

G.I. DOGS

HERO PUP
OF WORLD WAR I



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CHAPTER 1

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

The first thing you have to know about me is that I don't remember much from before I joined the army. I don't remember my mom or how I came to live on the streets of New Haven. The first thing I remember is prowling around by myself looking for food.

I know I started out with a human owner because of my tail. I'm what most people call a Boston bull terrier or just a plain old Boston terrier. Or mostly, anyway. Like a lot of dogs, I'm more than one breed. But mostly, I'm a bull terrier. One of the things that makes Boston terriers stand out is our tails. Our tails are shortened a couple of days after we're born to make sure we're especially



stylish. And I'm no exception, especially when it comes to style.

People used the words “brindle-patterned” to describe me. My face and paws were mostly white, but the rest of me was a kind of stripy brown. Like I said, *stylish*.

I was too young to remember my early days or what came next. I just know I landed on the streets of New Haven. I'm smart and strong and flat-out handsome (not to mention charming), so I did all right. Sometimes I palled around with other dogs, but mostly I was on my own. I quickly learned that the garbage cans in alleys behind restaurants were the best places to find food—second only to those behind butcher shops. One nice butcher used to save bones for me (did I mention that I'm charming?). When I was really lucky, some of those bones had meat on them.

I had a few favorite places where I curled up to sleep—places where I was well hidden. It was hard to stay warm and dry in the winter, though.

Life was okay, but I sometimes came across dogs that belonged to humans. They always had enough food to eat



and a warm place to sleep. Plus, they got scratched in places that I couldn't reach with my paws. As much as I loved my life, I knew it could be better if I had a human of my own.

Then the United States declared war, and I got my chance.

The world had been at war for three years by then. France, Great Britain, and Russia (known as the Allied powers) were fighting with Germany and Austria-Hungary (the Central powers).

Soon lots of other countries joined in on one side or another. Today people call this conflict World War I, but back then it was simply known as the Great War. Great not because it was awesome, but because it was so huge.

Three years after it all started, the two armies were still fighting it out in the trenches of France, and it didn't seem like anyone was ever going to win.

That's when Germany started attacking supply ships from other countries, including ours. And then they tried to talk Mexico into going to war against us in exchange for land in the American Southwest.



The United States had stayed out of the conflict for as long as possible, but that did it. President Woodrow Wilson was forced to declare war on Germany on April 6, 1917. The United States joined Great Britain, France, and Russia and became one of the Allies.

The only reason why I know all that is because the army came to New Haven a couple of months after President Wilson declared war. New England's soldiers started showing up at Yale University to train on the athletic fields.

Now ask yourself—what do soldiers need more than anything?

You might think discipline. You might think gun training. Both of those things are true. But the first answer I came up with was food, and lots of it. No more back alleys and garbage cans for me! All I had to do was follow my nose. Not only did I find lots and lots of food, I found a bunch of humans that were away from home, lonely, and in need of good company.

What could be better at a time like that than the good company of a cheerful, friendly, handsome charmer like myself?



It wasn't long before the men—or doughboys as the American soldiers were called—got to know me. Not only did the cooks save me bones and other scraps, the doughboys did, too. The men named me Stubby after my shortened tail, and I learned to run to whoever said my name. It usually meant food. Or a good scratch. Or both.

It also wasn't long before I picked out my very favorite human. His name was James Robert Conroy, and everyone called him Bob. He was from Connecticut.

It happened like this: One day I was running through camp when I heard a whistle. I looked up to see a friendly face with a wide smile.

“Who do we have here?” he asked, reaching down to scratch me behind my ears—one of my three favorite places to be scratched (my belly and under my chin being the other two).

“That's Stubby,” another soldier answered. “Haven't you met him yet?”

“Hey, there, Stubby,” Bob said. “Pleased to meet'cha.”



Now he scratched my second favorite place to be scratched, followed by my third.

I think you're my favorite human, I thought.

It wasn't just that Bob knew exactly where to scratch me, or that he started sharing every single meal with me. Or even that I slept next to him on his cot and he didn't mind a bit. Bob smelled the way the very best humans smell—kind, friendly, and loving. I continued to visit my other friends in camp—especially the cooks—but Bob and I became best buddies. When his sisters came to visit at the end of the summer, I was the first friend he introduced them to.

I wasn't just an eating machine, either. I was a soldier. When the soldiers marched, I marched alongside them, no matter how far they went. When they practiced digging trenches, I inspected their work. When they learned to shoot rifles, I barked encouragement. I even stood guard with Bob when it was his turn and kept my ears peeled for enemies.

There were bugle calls for everything. The day began



with reveille at daybreak and ended with taps as the sun went down. In between, there were bugle calls to assemble on the field, bugle calls to start marching, to stop marching, and everything else you can think of. My favorites were the bugle calls that let the men know it was time to eat.

I learned all the bugle calls. I even paraded next to the men while they marched in formation.

Bob taught me one trick that was everyone's favorite. The men spent a lot of time every day saluting. All that touching your hand to your forehead when you didn't even have to scratch seemed silly to me, but I wanted to do anything Bob did.

He taught me to sit and then rise up on my back legs before I brought my right front paw to my forehead. The real trick was to wait until the other person saluted me back, and then I could drop down to all fours again.

I don't know why the men made such a fuss over a silly little trick, but they had me do it over and over again.

So life was good. Lots and lots of food, any number of



soldiers who'd let me hop on their bunks to sleep, and a special human who made me his.

There was just one problem. We were in Connecticut and the war was in France. At some point, my human was going to have to ship out, and dogs weren't allowed.

Bob had to find a way to get me to France.

