

Bryant Richard

"Put Me In The Zoo"

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Richard Bryant

There was a white man from South Carolina
Dabbled in anthropology
He took ship to the African continent
In the year of 1903
Will you lead me through the jungle
He asked the man who met him there
To the pygmy man and woman do you dare
Ota Benga measured four foot ten
From his head down to his toe
He could split the eye of the elephant
With his poison arrow and bow
And feed the village three times over
On Father Elephant's jungle steak
Wash it down with good palm wine down by the cane
break
He heard Phillips Verner and his guide
Wriggle in the bush one day
He'd never seen a man with skin like milk
He could not turn his gaze away
Phillips spoke to him in his own tongue
I've been searching for a man like you
Come sail away with me and I'll put you in the zoo
Ota looked into his pale blue eyes
As the man did cast his spell
How else to explain when they started next day
For the land where the white men dwell
Yes I will travel with you, Verner
But there is one thing you must do
Return me safely home so I can put you in the zoo
Forty thousand people in New York
Traveled to the Bronx one day
And stood in line in front of the monkey house
To see the pygmy on display
Ota Benga put on quite a show
Said the Times in a mixed review
But we're not sure we approve of a pygmy in the zoo
They say that Phillips Verner was half mad
But he was a man of his word
He took Ota back to his jungle home
A land that himself preferred
They built a pen, put his rocking chair right in

And his books and his magazines too
Then Phillips Verner said now you can put me in the zoo
The forest people came from miles around
To see the cage Phillips occupied
We leave him there as he rocks and he reads out loud
To the assembled countryside
Ota Benga never received his degree in Caucasian
anthropology
But he did get a laugh or two when he put Phillips
Verner in the zoo
He did get a laugh or two when he put Phillips Verner in
the zoo
And we dance like demons
Down in the furnace room
Spill red wine, green weed we might

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