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Sunday in Fort Charlotte

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Sunday in Fort Charlotte

*why on earth in heaven's name
would paradise need a fort?*

I didn't know then of slave-trading forts
in Goree Gold Coast & Gambia
hell holes and grottos blasted in rock

growing up in Fort Charlotte
a colonial coloured christian child
I was Columbus' girl all the way
sailing with him from Canary Islands
to Guanahani every night on the Nina

I learned forts on earth were for bonfires
of a straw terrorist Guy Fawkes
protection from pillage piracy and plunder
crisped celebrations of royal family visits
& flying kites where angels dwelled

after a uniform week of red & white tan & brown
green & grey blue & white walking to school
after Saturday's salt-parched skin on Long Wharf
& sand-filled hair were washed & greased
wooden go-karts & bicycle rims defied death

the handsaw wheezed to a stop & sawdust settled
Mr. Dan stopped bruising his missus
fisherman parked his bicycle
policyman tucked his book on the shelf
the numbers runner put on his Sunday shoes

leading the charge Fr. Holmes a jolly good chap
marched us the Bahamian grenadiers
up & down the church aisles singing
We are soldiers of Christ who is mighty to save
would our saviour ever come?

during the march the most irreverent of prayers
Bonney Read & me firing cannons for heaven
before church ended and rescued us from itself
we sang *Hold the fort for I am coming!*
the only pirate in sight was holy father himself

later we fluttered and flapped

over Fort Charlotte
high as kites on tails of cotton
gliding with gods dressed in gingham

*why on earth for heaven's sake
would Eden need a fort?*