

# Use Me While You Can

Bruce Cockburn

There's a black and white crow  
On the back of a two-toned sheep  
In a field of broken yellow stalks  
Below looming cliffs.

High above the plains  
Little grey houses blend  
With giant jagged boulders  
And pale weathered stumps.

Life in the ghost of the bush.

Wind whips the acacias and strange forked palms  
That cluster around the water hole

Suddenly, out of the blowing sand  
A milk-white camel appears.

Turbaned rider, blue robe billowing,  
Bounces with the shambling trot;  
Wears a sword and a rifle on his back,  
And hanging from his neck, a transistor radio...

You blink and like ghosts, they're gone

Under the wan disc of sand-masked sun  
A woman grins - spits expertly  
Into the path of a struggling black beetle  
Six feet away  
Hoists her water bucket onto her head  
And strides off up the trail...

Sun a steel ball glowing  
Behind endless blowing sand  
Sun a steel ball glowing  
Dust of fallen empires slowly flowing through my hands  
Use me while you can

Pearl held in black fingers  
Is the moon behind dry trees  
Pearl held in black fingers  
Bird inside the rib cage is beating to be free  
Use me while you can

I've had breakfast in New Orleans  
Dinner in Timbuktu  
I've lived as a stranger in my own house, too  
Dark hand waves in lamplight  
Cowrie shell patterns change  
And nothing will be the same again

Bullet in a sandstorm  
Looking for a place to land  
Bullet in a sandstorm  
Full heart beats an empty one  
In the deck they dealt to man  
Use me while you can