

Redgum

"I Was Only 19"

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Mum and Dad and Denny saw the passing-out parade
at Puckapunyal
It was a long march from cadets.
The sixth battalion was the next to tour, and it was me
who drew the card.
We did Canungra, Shoalwater before we left.

And Townsville lined the footpaths as we marched
down to the quay
This clipping from the paper shows us young and
strong and clean.
And there's me in my slouch hat with my SLR and
greens.
God help me, I was only nineteen.

From Vung Tau, riding Chinooks, to the dust at Nui Dat
I'd been in and out of choppers now for months.
But we made our tents a home, VB and pinups on the
lockers
And an Asian orange sunset through the scrub.

And can you tell me, doctor, why I stil can't get to
sleep?
And night-time's just a jungle dark and a barking M16?
And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you tell
me what it means?
God help me, I was only ninteen.

A four week operation when each step could mean your
last one on two legs
It was a war within yourself.
But you wouldn't let your mates down til they had you
dusted off
So you closed your eyes and thought about something
else.

Then someone yelled out "Contact!" and the bloke
behind me swore
We hooked in there for hours, then a Godalmighty roar
Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the
moon,
God help me, he was going home in June.

I can still see Frankie, drinking tinnies in the Grand
Hotel
On a thirty-six hour rec leave in Vung Tau
And I can still hear Frankie, lying screaming in the
jungle
Til the morphine came and killed the bloody row.

And the Anzac legends didn't mention mud and blood
and tears
And the stories that my father told me never seemed
quite real.
I caught some pieces in my back that I didn't even feel
God help me, I was only nineteen.

And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to
sleep?
And why the Channel Seven chopper chills me to my
feet?
And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you tell
me what it means?
God help me, I was only nineteen.

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