

## **Herd, The**

### **"I Was Only 19"**

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Mum, Dad and Denny  
were some amongst many  
who turned up to see the passing out parade at  
Puckapunyal  
Seemed every man and his mongrel  
watched cadets stumble  
on the long march to the Viet jungle.  
"Oh Christ", I mumbled as I drew that card  
and my mates came to slap me on the back with due  
regard  
We were the sixth battalion and the next to tour  
we did Canungra and Shoalwater before we left, rest  
assured

Seemed half of Townsville turned out to see us leave  
and they lined the footpaths as we marched to the  
quay  
The papers wrote it up like you would not believe  
but we were looking to the future for a fast reprieve  
The newspaper clippings show us young  
strong and clean rockin' slouch hats  
slung SLRs and greens

God help me, I was only nineteen

From Vung Tau the black helicopters  
the chinhook pilots seemed relieved at Nui Dat when  
they dropped us  
Feels like months running on and off landing pads  
letters to Dad  
'cause it's like, man, he's sad  
But he can't see the tents that we call home  
cans of VB and pin-ups on the lockers of chicks off TV  
The noise, the mosquitoes and the heat suprising  
like the first time you see an agent orange horizon

So please can you tell me doctor why I still can't get to  
sleep  
the scar's left in me?  
Night time's just a jungle  
dark and a barking M16 that keeps saying

"rest in peace"

And what the hell's this rash that comes and goes  
I don't suppose you can tell me what that means?

God help me, I was only nineteen

Sent off on a four-week long operation  
where every single step could be your last one  
My two legs were sorta living hell  
falling with the shells, war within yourself  
But you wouldn't let your mates down  
'til they had you dusted off  
so you closed your eyes and thought of something else

Then someone yelled "contact!"  
another bloke swore  
we hooked in there for hours then a god almighty roar  
Then Frankie kicked a mine  
the day that mankind kicked the moon

God help me, he was going home in June

And I can still see Frank with a can in his hand  
thirty-six hour leave in the bar at the Grand  
I can still hear Frank  
a screaming mess  
of bleeding flesh  
couldn't retrieve his legs

The ANZAC legend  
neglected to mention  
the mud  
the fear  
the blood  
the tears  
the tension  
Dad's recollection  
beyond comprehension  
didn't seem quite real until we were sent in  
The chaos and confusion  
the fire and steel  
hot shrapnel in my back  
I didn't even feel

God help me, I was only nineteen

So please can you tell me doctor  
why I can't get to sleep  
I can't hardly eat?  
And the sound of the Channel Seven chopper still chills  
me to my feet

still fuels my grief?  
And what's this rash that comes and goes like the  
dreams  
can you tell me what that means?

God help me, I was only nineteen

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  
It was me who drew the card  
we did Canungra and Shoalwater before we left

So please can you tell me doctor  
why I can't get to sleep  
I can't hardly eat?  
And the sound of the Channel Seven chopper still chills  
me to my feet  
still fuels my grief?  
And what's this rash that comes and goes like the  
dreams  
can you tell me what that means?

God help me, I was only nineteen.

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