

Back Home on the 4th

My buddy Spencer gushed fate's blood ... his last breath of freedom.
His warm body spasmed death's omen!
A life now given, my arms wrapped false protection.
A human shroud was all I could give him.
Too soon, another dead tribute to the red, white and blue,

a foxhole rendition for the over there 4th of July tradition.

I screamed at the bombs, "He's too young to die. He's only 18. So am I."
A child's life wasted, even the rain was crying.
I knew I'd be next, one more dead hero for the family album text.
The fleshy air hung by a crescent moon that night.
Death was my brother, but my family's back home.

Back home on the 4th

My family's together, baking pies, eating BBQ chicken, drinking soda and beer and
laughing at kid's jokes. I smell it. I taste it. I hear it.
Oh God, take me home to my loves' gentle touch and the music of summer.
The chopper blades whopping, screaming in two part time harmony,
"this one lives, this one dies, this one cries". Here am I.

Take me back home for the 4th of July

How many GI's would flash back to remember crawling through stinking paddies,
forsaking Mom's apple pie. No Band-aid token to comfort death's pain.
Only the night fancied the day and laughed at the horrors repeated on TV,
raw scripts for lurid soaps or News Specials - - - dilemmas fed with perverted hope.

Fresh everything I wanted to taste - - - raspberries, biscuits, rich brownies and cake.
Instead, I'm choking on wet human stench. The taste of kill or be killed in a land, rich
rich in rice, rain and gut pain.
How many more would be killed in this profit sharing game?

I stared down at Spencer, my buddy of fame. Oh God, forgive me,
I don't even know his first name.
Two strangers caught in the battle of life and death; brothers together in a moment of hell.
Would I be the next? Not one but two unknowns lost, presumed dead,
MIA's alone on this 4th of July.
So different, these games played over here. The lies are for keeps.

It's so different from home, this 4th of July.

Back on Main St., the school bands march on - - - past the old timers standing proud,
past the kids with cotton candied faces waving tiny flags of red, white and blue.
Everyone is yelling for heroes like me, Spencer and you;
heroes hiding in rice paddies, gasping for life, dreaming of wet kisses.
and self worth slowly dying inside.

They all sent letters of care and regret, but if they cared - - - really gave a rat's ass,
we wouldn't be here, eye level in killer grass,
holding our dead, becoming our dead on this 4th of July. And yet - - -
and yet there would be no 4th without our dead.
The half dead continue to dream on and forget.

Yes, the spirit of our nation is dependent on death.
Inbred with the right to defend and bear arms, we lay our life on the line.
We die alone and scared under the enemy's sky.
We kill one another, a friend yet made, by our bombs and our missiles, our lies,
by our mistakes never spoken.

It's just another time, the history books deceive.
Across a county line or an island away, we must challenge broken treaties,
defend honor yet named. It's accepted, even expected to fight and to bleed
for the rights and secrets of Uncle Sam's needs.

Our Granddads, we love them, they taught us so well.
So well, it just keeps on going, going on and on and on and on.
We say we are different. We learn too late- - - oh God help us not at all.
We call it fate.

Back home on the 4th.

They remember us with fireworks, picnics and beer.
What I'd give for a cold one now. I need one for my buddy too.
He'd like that. My buddy, Spencer, he just died in my arms.
and I don't even know his first name.

But I'll remember him forever, on a wall somewhere.
I'll bring my children to stare. I'll bring Spencer a cold one for sure.
Just set it there, next to the flowers and mini flags, next to my reflection of pain.

I'll be back home then on the 4th.

It will be more than parades and picnics.
I'll have fireworks, sparklers and laughter without a care.
Back home, I'll hold tight my son's small hand to still
my memories of god-awful, blood suffering despair.

It was just another war for the books.
It was a conflict of words, actions withheld.
Honesty at last - - - back home would prove true.
A black granite salute stands watch to protect and uphold,
A black granite salute to broken bodies, shattered minds and lost souls.

Now, I still hold dear the 4th of July.
My family will continue to fly the stars and stripes proudly high.
and I've quit questioning why.

Why I lived? Why he died? But 30 years past and it's not over.
The phantom pain is killing me on each and every 4th of July.

War is not an easy answer, with a pledge of peace and prosperity for a few,
or a pledge for the rich. Not much has changed.
We honor the dead and the living with parades, picnics and beer.
We'll always wave our freedom flags for victory fame far and near,
even when there is none.

Just like my dad told me, I'll tell you children too.
It'll be different, you'll see.
I'll do my best, like those before me, to keep you from going over there,
over there to a strange unfriendly land, and wishing and praying
you were back home on the 4th of July.

Eileen Marie
7/4/97