

Title (up to 20 words) - One Hundred Years

Strapline (up to 40 words) -

Copy (between 900 and 1000 words) -

I plunged my sword into the lad. Opening a bloody chasm from waist to collarbone. He was only young, yet he had made the mistake of bearing arms against a knight of King Henry V, even if it was just a kitchen knife he held up towards me. It was said (by those who did not wish me to hear) that this fighting had destroyed my mind and morals like our own swords with which we hacked at our enemies. Looking at my crimson-dyed armour, I could attest to this, having just snuffed out a brave commoner's flame of life, I felt nothing. Remorse- no, regret- no, guilt- no. I stepped out into the castle courtyard amidst the clash of metal upon metal; it was the Roman blacksmith God: Vulcan's fiery forge for a time. Before silence descended, along with those spirits of the French soldiers we vanquished, bound to hell.

I laughed, drawing vicious glares from those chivalrous knights already prostrating themselves before God in prayer for their "righteous English victory" and the exhausted French Prisoners. They would do nothing though; next to them, I was a titan, my strong sword arm and singing blade able to decapitate, disembowel and destroy in a stroke. I knew then that this measly win would not be the end to our conquest, for my bloodlust was not yet satiated. Climbing upon my horse, I made haste from these weak knights and infantry to John of Holdfaste, the only good apple in this rotten bunch and a childhood friend. Certainly he had delusions of grandeur like our English archers often have and considered himself one of those detestable "honorable men", but still I was drawn to him.

The march to a town named Agincourt commenced with the dying of the light, which cast out a final warning of spilled blood to come with the sun's final beam of life, before tendrils of blackness came forth from the shadowy expanse that now smothered the horizon. "John. These Frenchmen need to show us some real fighting or else we'll have to duel their wives. No doubt they'd put on a better fight as well!", I exclaimed to the English Longbowman. It was me who'd enlisted him for this war when the king came calling. I had taken him away from his family and through this misery of battle, yet he did not hate me with vicious vengeance, but regarded me as an ally. I supposed this was a

quality within “good people”; either way, I wanted no part in it. “Why if it in’t Sir Edward t’e Small!” John responded. His comrades smirked upon hearing my damned nickname. No doubt they found it hilarious that my towering height and muscled frame is to be considered small. I tolerated it, given that they were vouched for by my only friend, but I wished they would choke upon their laughter; see if my nickname was humorous then.

The battle horns sounded soon enough, whilst I sighted the gathering French army encroaching on the land between us like lambs to the slaughter. By now the sun had risen, yet millions of our arrows rose to the sky too, blotting out its radiance before they fell backwards to Earth like deathly rain that pierced shields, armour and flesh of those unfortunate enemies who had taken a gamble with their life only to discover they had made a deal with the Devil. It was immensely satisfying to see the pain of war etched onto the faces of the wounded French soldiers, like the mark of a twisted soul which I had within myself. For now I could only watch in contentment as the battalions of English Archers which flanked us knights in the middle, released their instruments of killing with a twang of the bowstring. Still leagues of enemies struggled forwards so I calmed my horse, who sensed the terror to come and calmed myself ready for the wave of self-indulgence that would surely come when I cut through the weary opponents like a knife through butter.

The first one trudged forwards to the execution block; I swung my sword with all might, only to be parried by the giant foreign knight, but with building hellish fury, I buried it deep within his skull through the gap in his helmet. Crimson blood oozed out from his helmet and trickled down his chain mail like a serene waterfall. The second one staggered forwards to meet with death; this time, a single thrust of my blade to his chest was enough to end the poor man’s life and everything he had worked for. His hopes and dreams for the future were crushed in a single stroke. Therefore I allowed myself a smile for the power I held over mortality before sending a cascade of his lifeblood into the air when I cleanly severed his head from the rest of his flesh. More came forth and more met their violent end.

The Battle of Agincourt eventually drew to a close and us standing Englishmen were left to reflect. Some mourned their fallen comrades, others stared in disbelief at what they had done. Thousands of lifeless enemy bodies were strewn across the marshland, like flowers in a meadow. But I still felt incomplete after all that glorious slaughter. Hence, it seemed as though God himself had smiled upon me when the order was given from the King: “execute all the prisoners”; the chivalrous knights among us protested on the grounds that it was “inhumane”.

And I was ready to abandon my humanity when I picked up my dripping scarlet sword and filled my heart with joy to a symphony of screaming and begging whilst the blood of the enemy filled the air, preceded by the ferocity which I embedded into every slash of my sword.

