

Merry Christmas, My Friend

Marine Twas the Night before Christmas



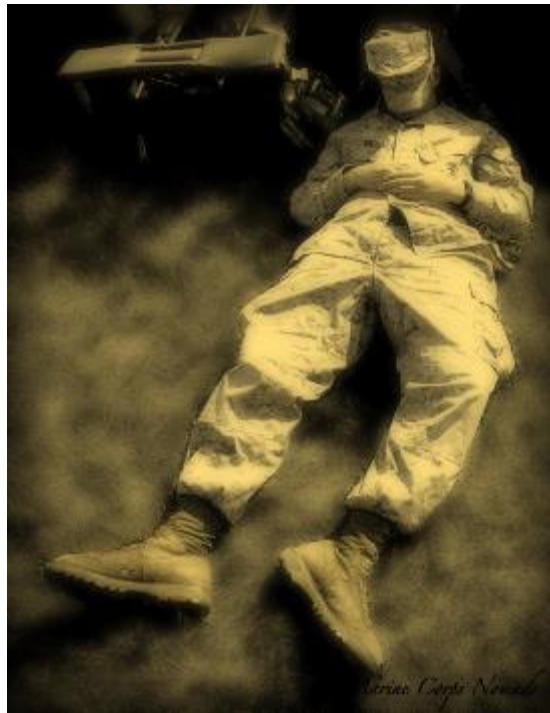
Twas the night before Christmas; he lived all alone
In a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone
I had come down the chimney, with presents to give
And to see just who in this home did live.

As I looked all about, a strange sight I did see
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree
No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand
On the wall hung pictures of a far distant land.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind
A sobering thought soon came to my mind
For this house was different, unlike any I'd seen
This was the home of a U.S. Marine.

I'd heard stories about them, I had to see more
So I walked down the hall and pushed open the door

And there he lay sleeping, silent, alone
Curled up on the floor in his one-bedroom home.

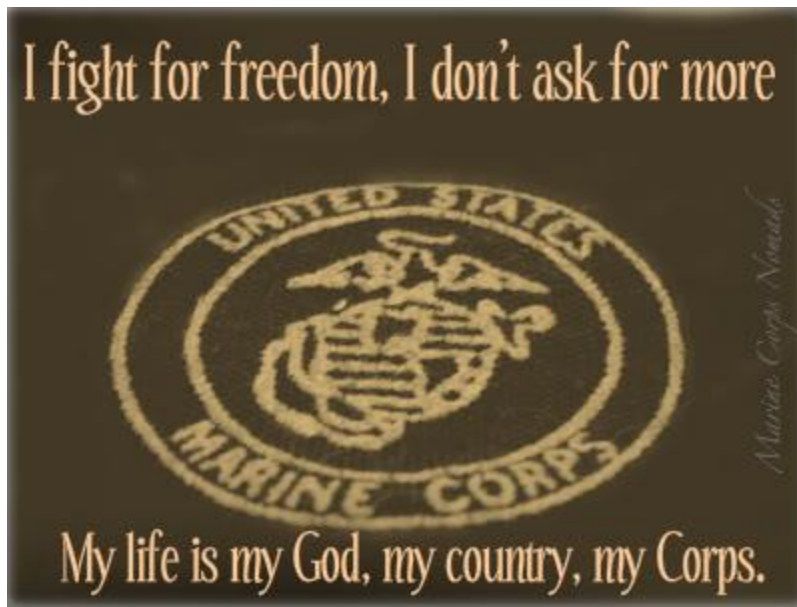


He seemed so gentle, his face so serene
Not how I pictured a U.S. Marine
Was this the hero, of whom I'd just read
Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean-shaven, his weathered face tan
I soon understood, this was more than a man
For I realized the families that I saw that night
Owed their lives to these men, who were willing to fight.

Soon around the Nation, the children would play
And grown-ups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day
They all enjoyed freedom, each month and all year
Because of Marines like this one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone
On a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home
Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye
I dropped to my knees and I started to cry.



He must have awoken, for 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.”

With that he rolled over, drifted off into sleep
I couldn’t control it, I continued to weep
I watched him for hours, so silent and still
I noticed he shivered from the cold night’s chill.

So I took off my jacket, the one made of red
And covered this Marine from his toes to his head
Then I put on his T-shirt of scarlet and gold
With an eagle, globe and anchor emblazoned so bold.

And although it barely fit me, I began to swell with pride
And for one shining moment, I was Marine Corps deep inside
I didn’t want to leave him so quiet in the night
This guardian of honor so willing to fight.

But half asleep he rolled over, and in a voice clean and pure
Said “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, Semper Fi and goodnight.



James M. Schmidt, who was a Lance Corporal stationed in Washington, DC wrote this poem in December, 1986. While serving as Battalion Counter Sniper at the Marine Barracks 8th and I in Washington, DC under Commandant P.X. Kelly and Battalion Commander D.J. Myers, Schmidt wrote this poem to hang on the door of the Gym in the BEQ. When Colonel Myers came upon it, he read it and immediately had copies sent to each department at the Barracks and promptly dismissed the entire Battalion early for Christmas leave. The poem was placed that day in the Marine Corps Gazette, distributed worldwide and later submitted to Leatherneck Magazine and was published in December, 1991. There have been many other versions, but this is the original version.