

The Night Before Christmas

T'was the night before Christmas,
He lived all alone,
In a one bedroom house,
Made of plaster and stone.
I had come down the chimney,
With presents to give,
And to see just who,
In this home did live.

I looked all about,
A strange sight I did see,
No tinsel, no presents,
Not even a tree.

No stocking by the mantle,
Just Congo filled with sand,
On the wall hung pictures,
Of far distant lands.

With medals and badges,
Awards of all kinds,
A sober thought,
Came through my mind.

For this house was different,
It was dark and dreary,
I found the home of a Tegadaly,
Once I could see clearly.

The Tegadaly lay sleeping,
Silent, alone,
Curled up on the floor,
In this one bedroom home.

The face was so gentle,
The room in such disorder,
Not how I pictured,
An Eritrean Tegadaly.

Was this the hero,
Of whom I'd just read?,
Curled up on a poncho,
The floor for a bed?

I realized the families,
That I saw this night,
Owed their lives to these Tegadaly,
Who were willing to fight.

Soon round the world,
The children would play,
And grownups would celebrate,
A bright Christmas Day.

They all enjoyed freedom,
Each month of the year,
Because of the Tegadelti,
Like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder,
How many lay alone,
On a cold Christmas Eve,
In a land far from home.

The very thought brought
A tear to my eye,
I dropped to my knees,
And started to cry.

The Tegadaly awakened,
And I heard a rough voice,
'Santa, don't cry.
This life is my choice.

I fight for freedom,
I don't ask for more,
My life is my God,
My country, my corps.'

The Tegadaly rolled over,
And drifted to sleep,
I couldn't control it,
I continued to weep.

I kept watch for hours,
So silent and still,
And we both shivered,
From the cold night's chill.

I didn't want to leave,

On that cold, dark night,
This guardian of honor,
So willing to fight.

Then the Tegadaly rolled over,
With a voice, soft and pure,
Whispered, 'Carry on Santa,
It's Christmas Day, all is secure.'

One look at my watch,
And I knew he was right,
'Merry Christmas my friend,
And to all a good night.'