

G.I. DOGS

**PRISONER
OF WAR**



Laurie Calkhoven

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

ISBN 978-1-338-18523-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

18 19 20 21 22

Printed in the U.S.A. 40
First edition, April 2018

Book design by Baily Crawford

CHAPTER 1

ADVENTURE IN SHANGHAI

It all started at the Shanghai Dog Kennels in Shanghai, China, in February 1936. My mother was one of the finest English pointers in the city, and I looked just like her. My face was almost entirely brown and my body was white with lots of brown spots. I was born in the English-run dog kennels, which meant that as soon as I was big enough, one of the English families living in Shanghai would bring me home.

The English loved Chinese tea, silk, and other goods, so there were a lot of English people living in the country at that time, working for companies that shipped those goods back to Great Britain. They tried hard to make



China feel like home, which included having dogs as pets. Pointers are very playful, especially with children, and we also make great gundogs.

Gundogs *point* to game when their humans are hunting. We're much better at that than humans could ever be. To be perfectly honest, human noses don't work very well. That's why humans need dogs. My sense of smell is about a hundred thousand times more powerful than yours.

At three weeks old, I was at the kennel, waiting for my real life to begin. I was ready for adventure and tired of being kept in a cage. The excitement of Shanghai was just a few feet away—rickshaws, cars, bicycles, food carts, horseflies, shops, and people. Best of all were the smells—so many of them! And I wanted to investigate them all. So when no one else was looking, and my brothers and sisters were busy crowding around my mom, I wiggled my nose under the wire. Then I wiggled some more. And then I popped right through the wire fence and onto the street.

It was amazing! I ran from one smell to the next, checking everything out, dodging rushing feet and rolling



tires. A fly landed on my nose and took off. I chased it, but it was too fast for my pudgy little legs. A few people stopped to pet me, but a food cart vendor gave me a shove when I tried to check out his wares.

That made me realize I was hungry, and it was starting to get cold, too. I was ready to go home, but I couldn't remember where home was. I had dashed here and there, from one smell to the next, without paying any attention.

What am I going to do?

I whimpered, hoping someone would stop and help. No one did.

I lifted my nose and sniffed a big sniff, hoping to follow the scent of the kennels—the warm, delicious smell of puppies and my mother and the humans who took care of us. But there were too many other smells crowding around me.

I was lost. I was scared. I was cold. But mostly I was hungry.

I have to fill my belly, I realized. Then I can find home.

So I searched for food.



Garbage heaps turned out to be the best place to find a snack, and once in a while a nice human slipped me a handful of rice. Even so, I could never fill my belly and I never did find home. Days went by, and then a week or two. I was hungry all the time.

I wandered around the city, searching for food and a cozy place to live. Not all of the humans I ran into were nice, and I started to think I would never find a safe place. Then I found Mr. Soo standing by the back door of his shop.

“Hello there,” he said, reaching down to pet me. “You look hungry, little one.”

I trained my big brown eyes on him and wagged my tail to say, *I'm hungry and I like you.*

Mr. Soo went back inside, and I was afraid that he wouldn't come out again. But he did! And he had food! He gave me a small handful of rice and fish from his lunch.

I learned that not only did Mr. Soo love dogs, but he also had a small store full of all kinds of interesting things. He sold stuff mostly to the British and American sailors that were all over Shanghai.



At that time, Shanghai was full of westerners. It's a port city on China's coastline that sits at the mouth of the Yangtze River—Asia's longest river. England, America, and France all had business in the country. But because warlords and pirates sailed the Yangtze, those countries sent gunboats to patrol the waters and keep their merchant ships safe.

I stayed with Mr. Soo for a few weeks after that. He fed me scraps of his own meals every day, and he let me sleep in a box in the alley behind his shop. Sometimes he let me in the store and I helped him wait on the sailors. Mr. Soo saved my life. Shanghai was a dangerous place for a dog like me, and I was safe in his shop. I still patrolled the neighborhood looking for extra scraps, but I was grateful to have a box to sleep in and a kind human to visit every day.

I thought that might be my life from then on. But another danger made itself known—Japanese sailors.

Japan's ships, like England's and America's, sailed up and down the Yangtze River. Japanese sailors patrolled Shanghai, and often got into fights with the English and



Americans. I had learned to recognize Japanese sailors pretty quickly after I escaped from the kennel—mostly because they always kicked me. And tonight there was a whole group of them yelling and throwing things around in Mr. Soo’s shop.

Mr. Soo tried to get them to stop. When he did, they started to hit him. He was already on the floor, bleeding, when I ran through the back door into the shop. The Japanese sailors knocked over shelves, breaking everything and then stomping on the pieces. I tried to run to Mr. Soo’s side, but the sailors spotted me. One gave me a kick and another threw something at my head. Then a third one grabbed me by the neck and carried me outside.

I yelled, partly because I was in pain and partly to attract attention, but no one had time to come to my rescue. That sailor kicked me across the street and into a pile of garbage. I heard them all laughing as they left the shop.

Neighbors ran to help Mr. Soo, but no one saw me or came to help. My stomach hurt and I was scared. I was



afraid someone would come along and step on me. So I limped into an empty doorway and curled up.

It was dark. I shivered and cried from the cold and the fear and the pain while I watched the sky slowly change from black to purple to pale gray. I sniffed the air around me, hoping for the smell of food or Mr. Soo. But instead, there was another smell I recognized—Lee Ming!

Lee Ming's mother worked with Miss Jones, the English lady in charge at the Shanghai Dog Kennels. The little girl used to come and visit and play with my brothers and sisters and me. I liked her.

I lifted my snout to smell her good, friendly smell, and I started to cry harder in the hope that she would hear me. The next thing I knew, she was kneeling in front of me. Even with just a human nose, she recognized me right away.

“*Shudi!* Oh, Shudi, where have you been?” Lee Ming asked.

I tried to thump my tail as a way to say *hi* and *I've missed you* and *Japanese soldiers are mean*, but I hurt too much.

