

## Chapin Harry

### "Bummer"

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His mama was a midnight woman  
His daddy was a drifter drummer  
One night they put it together  
Nine months later came the little black bummer  
He was a laid back lump in the cradle  
Chewing the paint chips that fell from the ceiling  
Whenever he cried he got a fist in his face  
So he learned not to show his feelings  
He was a pig-tail puller in grammar school  
Left back twice by the seventh grade  
Sniffing glue in Junior High  
And the first one in school to get laid  
He was a weed-speed pusher at fifteen  
He was mainlining skag a year later  
He'd started pimping when they put him away  
In jail he changed from a junkie to a hater  
And just like the man from the precinct said:  
"Put him away, you better kill him instead.  
A bummer like that is better off dead  
Someday they're gonna have to put a bullet in his head."

They threw him back on the street, he robbed an A & P  
He didn't blink at the buddy that he shafted  
And just about the time they would have caught him too  
He had the damn good fortune to get drafted  
He was A-One bait for Vietnam, you see they needed  
more bodies in a hurry  
He was a cinch to train cause all they had to do  
Was to figure how to funnel his fury  
They put him in a tank near the D M Z  
To catch the gooks slipping over the border  
They said his mission was to Search and Destroy  
And for once he followed and order  
One sweat-soaked day in the Yung-Po Valley  
With the ground still steaming from the rain  
There was a bloody little battle that didn't mean  
nothing  
Except to the few that remained  
You see a couple hundred slants had trapped the other  
five tanks  
And had started to pick off the crews  
When he came on the scene and it really did seem  
This is why he'd paid those dues  
It was something like a butcher going berserk  
Or a sane man acting like a fool  
Or the bravest thing that a man had ever done  
Or a madman blowing his cool  
Well he came on through like a knife through butter

Or a scythe sweeping through the grass

Or to say it like the man would have said it himself:

"Just a big black bastard kicking ass!"

And just like the man from the precinct said:

"Put him away, you better kill him instead.

A bumner like that is better of dead

Someday they're gonna have to put a bullet in his head."

When it was over and the smoke had cleared

There were a lot of V C bodies in the mud

And when the rescued men came over for the very first time

They found him smiling as he lay in his blood

They picked up the pieces and they stitched him back together

He pulled through though they thought he was a goner

And it force them to give him what they said they would

Six purple hearts and the Medal of Honor

Of course he slouched as the chief white honkey said:

"Service beyond the call of duty"

But the first soft thought was passing through his mind

"My medal is a Mother of a beauty!"

He got a couple of jobs with the ribbon on his chest

And though he tried he really couldn't do 'em

There was only a couple of things that he was really trained for

And he found himself drifting back to 'em

Just about the time he was ready to break

The V A stopped sending him his checks  
Just a matter of time 'cause there was no doubt  
About what he was going to do next  
It ended up one night in a grocery store  
Gun in hand and nine cops at the door  
And when his last battle was over  
He lay crumpled and broken on the floor  
And just like the man from the precinct said:  
"Put him away, you better kill him instead.  
A bum like that is better off dead  
Someday they're gonna have to put a bullet in his  
head."  
Well he'd breathed his last, but ten minutes past  
Before they dared to enter the place  
And when they flipped his riddled body over they  
found  
His second smile frozen on his face  
They found his gun where he'd thrown it  
There was something else clenched in his fist  
And when they pried his fingers open they found the  
Medal of Honor  
And the Sergeant said: "Where in the hell he get this?"  
There was a stew about burying him in Arlington  
So they shipped him in box to Fayette  
And they kind of stashed him in a grave in the county  
plot  
The kind we remember to forget

And just like the man from the precinct said:

"Put him away, you better kill him instead.

A bummer like that is better of dead

Someday they're gonna have to put a bullet in his head

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