

Bruce Cockburn

"Dancing In Paradise"

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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 cure
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 hills
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 tumeric goats soursop
mushroom cane plantations 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 Bit 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 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 Boulevard 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...
-- Jamacia, Easter 1985

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