

LIZARD ISLAND LADY

By Barry Hockings

In 1985, Barry & Sue Hockings were assigned to “clean up” Lizard Island. Having shunted the managers and attended to overdue maintenance, restoring order and disciplining the mostly “backpacker” staff, Barry reflected on the fate of Mrs. Mary Watson. He wrote this song, performed by various performers to their own rhythms.

Chorus

LIZARD ISLAND LADY, YOUR STORY MUST BE TOLD,
THE WORLD SHOULD KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, ON THAT ISLAND YEARS
AGO,
WE’RE NOT HERE TO POINT THE FINGER, NOR TO SAY WHAT’S RIGHT
OR WRONG,
BUT LIZARD ISLAND LADY, WE’RE HERE TO SING YOUR SONG.

YOU WERE THERE IN PARADISE, IN THE SPRING OF EIGHTY-ONE,
WITH YOUR HUSBAND AND HIS PARTNER, AND YOUR THREE MONTH
OLD BABY SON,
AS WELL AS TWO CHINESE HELPERS, AH LEONG AND AH SAM,
YOU CAME TO FISH FOR BECHE DE MER IN THAT ISLAND
WONDERLAND.

YOUR HUSBAND AND HIS PARTNER FULLER, SMILED AWAY THAT DAY,
WITH NO THOUGHT OF THE DANGER THAT WOULD COME TO WATSON’S
BAY,
WILD NATIVES CAME IN BARK CANOES, THE MEN HAD SCARCELY
GONE,
YOUR DIARY TELLS THE STORY, THEY’VE KILLED POOR AH LEONG.

ABORIGINES CAME AGAIN NEXT DAY, YOU FIRED WITH RIFLE AND
HAND GUN,
JUST ONE MORE DAY THEY SPEARED AH SAM SEVEN TIMES, HE WAS
ALMOST DONE,
WITH YOUR BABY SON AND WOUNDED MAN IN A SMALL SQUARE IRON
TANK,
WITH A PAIR OF PADDLES YOU PUT TO SEA, COULD YOU MAKE THAT
FAR SAND BANK?

TEN TERRIBLE DAYS IN THAT MAKESHIFT BOAT WITH A BABY AND
WOUNDED MAN,
FROM REEF TO ISLAND DANGER EVERYWHERE, ON WATER AND ON
LAND,
THE LAST PAGE FROM YOUR DIARY SHOWS THAT COURAGE STILL RAN
FIRST,
“ALL STILL ALIVE, BUT PREPARING TO DIE, NO WATER, NEARLY DEAD
WITH THIRST.”

ON SUNDAY JANUARY TWENTY-NINE, IN EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-TWO,
THE PEOPLE OF COOKTOWN HUNDREDS STRONG, SAID THEIR LAST
GOODBYES TO YOU,
EVERY HEAD UNCOVERED WITH REVERENCE BENT, THEY STOOD
BEFORE YOUR GRAVE,
THE WILDFLOWERS WREATHS SHOWED THE COMMON GRIEF FOR A
LADY WHO DIED BRAVE.

Repeat Chorus