

## THE SWEETHEART OF COMPANY D

By Pvt. William Saroyan

There is something in the heart of street dogs which draws them close to me, and there is probably no camp or post of the Army which does not have at least one dog, whether the post is in a Far Western desolation or in a suburb of New York, as my post is.

Our Company D has one of these dogs. Shorty is small, lazy, and given to a bitter attitude toward civilians, including children. Somewhere in Shorty's family is a dachshund, as Shorty has the lines of such a dog, but not the hair.

The theory of the men of Company D is that Shorty spends the greater part of his time dreaming of women—or at any rate women dogs. He doesn't come across such



creatures very often; he doesn't come across any kind of dog very often.

Now and then Shorty will be discovered in the middle of the street, dreaming of love or whatever it is, while two or three trucks stand by discreetly waiting for him to make up his mind. Shorty may have come into the world thoughtlessly, but it is not likely that he will leave any children standing around. He is either too tired, or too old, even though he is probably not more than two.

I have observed that Shorty makes himself available to any man in uniform, bar none, and while our post is made up mostly of men of talent, Shorty is not above giving himself over to the affections of a man of practically no talent at all, such as our top sergeant, who was not in civilian life the famous man he is now. Our top sergeant may be a genius, the same as all the rest of us: Two-Teeth Gonzales, Bicycle Wilkinson, Henry the One Hundred and Fifty-first Million, and all the others. He probably deserves a story all to himself, but somebody else will have to write that story, as I want to write sonnets. (That is, if I ever learn to spell.)

My hero is Shorty, not our first sergeant. The sergeant is his mother's hero, I suppose, and I wish she'd never let him out of the house. If he thinks getting me to do K. P. is the way we are going to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion, I believe his education has been neglected. That is not the way to do it. Give me a map of the world, a pointer, and a good-sized audience and I believe I can figure the whole thing out in not more than an afternoon. The idea that generals are the only kind of Army personnel capable of figuring out ways and means and all that stuff is unsound. For every general there ought to be one private on the ground floor. As it is, half the time I don't know what is being done, what the idea is, or anything else. The result is that I must go out into the yard and whistle for Shorty, who, instead of leaping to his feet and running to me, opens his eyes and waits for me to run to him.

Shorty knows me all right, but what kind of planning can you do with a dog, and a sleepy one at that—a day-

dreamer, an escapist, a lover of peace, an enemy of children in sailor suits? I don't know who the chaplain of Company D is, but for my money he can pack up and go to some other post, because Shorty is doing the same work and sending in no reports to anybody. He is a quiet creature, he is patient, he will listen to reason or anything else, and he will get up after a half hour of heart-to-heart talk and slowly wag his tail. He will wag thoughtfully, with effort, and you will know what advice he is giving you after carefully considering your case.

Now, there was the celebrated case of Warty Walter, the Genius from Jersey, who had a secret weapon all worked out in his head which he believed could finish the war in two weeks. Warty mentioned this weapon to our top sergeant only to hear the man say, "You do what I say, Warty, or you're going to hear otherwise."

Warty went out into the yard to Shorty and unburdened his heart, whereupon Shorty got to his feet, stretched his body until it hurt, wagged his tail three times, kissed Warty on the hand, turned, and began wending his way across the street where a girl of six in a sailor suit was looking at a movie billboard. That was the end of Warty's secret weapon. The following day he got his orders to go to Louisiana, took Shorty in his arms to say good-bye, and the war is still going on—a good three months after Warty got his idea for the secret weapon. Our top sergeant said, "If it's a secret, what the hell are you coming to me about it for? Keep it a secret."

Not every man at our post is as brilliant or as sincere as Warty, but I can think of no man who is not as devoted to Shorty. No girl of the USO has done Army morale as much good as Shorty. He may not be a dancing dog, but he's got eyes and many a man's seen a lot of understanding in those brooding eyes—many and many a man.

As for the little girl in the sailor suit, she turned and ran, so that Shorty, not knowing what else to do, went up to a second lieutenant and bit him. The following day there was a notice on the bulletin board saying: "Yesterday an enlisted man was bitten by a dog who might or might not have had rabies. Therefore, in the future, any man caught without his dog tags will be given extra duty." This of course was a subtle way of saying that Shorty had rabies, a lie if I ever heard one.

The basic failing of Shorty, if he must be given a failing, is his love of comfort, his passion for food, and his devotion to sleep, or The Dream. I doubt very much if he knows there is a war going on, and I am convinced he does not know that the men of Company D are soldiers. I believe he has some vague notion we are orphans.

Shorty eats too much and never does calisthenics. He has seen a lot of men come and go. He has loved them all, and they have all loved him. I have seen big men with barracks bags over their shoulders bend down to whisper good-bye to the sweetheart of Company D, get up with misty eyes, swing up into the truck, and wave to the little fellow standing there in a stupor. And I have heard them, as the truck has bounced out of the yard on its way to the war, holler out—not to me or to our top sergeant, but to Shorty: "So long, pal! See you after the war!"

I don't think they will see Shorty after the war. I think he will lie down and die of a broken heart once the boys take off their uniforms. Shorty lives to watch them stand reveille and retreat. All that stuff will stop after the war and Shorty will be out in the cold, just another dog of the streets without honor, without importance—lonely, unfed, despised, and unwanted.

That is why I have written this tribute to him.

## THE ROTATION OF SGT. REGAN

By Sgt. Ray Duncan

Alaska—"Don't stand so near the road, corporal," said Sgt. Regan. "Them prime movers don't give a damn what they hit."

Later he said, "You oughta wear a muffler under that field jacket, corporal. This wind goes right through a guy. Here, take mine."

The sergeant's big face was wrinkled with anxiety. In the Aleutian Islands you make friends quickly, but there's