

the bar. Then Mr Percy and the others come back one by one to the bar and they talking quiet and they not drinking and they left 3 a.m. 3.15 Mr Wills return and take one whisky and 2 Carib. He asked for pineapple or some sweet fruit but it had nothing.

6 a.m. Mr Wills come in the bar looking for soda but it aint have none. We have to get some soda for Mr Wills sir.

6.30 a.m. the papers come and I deliver them to Door-man Vignales at 7 a.m. *Chas. Hillyard*

Mr Hillyard: In view of the unfortunate illness of Mr Inskip, I am temporarily in charge of the hotel. I trust you will continue to make your nightly reports, but I would be glad if you could keep your entries as brief as possible. *Robt. Magnus, Acting Manager*

December 1. 10.30 p.m. C. E. Hillyard take over duty at C—Hotel all corrected 12 Midnight Bar close 2 a.m. Mr Wills 2 Carib, 1 bread 6 a.m. Mr Wills 1 soda 7 a.m. Night Watchman Hillyard hand over duty to Mr Vignales with one torch light 2 Fridge keys and Room Keys 1, 3, 6 and 12. Bar intact all corrected no report. *C. E. H.*

Dog Food

MICHAEL RECKORD

A small security guard with a huge German Shepherd on a leash barred my way into the supermarket.

'I just need a bag of corn meal,' I told him.

'Yu can't go een.'

'For the dogs,' I said. I put out my hand to pat his animal.

'Hey!' He dragged the dog away. 'Him wi' bite yu.'

'Not me,' I said. 'He'll bite if you order him to; or if he smells fear. But I'm not afraid of dogs.'

I patted the dog's head and its tail twitched, a mere suggestion of a wag. The guard looked at me incredulously. I smiled down at him.

'Please let me pass.'

He glanced behind him into the supermarket, then back at me. 'A riot goin' on in dere, yu know.'

'I'm not afraid.'

He scratched his head. 'Ah don't even tink dem have any corn meal.'

'Allow me to go and find out for myself, officer. The manager knows me and usually keeps back a few scarce items in the storeroom for me. I'm Mrs Gregory.'

'Mrs Gregory?' he echoed. Clearly didn't know me. Probably didn't read the newspapers.

I told him who I was, or rather who my husband was. Reluctantly he stepped aside.

'Well, try yu luck, Mrs Gregory. But ah don't tink yu can get pass dem women inside just now. Maybe when de police come.'

'The police have been sent for?'

The little man nodded. 'Is only police can control dem women when dem start gwaan like – like – animals.'

'What's the problem?' I asked.

He shrugged. 'Dem tink de manager hoarding scarce goods in de storeroom, Flour, an rice, an soap. So dem trying to bruk down de door.'

'I'm sure the manager bought whatever goods he has with hard-earned cash,' I said. 'They're his, and he's entitled to do whatever he wants with them. I'll bet if their neighbours tried to break down their walls to get their goods they'd be extremely annoyed.'

I went inside and walked over to the manager, a pleasant, well-dressed Chinese gentleman of about forty – a second-generation Jamaican. From the little elevated cubicle that served as his office, he was watching – with typical Chinese inscrutability – the dozen or so women who were yelling at the top of their voices while they beat against the storeroom's drawn steel shutter.

'Good morning, Mr Lowe,' I said. 'I'm sorry about this little trouble you're having.'

'Lue,' he said. 'Good morning, Mrs Gregory.'

'You know, Mr Lue,' I continued, 'the one thing that's wrong with this country is that it's overpopulated.'

He glanced at me briefly, then back at the howling pack of women. They weren't harming the shutter, but I suspected he was worried about them turning to the goods on the shelves.

'Really, Mrs Gregory?' he said.

'Sure. You have a big supermarket here. If you didn't have so many hungry-belly creatures to cater to –' I indicated the mob – 'and their hungry-belly offspring, the goods you store here would be quite adequate.'

He glanced at me again. Inscrutably. I wondered if he hadn't understood my point.

'In other words,' I explained, 'your goods are only

scarce because so many people want them.'

He smiled. 'You may be right. And how can I help you today?'

'I need about ten pounds of corn meal,' I said. 'For the dogs.'

He looked grave. 'We have only a little corn meal left, you know, and *they* want it.' He glanced at the women and hesitated. 'Couldn't you buy some of the tinned dog food for today?'

'Oh, I have lots of the tinned stuff. But I need the meal to mix with it. At three dollars a tin, it's too expensive to feed my four dogs with tinned meat alone.'

'I see. Well, could you wait awhile? As soon as the police get those women out of the store, I'll be able to get to the corn meal.'

'They won't be long, will they?'

'I hope not,' he said, eyeing the women.

I frowned. 'You can never tell with the police though, can you? They might be in the middle of a domino game or something. Tell me, is anyone in the storeroom?'

'A couple of packers. Why?'

'I wonder if I could persuade them to pass me the corn meal?'

He shook his head. 'You'd never get past those viragos. I think you should wait.'

Smiling at him, I said, 'My husband's favourite adage is: "Nothing tried, nothing done".'

I walked across four aisles to the mob. It was then I noticed that there were three young men – two were boys under twelve, really – in the group. While the women were deadly serious about what they were doing – screaming through the shutter or hammering with their fists or feet upon it – the boys were having fun, grinning at each other and shouting for shouting's sake.

The din was terrific. 'Open de damn door!' Bam! Bam! Bam! 'Pass out de rice!' Buff! Buff! Buff! 'Mi have pickney fi

feed! Wham! Slam! Bang! 'Gimme some soap powder, or ah wi bruk up yu -!' Biff! Baff! Boff! 'De damn Chinee man tief wi when de goods plentiful, an im won't sell wi dem when dem scarce. An oonu tekking him side 'gainst yu own people! Buff! Slam! Bang! 'Mi seh open de door!'

The women were of all shapes and sizes - short, tall, fat, slim. Some were colourfully, some drably dressed. Most were very black, though there were a couple who were brown-skinned, like me. One was even fairer than I was, but otherwise quite ugly.

'Ladies,' I said, quietly but firmly, 'may I have just a word with one of the storemen in there.'

No one paid me the slightest attention. I tried again, a little more loudly. 'Ladies, if you'd excuse -'

It was like talking to a wall, except this was a moving, heaving, punching, kicking, screaming wall of human bodies. But they *were* all deaf.

'I'm addressing you women,' I shouted. Again in vain, except that two of the boys looked at me, grinned, and went back to assisting the women in making noise and uselessly battering at the shutter.

I can't stand being ignored, never could, and I felt myself losing my temper. But that would have been unseemly. So I decided against shouting any more and against trying to push through the women to get to the shutter.

Breathing deeply, willing myself to be calm, I retreated a few paces from the pack. Which was lucky for me, for that was when the police arrived.

Five of them, gas-masks around their necks, revolvers in their holsters, batons drawn and waving, rushed through the door, shouting. I heard them, but I doubt if the women did until the cops were right on them. Two of the policemen grabbed one boy each and hauled them from the crowd. Depositing the youths a little distance away, the cops then rushed back to assist their colleagues in their efforts to quell the women.

'Bruk it up. Stop dis noise. Oonu go home. Outa de man store!' and similar instructions were shouted to the women, while the cops pulled with hands and pushed with batons at the human wall. But the women, angry and desperate, were not easily moved. At first they resisted the policemen passively, then they started pushing back, so that for several minutes there was more confusion around the shutter, not less.

Then, gradually, the superior strength and fighting technique of the officers caused a breaking up of the solid mass into smaller, discrete groups of fighters. Mostly there was one policeman to two or three women, except in one instance where a young cop was tackling a large, dark woman in a floral dress and blue tie-head.

'Cool down yusef, and come outa de man shop,' yelled the policeman, pushing the woman in the general direction of the door.

'Come out yusef. Mi haffi get rice an flour fi mi family dinner,' the woman shouted back. And she pushed the lighter constable back toward the shutter.

'Yu resisting an officer of de law. Ah can arrest yu.'

'Boy, move outa mi way. Mi pickney haffi eat.'

'Ah warning yu!' The policeman raised his baton high in the air.

'Don't lick her!' The yell came from behind me. I turned. It was the oldest of the young men, a youth of about seventeen.

He rushed forward, but the baton landed with a loud crack on the woman's skull. Blood gushed from a large cut that suddenly appeared on her forehead. She staggered and bent low, both hands holding her head.

'Aunt Ivy! Aunt Ivy!' The youth was screaming, his agonized voice blending with the woman's wail. He rushed to her and held her around the shoulders, preventing her, it seemed to me, from falling.

Glaring at the young policeman, who looked a little

scared at what he'd done, the youth snarled: 'Yu son of a bastard! Yu piece of nastiness! Yu lick Aunt Ivy! Ah going fix yu -'

He kicked at the policeman, caught him in the crotch and the cop doubled up in pain. The boy drew back his foot again. 'Yu bitch!' And he was aiming another kick at the constable's face when another policeman walked away from the women he'd been struggling with, drew his gun and, quite coolly, pressed it against the youth's chest and pulled the trigger.

A loud report. Then dead silence. The youth fell like a full sack of corn meal. Pieces of flesh scattered. Blood gushed suddenly, then just as suddenly stopped. I glimpsed the stunned faces of the policemen and crowd alike as I turned away.

It was quite distressing. Nauseating, in fact. But I looked on the bright side: there was one less hungry belly to feed. The manager, still in his cubicle when I reached him, looked sick, not inscrutable anymore.

'Do you think I could get my ten pounds of corn meal now?' I asked.

He stared at me, as if he hadn't heard.

'My corn meal,' I repeated. 'The mob's dispersed. Would you have one of the store men bring it to my car?'

'Yes,' the manager said slowly, apparently in a daze. 'Yes, Mrs Gregory. Please pay the cashier.'

I did so and walked to the door. The little guard and his large dog were both staring through the glass. I patted the dog on the head again and turned to the guard.

'See, I'm not afraid of dogs,' I said.

Anti-Apartness Anancy

ANDREW SALKEY

Special, sweet truth (*not* history truth) is that Caribbea is a deep sea woman, broadminded when mostly everybody inside her have narrow heart and tight ways. She stay so, from time. Back when pirate prancing and spinning doubloon on her foam, she lick up a class of storm that quiet the direct hooligan buccaneer grabbaliciousness. Back when the islands them catching hard miseries from slavery, she send hurricane, and wash way some of the brutality and savagery off slave back, for a day or so, from year to year, August, September, October time.

So, you see, Caribbea have a long, long tradition-culture of serious risk-taking and rescueation. But, you must know this: Caribbea truly native to more than the islands them in her water; she hinternational, too.

Anywhere, she spy out justice-lack, equality-lack, imperial parangles, and so, she ups and send a daughter or a son to do her name and intention proud; look the heaps of daughter and son did go do Caribbea bidding in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, ol' Gold Coast, Algeria, the US. . . !

Well, now then, Caribbea send for Brother Anancy, a key-ace son who first come out of Africa himself when Europe economics-ting-an-ting salt bad, and nough tiefing had was to devil-support expansion, and slavery was a bunch of khus-khus grass for Europe, and slave leave with plenty ashes in them mouth, on the Middle P, and after.

So, right now, Caribbea send for Anancy because she feel him could well use some of the back-home tactics to help out the township folks in South Africa.