

The Price Of Freedom At Christmas

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In some far distant land he sits in a foxhole, it's raining and he is wet and damp. He tries to keep his weapon dry because he never knows when he'll use it. He looks up at the sky and wishes the rain will stop and especially the fighting. It seems like he's been here for years even though it's only been a couple of months. He thinks of home, it hurts and tears run down his cheek mixed with the raindrops. Its Christmas Eve and he knows back home everyone will be around the Christmas tree drinking Hot Chocolate and eggnog, singing carols and enjoying the company of family. What he doesn't know is that their hearts are heavy too, it's his first Christmas away from home and they pray he will make it back safely. Just then the sky lights up like day and he bounces back to reality. He is Thankful for the chance he had to dream a little of home and he whispers "Merry Christmas" and "God Bless", at the same time his family kneels, hold hands and pray for his safety and the safety of all of the men and women serving their country.

She just got off early from an eight-hour watch. Its seems her relief wanted to give her something for Christmas. Its 3:00 AM in the Indian Ocean and the ship she is on is just rolling a little in the storm they hit last night. At least she will get about four hours sleep before its time to get up and assume her normal duties. Sleep doesn't come easy though and she thinks of her children at home with no Mommy for Christmas. Its only Christmas Eve at home and she knows the two little ones will be getting ready for bed and Santa Clause. She remembers last year and how excited they were on Christmas morning. She crawls into her rack and pulls the curtain and starts to cry. She never thought that the Navy would be this hard. There were no jobs back where she was born and she thought this was a good way to earn a living and an education. Her education grows daily, even thought she is working on her GED. The tears are really coming now as she hopes only three more months to go. Her towel is hanging near by and she reaches for it to dry her tears, its time for reality and she must get some sleep. Before closing her eyes she prays for her husband and children at home and pray that God will keep her safe. It's about 7:00 PM in Iowa and her husband is busy getting the children ready for bed. Before tucking them in they all kneel and pray for the safe return of their beloved mommy and wife. They all cry, its hurts so bad especially for him. He asks for God to bless her and keep her safe.

In a plane at 20,000 feet they fly over our nations skies, keeping the peace. It's not like the computer programmer job he had with his flexible hours and holiday off time. He looks at his watch and its just past midnight and he just began his run from New York to Washington DC. The sky is clear and he thinks that maybe he will get a glimpse of old Saint Nick. He even thought he would see if he could keep up, after all this plane can do Mach One. As he watches the skies his mind wonders a little, thinking what if he didn't go into the reserves to pay for his college education. He learned to fly in the Air Force and that he really loves, but he also loves being home in Seattle with his family. He got a great job with a major computer software company, beautiful home and a great family. His reserve time was almost up and he thought he would make it without getting called up, but he did. Instead of being home for Christmas he patrols the East Coast of our country. Deep down inside he loves what he does. Just then he sees a shooting star wondering if it just might be Jolly Old Saint Nick. Everything seems so quite up here, with the exception of the roar of the engines and squawk of the radio. As he turns his plane around just over Maine he shouts to nobody in particular "Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night", then laughs at himself. He then thinks of his wife and three

boys at home. It must be about nine thirty on the west coast and his sons will be getting into bed. Christmas morning is something special at his house and he knows that the boys will give his wife no trouble tonight going to bed. He says a silent prayer Thanking god for his family and giving him the strength and courage to do what he does. Then he thinks that he will not resign his commission in the reserves but stay around a little longer. As he passes over the nations capitol he whispers "sleep tight Mr. President, we have your back".

He patrols the perimeter around the Marine Base in Japan. Things are quiet and hopefully he will get off duty in another hour. Its Christmas Eve back home and he wants to try and get a call in to his family. The sun is shining and he has time to think of past Christmas's at home. This isn't the first one he has been gone for and he knows it won't be the last. He loves being a Marine and he is looking to make a career out of it. The Corp has really shaped him up. When he first enlisted three years ago he was just another nobody, a geek they called him. After three years in the Marines he really made something of himself. His old classmates back home wouldn't even understand. He thinks God, Country and the Corp, and then smiles. At home all of his relatives get together for a traditional Christmas Eve dinner, then everyone is off to Midnight Mass. It will be almost 3:00 AM before they get to sleep. Christmas Day has always been on his Grandparents farm. The ladies of the family have been cooking for days to feed the whole crew. He always remembers how good all that food tasted, maybe next year he will be home. He stops daydreaming and get ready to get relieved.

It's cold and snowing in New York. The icy river doesn't make things any easier. She is on the bow of the Coast Guard Cutter patrolling these waters. Things don't get easier today even though it's Christmas. She was up at 0400 and started getting things ready to get the cutter underway. She is the ships Chief Bosn' and its her job to make sure everything is ready to go prior to getting underway. This is a job she truly loves and she has been doing it for nearly fifteen years. In her mind it's just another day and there is a job to be done. A lot of her people didn't like the fact they had to work on Christmas Day, but that the job. She has no family, her parents died years ago and she was an only child, never been married and has no current boyfriend. When she was growing up she can't remember having a good Christmas because they were poor. She grew up not far from here, but rarely goes back. The Coast Guard is her love and family. The coffee in her cup is getting cold and she heads down below to get another cup, but before going she whispers Merry Christmas and God Bless America.

At this special time of the year its time to pray and pay thanks to our men and women around the world who dedicate their lives for us. Even though the stories I've have told are fictional in nature, the truth is still there, I know I did it for twenty years. Say a special prayer, light a candle, send an e-mail, or thank them on the street. At any time they may die for their country, so let them know its not in vein.