

## **Redgum**

# **"I Was Only Nineteen"**

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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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