



The battle for Nacfa and Tezeta music -

DEDICATED TO ALL ERITREAN WOMEN:

The sultry voice of the female singer owned the place. Tezeta was the music playing.

The place was the Hilton Hotel somewhere in the Western world. The occasion was an event hosted by the Ethiopian government. The young woman walked into the lobby and suppressed her inner feelings of anger and repulsion.

She told herself to focus only on her thirst for revenge. She carried this anger as a soul mate for years.

The music was so subtle and the atmosphere set for relaxing ones' mind and surroundings.

She suddenly remembered all her struggles to raise her kids single handed. Back in time, she was arrested by the Ethiopian security and her beauty did not go unnoticed.

She pushed those painful and repugnant remembrances all the way at the back corner of her mind. She could not help but freeze while remembering the smell of some Ethiopian soldiers' body going through her body and reaching the utmost form of enjoyment. The humidity and the smell of those dark places infested with cockroaches and rats were filled mainly with female prisoners. The terrorizing and scuttling sound of those bugs and the rodents crossing the cold floor wet only with blood and human excrements made chills go through her body. The place was infested with rodents clicking and clacking like dry bones day in and night out. All female prisoners were living in constant fear of torture by the humans around them and the constant shadow of the place owned by diseases transmitted by bugs and rodents.

Those images were not easy to erase from the multiple layers of her mind, each holding an image more painful than the other.

The female prisoners' screams had a personally identifiable sound, while it was accompanied by the brutal attackers' screams these ones filled with a sick sexual pleasure stolen by force from women subjected to a form of torture they did not ask for.

In particular she focused on the image of an **EPLF** female freedom fighter whose name was Tiblez (these kind of fighters were called **fedayin** by the Eritrean struggle and today's national history); she was brutally tortured, raped and her left

breast cut while she was alive. Her defiant look made her a subject for more torture. The enemy left her remains for all female prisoners to see and above all to hear the noise of cockroaches and rats chomping on her open and infected wounds.

Tiblez's last words to her fellow inmates were: " Ajokheen, keeribna ena! {Never give up! Victory is close!}.

"May I help you?" the doorman's voice asked. The young woman smiled and gave her invitation card for the doorman to check on a list. The event was restricted to selected invitees and the city's circle of diplomats.

Mebrahtu informed her of the brutal bombardments of Nacfa by **the Ethiopian forces, who promised its own people that Nacfa would be re-gained in 5 days!** {"On October 10, 1985, the Derg launched another anti-EPLF offensive, whose objective was the capture of Nakfa "within five days." The operation involved sixty aircraft and thirty helicopter gunships. For the first time, the Ethiopian air force dropped airborne units behind rebel lines in northeast Sahel awraja (sub region). When Ethiopian forces failed to capture the city, the Mengistu regime ordered two more attacks on Nakfa, each of which ended in the government's defeat"} Source: www.country-data.com

It was quite a heavy responsibility to try to meet that particular guest and gain the trust of such well trained diplomat.

Mebrahtu also told her - a while back - that her best weapons would be her intelligence, her beauty, her elegance, her love for country and above all her determination to avenge her husband's murder and torture. "You are above intelligent - he said - not only that, you are brilliant and can navigate any diplomatic corridor using the many foreign languages you master. You can go in and out of high places and then proceed to take care of your grocery list and go on with your regular day activities. **You can do it all.** Think of those Eritreans that are going thirsty and hungry for days while defending one or the other side of the front. Some are not sleeping for an entire week from the non-stop bombardments. **The enemy gave us 5 days. I give you 5 hours. I put my entire trust in you" he said.**

She absorbed each and every word Mebrahtu told her and all the trust and respect her country was squarely putting on her shoulders. It was like a source of energy that made her walk straight forward into that hotel lobby.

She swung her long hair on one side of her face and walked towards her host slowly moving her hips in such a way that every man in the hall stared at her. That was one battle she gained right there! She had just gained the upfront attention of all guests. Male and female alike!

She reached her host, a puffy faced man with an even puffier stomach due to the tons of beer he kept drinking. She smiled while her host hand-kiss her; the gesture showed the upper class diplomat he was. She smiled some more and followed him to his table; she sat crossing her legs made longer than they really were by the stiletto she was wearing for the day.

She looked straight at his eyes and carefully leaned on the table and made sure her host - sitting across- was facing her upper body. His attention never left her chest and all it offered for the eyes to see - through her black strapless organza dress. She sipped from her champagne flute and carefully asked him questions - after she

explained – they were based on deep concerns for her family back home. He told her that he understood her fears and he talked, and talked and never stopped.

After his long monologue rich with needed information, she suddenly sat up and checked her gold Cartier watch and asked him to hold her shawl while she was going to the powder room to refresh. He smiled and felt comfortably reassured that by holding part of her clothing he was holding the keys to a night of pleasure.

She left and made a detour to the other corner of the lobby; picked up a public phone, insert some coins and talked straight to the person on the other side of the phone line.

Once done she straightened up her short dress around her hips, looked up and smiled all while walking back to her guest. She told him that she suddenly had stomach cramps and could not stay longer.

He let her shawl go and with a voice filled with disappointment asked: **“When will I see you next?”** **She smiled broadly, making sure to enhance her lips while replying close to his face: “In 5 days, I promise you that!!”**

Five (5) days for him to dream and 5 hours for the valiant Eritrean EPLF fighters to deliver nightmares to him and his alike. It is good to be a woman and above all an Eritrean woman who is told “Your country trusts you. You can do it all and once you have achieved your goal, you will just walk away”. **Eritrean women did it! And did it all! Let’s hope our country and fellow citizens never will forget and keep freedom’s fighter women – of any group and with any kind of assignments – to the highest place in the Eritrean history!** When women feel that everyone forgot – yet again – about all their struggles and painful achievements, let our country and governments remember the life women gave over and over again.

To all the Ararat, Miriam, Roma, Birikti, Fatma, Weyni, Gabriela, Mebrat, Jamila, Ahlam and many more Eritrean Women.

By Kiki Tzeggai ** “a page from Wegheehu do?” {“Weghihulna do”?} a novel still on the work.

“This novel is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.”

20 September 2015



Woman fighter of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front is considered an equal among her male colleagues in the struggle for an independent Eritrea, 20th June 1978. She holds a Russian-made Kalashnikov AK-47 while her daughter looks on shyly from behind. (Photo by Alex Bowie/Getty Images)



Image by: NYCEFM.org “Eritrea-women-empowerment”



Eritrean women fighters leading to war



The author: Kiki Tzeggai – photo by her husband Berhane Tesfamariam - Asmara/Eritrea - 1976