiantly did not miss them.

I knocked on the old, familiar door that I opened and closed every day.

"Will!" Mother cried as she opened the door in relief. "Your back! Where did you go?" as she hugged me so tight I could hardly breathe.

"Long story," I replied, hobbling in.

"Who are these young men and what happened to your foot!" Mother asked confused in one breath.

"Some people I met along the way and they saved my life." I uttered looking back at the 3 soldiers behind me with thanks.

"Why are they all wearing army clothes Will?" Mother asked looking concerned.

"I'll tell you all about it later," I spoke.

"It's time for us to go now," The third soldier said smiling at me.

"But I never found out your names," I declared urgently.

"Just call us soldier 1,2 and 3. We'll know who you're talking about." The first soldier said.

"But when will I see you again." I asked looking down.

"You'll see us serving this country." The second soldier spoke.

I was tearing up, I ran to hug them knowing I would never see them again.

Chapter 10 (The final chapter)

The following morning, Ethel, Dorothy, Grandmother, Father and Mother were all waiting for me in their cracked chairs and Ethel in her musty highchair. We all dug into our delicious porridge with a touch of honey.

"So, are you going to tell us what happened then?" Mother requested. Everybody looked up from their bowl of porridge, and I told them all about my little trip to a place called Dunkirk....