

Army Talk

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The two soldiers stood under the arch with their legs spread wide after the fashion of men filled with confidence and a sense of well being. The larger of the two men took off his helmet and ran his fingers through his hair.

Far in the east the sun was just beginning to push its way past the horizon for another day of work. The big soldier rubbed his eyes and yawned.

"Thought morning was never coming. The way night closes down on you in this forsaken country, you'd think the sun had wandered off into space." He yawned again and stuck his helmet back on his head at a jaunty angle. A spot somewhere near the center of his back seemed to demand attention. His smaller companion obliged with a grimy thumb.

"Tell you what, Gus. I'm getting pretty well fed-up with this army. I've just about a little higher and to the right, Gus. I've just about decided to head back home one of these days if I ever get a decent chance."

Gus quit scratching and leaned back against the arch. He rubbed the side of his nose with his forefinger and chuckled softly. "And that my friend, sounds like a fine way to land in more trouble than you've ever seen. Take it easy, you'll be home some day." Gus stopped chuckling, took good aim, and spit at an ant. He missed. "Just what's your bitch about the army Julius?"

Julius began with the air of a man who was going to be talking for quite a while. "The chow is lousy, the pay just

isn't existent, a fellow can't get any sleep, I'll never get a promotion, I haven't seen my wife in three years, and on the whole, time spent in the army is just lost time as far as I'm concerned. And to top everything, that little pip-squeak of a company commander of mine is on my tail again. I'd like to break the bugger's back!"

Gus laughed again. "That doesn't put you in any special class, Julius. Every guy in this army could dig down and come up with the same list of woes. Incidentally, I saw a fellow yesterday who really had worries. Were you on that execution detail?"

"Naw. I was out digging latrines. I heard about it though."

"Well, Julius, it was pretty rough. I certainly wouldn't have cared to have been in that man's shoes. We marched him through town and I was right behind him all the way. Sorta scared me. You'd expect a fellow in a spot like that to bust up, but he took it like a man. Almost like he was one of the spectators instead of the principal character." Gus shook his head sadly.

"He was some kind of fanatic, wasn't he?" Julius asked.

"I guess so, but the way he died sorta has me wondering. So calm and everything, Julius. Can't tell, maybe he had something. He certainly had my admiration anyway. Some of the guys were pretty brutal about the whole thing. You know, matched to see who'd get his clothes, but I think it was just to hide the way they really felt."