**A Dog and His Day**

1500 words

**Notes from Mikey:** I have attached the original and the typed version. There were some difficulties reading the handwriting, so you may want to proof read things.

Every dog has his gay, or so speaks conventional wisdom, and it seems to me a pretty desperate state of affairs that one single day of doggish delight is all that he is allowed. (I say “he”, because “she”, in her natural social life, is either busied with the latest of the litter or awaiting a fresh consignment). But there, I only speak as an observer, and maybe uncomprehending at that.

I particularly remember one dog in Burma, though he never had a name, was never called to home for water and hard tack, was uncared for and kennel-less. He had not one friend, whether human or canine. And as for colour, he was either a rare albino or a washed-out forteeth generation of bull terrier from the days of Robert Clive. Across the Bay in India. His name? Ti-dog, short for Parish, the outcast.

This was in Central Burma, and though the name when featured in the British Press, was meant to instil a sensed \*\*\*, this central part of the country offered the British soldier, when not in actions a more than welcome, a more moderately pleasing place to live. (apart from the hundred degrees of heat, the profusion of fiery ants and the complete lack of running water). Certainly, an endurable one.

I think that here we bivouacked on or our groundsheets, after taking our inexpensive toilets and dabbing on lavender oil to repel the mosquitos. I guess, like Thomand & Tatams, we tied our nets to trees, but there must have been light, slender poles in the regimental garry, that’s all I know. But the village people were friendly enough, and even a British soldier could hardly fail to notice the effect of Buddhism on hygiene on cleanliness compared with the \*\*\* across the Bay.

In India, any meal in the open air had been plagued by the kite hawk, better known to us in rhyme. We would collect our M&V in our mess tin, our dessert in another, and make for a seal on a low wall; but in a matter of seconds, a mucking and foul-smelling wind strike us and our dinner of beef or goat or whatever would be snatched away and borne up to a charnel-laden “tower of silence” by one of these beady-eye bastard offspring of the roc that imperilled Sinbad.

We weren’t plagued in quite the same way in Burma; perhaps we were more experienced and left no trace of our occupation, not of the cooking and certainly not of the fag-ends which either fed the last Hucknery flames or were buried and the grounded roughed over. But there was one exception. I didn’t know whether the bird was of the same \*\*\* as the Indian, but it plagued the life of one inexperience lower corporal, who dropped his gun and the stem, a wayward child of an Indian manufacturer, fired itself, and the kite came tunnelling down. The company moved on, and Ti-dog had the unexpected bonus to enjoy until the jackal poured in.

It was a quiet evening, or verging on evening= though that magical hour of fullness and serenity at home washed here only a brief intermission, before

The sun’s rim dipped, the stars rush out,

At one stride comes the dark.

But it was the soldier’s invariable duty to guard, against whatever or worse might come upon under cover of dusk. So the moment before darkness fell the soldiers there two-man waist, high trench with rifle loaded and one of up the sprout. Looking to the front by making sure his partner looked left and behind him for so much of the Japanese success had been due to their ability to march fast, because light armed, and they encircle the British and Indian troops and attack them from the rear. Or else, edging ever closer to the British positions, they would call out “Hello, Johnny, where are you Jonny” intending to provoke an impatient or maybe nervous panicky Tommy who lets off a round betray this position by the muzzle flash. But the British fine discipline held, for the young soldiers new to the tricks and the craft was usually place with one who knew the ropes, and they learnt quickly, or was wounded or died.

*Footnote:*

*The Japanese bullet were smaller than ours- indicating rifle barrels using less of the super-resistant steel which Japan had to import, for want of high-grade iron ore to smelt, I think. At any rate, Japanese small-arms – two million rifles or carbines at .22in demand appreciably less steel than the standard British Lee-Enfiled 303 rifle, though it appeared to us at first glance that sometimes a longer barrel was fitted, presumably to give the bullet more perfect accuracy by prolonging the discipline of the rifling.*

*We were told- whether old sweats tale or not – that the Japs preferred the smaller calibre because it was less likely to kill a man out-right but render him useless, and then two more British soldiers would be out of action taking their wounded pal to dressing station. It may be true – but enough of that.*

Darkness fell, and so passed the night quietly, and the nervous young sentry who reported the flow of Japanese cigarettes was cursed by his awakened sergeant and told to wash his bloodshot eyes and recognise the light of a firefly when he saw one.

During all this time Ti-dog kept a safe distance, though in the daytime, snigging around in vain for any scrap of carrion left by the jackals, did venture to steal into the company food store when the cooks back was turned and set himself up for the day with a string of sausages. When evening came, he moved a little closer to the humans again. He could sense, though he could not see, what use they might be to the hungry dog, and if they were at ease he might have a chance of a throwaway – all this he felt without reasoning it.

The day wore on, the sun’s rimmed dipped, and the soldiers movd into their trenches and waited for any sign of danger, the snapping of a twig, the flutter of a disturbed nestling, but they heard nothing they could understand, but one of the young soldiers shivered and his gasp warned the dog of a danger bearing down on them both. Who knows what went through his mind, but it was almost as if, under the stress of human scent that was unfamiliar and redolent not of meat but of vegetable, rice and rich sugar, he recognised danger; and in the darkness, with something of a strength of his ancestor and driven by urgency, he warned with a howl that quickened the senses of the meat-eating soldiers on guard, the rice-eaters discovered by a pi-dog, drew back into the jungle and tried no more that night; and pi-dog neighbours – and friends for the time being – slept more securely until rouse by their sergeant first before dawn.

All that dog ti kept a respectful distance from his unwilling hosts. No one threw a stone at him – maybe for want of them in this ashy soil – and he felt without fear – in a state of ease that made him more confident and trustful of humans than was justified.

And the day went by, and nothing troubled him but the perpetual hunger that he somehow suffered through, though never quite satisfied or defeated. But he hung on. These meat-eaters had him back into the jungle, and the odour of meat still lingered and drew him closer, for their sticks and stones did not break his bones.

By the bye, these involuntary friends of his feel asleep, all but one, and this guard strove to stay awake, but every now and then rested his eyes for a moment, until at the tiredness of his whole body took over, his head nodded forward and he slept.

Near at hand, but in the jungle however, something moved; a twig snapped, and the sentry pulled himself awake and erect. Then silence again, for half an hour while slumber overtook the defenders. And then, an \*\*\*\* and a \*\*\*\* with blackened blade came out at ground level out of the jungle, and all the hairs on Ti’s back bristled a silent warning. And now, under stress, the purpose of his guard-dog ancestor of generations before came to life, and his diligent pi-dog moved with the vigour of a guard-dog by birth and training, sprung across the moonlit glade and sank his teeth into the wrist and hand that held the threatening knife, and held, and held, and held until the wrist was limp and blood dripped down on it from above. Then thinking nothing of it, he automatically let go, resumed his pi-dog states, and left to get on with it. Descendants knifes and suchlike of guard-dogs do not repeat now mise with malefactors.

“Lor Bill” said Private Lamk. “We you seen what that pi-dog did? Saved our bacon, for sure. I don’t suppose he had any idea what he was doing”