

PURPLE HEART ROW

For Gary Fuller, RVN, 366th SPS K-9

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Da Nang AB, RVN, **366th SPS. K-9**

12/29/1966 – 12/29/1967

Our purple heart slipped away one night,
When our backs were turned and filled with fear.
Curled around mystic rings of delirium,
I heard the rumble of bombing in a dream war.

We lay there like children, counting the seconds
Between the flash and thunder.
And felt the old familiar panic
When the sirens went off.

The alarm spread like bad news; but we seemed frozen
In time, as the heart lay dying in a burnt out field.
The fences went down and the jungle opened up
Like the jaws of a great shark, spilling out

Blood and shadows, bent over,
Explosives strapped to their backs.
The sky lit up with flares, like miniature suns.
Armies floating in the dreamy straits of Panama Red.

Laughing at jokes we made up to pretend
What happened was imagined—a dream.
But the missing heart would not forget;
Though we tried to banish our ghosts.

So when you ask: “Did you do your duty?
Were you strong; were you brave enough?”
We could say: “Yes, we did. We served our
Country. We defended your freedom.”

But in the dream, none were free because
The heart, you see, lay bleeding

In burnt out scenes that keep haunting us.
Ghosts that walk the battlefields keep bumping into

Ghosts from other wars. Old friends left behind.
Ghosts still wrestling with guilt—regret;
All trying to find some peace of mind.
On purple heart row, you see the ghosts.

Drifting in-and-out of the shadows,
Still trying to make some sense of it.
On purple heart row, you hear the heart beating—
Somewhere...everywhere.

Dreaming or not,
I hear it beating under my pillow.

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From: "When You Can't See The Trees For The Wood"

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