

## **Cockburn Bruce**

### **"Dancing In Paradise 657"**

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praying mantis on screen

canoes prowl reef in early morning sun

as it flashes on the rhythmic fall of weed cutter's  
cutlass blade

everybody's got something to sell besides the obvious  
dollars and dope

aloe rub, starfish, vegetable patties, braid your hair  
miss and bush doctor cures

sudden angry eruption between aloe peddler and man  
with property to protect

muscular security guard with truncheon of twisted wire

"kiss my blood clot" she hisses and they're enemies for  
life

in the beach front bar they're playing reggae versions  
of Jim Reeves' Greatest Hits

the waitress sings along, eyes focused dreamily on  
that sentimental world

and there's DANCING in PARADISE...

blue green ship in turquoise bay

swollen bauxite-red river rushing

stream rising from feathered bamboo hills

tracks once paved now falling away into deep lush  
valleys

and the farmed-out road contracts pass through so  
many hands

the print erodes with the weather-worn blacktop  
and the jungle's always trying to reclaim the right of  
way  
and the mangoes cacao turmeric goats soursop  
mushrooms cane plantains limes  
horses crayfish long-legged birds donkeys  
curved horns of cattle above dense grass  
ganja sensitive plant ackee  
and some thorn whose prick brings lockjaw  
and tires torn by sharp yellow rocks --  
young girl stares pensively from dark door in pale blue  
wall  
Big About and friends at their crossroads bar  
with its dirt corral for dancing  
drink soursop juice all day long  
in quest of the perpetual stiff bamboo  
and there's DANCING in PARADISE...  
Biggy Dread gunned down by police at Big Bridge  
March 16  
riding a mule cart to Sav-la-Mar pulled out a cutlass  
and they had to shoot  
that's what they say  
something tells me they like to shoot  
something in the eyes of the ones at the road block  
where they searched the car and tried to get us to  
confess to whatever...  
there's truncheons and gas down in Harbour St. --  
typical response where life isn't so sweet

and somebody gets desperate enough to say so --

price of fish price of flour

going up up up almost by the hour

and they throw away money on spectacular shows

to show the world the right likes the right music

and the Prime Minister sucks ice cream in the company  
of a happy band of children

while a naked man, sores on his neck,

lies for days in Washington Blvd. gnawing chicken  
bones

and the Chamber of Commerce thinks there's too much  
crime

and there's a kung fu movie in every town

and there's DANCING in PARADISE...

(JAMAICA, EASTER 85

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