

When You Give It Away

Bruce Cockburn

Slid out of my dreams like a baby out of the nurse's hands
Onto the hard floor of day
I'd been wearing OJ's gloves and I couldn't get them off
It was too early but I couldn't sleep
Showered and dressed, stepped out into the heat
The parrot things on the porch next door
Announced my arrival on Chartres Street
With their finest rendition of squealing brakes

Down in Kaldi's caf the newspaper headlines promised new revelations
Concerning Prince Charles' Amex account
A morose young man in old-tim Austrian drag
Stares past his long mustache at the ground
And last night's punks and fetish kids
All tattoos and metal bits
And in the other corner (wearing the white trunks)
Today's tourists already sweating

Deep in the city of the saints and fools
Pearls before pigs and dung become jewels
I sit down with tigers, I sit down with lambs
None of them know who exactly I am

I've got this thing in my heart
I must give you today
It only lives when you
Give it away
Languid mandalla of the ceiling fan
Teases the air like a slow stroking hand
Study the faces, study the cards
Study the shadow creeping over the yard

I've got this thing in my heart
I must give you today
It only lives when you
Give it away
Trouble with the nations, trouble with relations
Where you going to go to find illumination?
Too much to carry, too much to let go
Time goes fast - learning goes slow

But I've got this thing in my heart
I must give you today
It only lives when you
Give it away