

SOLDIERS CHRISTMAS

BY an Australian Peacekeeping soldier stationed overseas

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 MANTLE,
JUST BOOTS 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 SOLDIER,
ONCE I COULD SEE CLEARLY.

THE SOLDIER LAY SLEEPING,
SILENT, ALONE,
CURLED UP ON THE FLOOR,
IN THIS ONE BEDROOM HOME.

THE FACE WAS SO GENTLE,
THE ROOM IN DISORDER,
NOT HOW I PICTURED,
AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER.

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 SOLDIERS,
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 SOLDIERS,
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 SOLDIER 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 SOLDIER 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 DID NOT WANT TO LEAVE,
ON THAT COLD, DARK, NIGHT,
THIS GUARDIAN OF HONOR,
SO WILLING TO FIGHT.

THEN THE SOLDIER 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."