

A Crew Commander's Lament

The Eland's gears they whined and ground
The radio hissed and spluttered
With a dust-choked voice I gave command
"HE Action - Loaded!"
A stallion's kick as the breechblock surged
And the Demon's shell struck home
Rending flesh from bone and breaking steel
Claiming some poor Mother's son



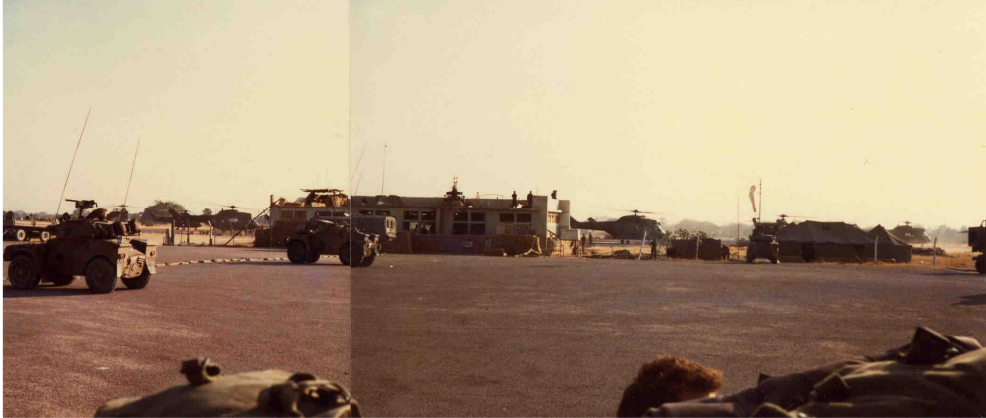
In the dark of night I shed my tear
Unable to cry out loud
Thinking of those poor lost souls
How can we as a people be proud?
But in the shadow of the dawn
As the darkness yields to light
An unspoken question nags as I yawn
How can we escape this plight?



And so the small idea gets life
Like a germinating seed
Taking root in the ruins of a bombed-out place
Among the rubble where our fears used to breed
As we lead young men with aggression into war
Girding the softness of their fleece
Can we do what has ne'er been done before?
Dare to think that thought called peace...

© Anthony Turton – Conceived on a forgotten Cold War
battlefield in Africa

Poetry from Shaking Hands with Billy



One Man's Freedom is another Man's Fear



Locked within the TNT
A demon lies there lurking
Urging to be unleashed
By a soldier unsuspecting
Like a glutton to feed
On flesh soft, blood and bone
Why do we feel this primordial need?
To invade someone else's home



What have they done to drive us so?
Into that limbo of no-man's land
Beyond what I call that thin grey line
Dehumanized lost souls
Why does the unknown cause us to fear
Making us act this way
Or do we think if we call them *Gook's*
We can simply do as we may?



Why are we afraid of those aspirations so?
As *their* yearning simply to be free
Ignites in *us* that thing called fear
Is there no place in there somewhere for me?
What will it take for us to start
To seek between us common ground?
Or does the beat of Mother Africa's heart
Doom us eternal, no peace to be found?



© Anthony Turton – Conceived during combat operations

Poetry from Shaking Hands with Billy

Interlocking Arcs of Fire

The night air was cool and sweet
Scent of nectar wafting wide
Under the arms of the Baobab majestic spread
We dug ourselves into the ground

Spirits of our ancestors spun
In the branches high above
Were it not for the presence of the guns
My soul would be at peace

The radio hissed as the message was passed
From now on silence prevails
Alone with our thoughts and the palms of our hands
We gingerly caress the guns

The blast was loud as the claymore went off
The ambush had been triggered
And then with the most spectacular sight
We engaged with all our force

Hot streaks in the dark we spat out our lead
From the guns until then silent
'Til the barrels glowed near-red
Interlocking arcs of fire

In the middle of that hail
Some soldiers bleed and die
But in the rush of battle fierce
We have no time to stop and think

That these were sons of Mother's sad
Simply doing what they must
To answer the calling of the day
As we ourselves just did

But now as time and distance pass
Between what happened then
We can in peace stop to reflect
The senseless anger of the time

For a life so lost is sad indeed
Because it's a one way street
But now with wisdom deadly bought
We can reflect and mourn

As we begin to remember
What we tried so hard to forget
We start to feel we are human beings
And not just lumps of meat

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An Outsider Looking In

What is the story of this land?
From where people fled so fast
What enduring mystery can be found?
Through the swirling mists of the past
Is there a tale of humankind?
That speaks of hope at last
Or are we locked in cycles blind?
Doomed to fear, no shade that peace can cast

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A Forsaken Camp in Africa

I came to this forsaken camp
Some time in mid-July
The Corporals they all laughed at me
"The Soutie's sure to die"
They made me fill in forms
Until I shook with fear
About my parent's politics
And if my brother's queer

Here's your golden Dog Tags
You'll be in combat soon
And a piece of paper
To say you left here sane
But if you've got ambition
And want a good career
Just sign along the line
And join for fifteen years



**Jointly composed by soldiers in my tent while on a
tour of combat duty after imbibing heavily on music
from the Vietnam War era**