

*Dana Gilkes*

## DISPATCH, A SCENE FROM PARADISE LOST

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At the village shop,  
shifting his weight around  
so you could hear  
the few grains of rice or scratch-grain  
or whatever it was that spill  
crunching under his feet,  
the owner pits science  
against conscience  
as he sifts a little extra corn meal,  
then sugar for goodness sake  
and as a measure of courtesy  
on to the scale

(of course that was well before  
this latest onslaught of diabetes  
begin eating everybody heart  
inside out  
and trying to desecrate we soul  
at the knee joint)...

But getting back to the smell  
of cider, lux soap  
and pigtail in brine

*So how your grandmother, he says,  
wiping his hands and letting fall  
the wing flap of his white apron  
all business minded  
and yet sociable like.*

I say hearty cause it sound life affirming –  
sound like if Ma was constantly

throwing back her head and guffawing

and turning his mind to origami,  
he folds up the parcels neat, neat so  
figures out minute change  
hums to himself when all it adds up  
sticks his pencil at a jaunty angle  
relative to his ears  
and offers me a paradise sweetie  
from a glass jar  
before he rags the counter clean  
and frowns all hopeful-like to the next customer.

Across by the main road  
and a little ways up  
(if you pass the rum shop  
you too far out),  
they building a new mini-market  
with everything exact  
and pre-package  
and name-brand

cause is ample time we Bajans learn  
how to suffer change  
and to hell –  
if I may make free with the devil  
and his consortium –

with the dispatch.