Music to Awaken the BALLROOM BEAST

Calypsos  
Meringues  
Sambas  
Tangos  
Pops

by the BRUTE FORCE STEELBAND of Antigua

An on the scene recording at St. John's, Antigua, British West Indies

COOK  Sounds of Our Times  long play 1048
The Story of the Prince and the Princess

The Brute Force Steelband consists of a gourd, accompanied by oildrums. Legend has it that inside the Brute Force gourd, still romping and playing, are a Prince and a Princess Cricket.

Once upon a time when they were both very young, they ran away from their leafy palaces and first encountered each other purely by accident deep in a vegetable garden outside St. Johns. Immediately, they fell in love, and decided to proceed together in disguise, as common crickets. As they wandered together day after day, foot-sore, weary and hungry through the garden, they came suddenly upon a small, tender and brightly coloured gourd. In the side of the gourd there was an enormous hole disappearing into the cavernous interior—a hole large enough to crawl into. While they were watching the bright little gourd, an enormous earthworm wiggled out and disappeared into Antigua.

"Quickly, quickly!" cried Prince Cricket.

And the Prince and the Princess popped into the hole, and crawled deep into the middle of the gourd. They were tired from keeping watch night and day against predatory tropical lizards, turtles and birds; here they could rest and have something to eat.

Prince Cricket had brought a large pebble with him, and now he stuffed it into the end of the hole to keep out intruders.

"Quickly!" he said.

There in the darkness of the interior of the gourd they rested and ate, and were very, very happy. Then they fell asleep, the Prince and the Princess, side by side on a gourd seed. They slept for a very long time because there was no sound from the outside world to awaken them. As they slept, the gourd grew larger and larger and it grew around the pebble and the hole closed up.

Finally it had a long neck and fat body, and it was picked and brought to market where it was purchased at a premium price by a tall dark gourd fancier named Ethelbert Nizam. Mr. Nizam put it under his arm, and holding it tightly he ran back to his curio shop and hung it in the window in the sun, where it could dry and attract customers because of its beautiful shape and colour.

The gourd hung there for six months while the Prince and Princess slept on the seed.

Now at Christmas time in Antigua there is a Carnival, where everybody gets out into the street to sing and dance, and the steelbands play and march in parade. Of all the steelbands in Antigua, the one called the Brute Force Band was always the biggest and loudest and most powerful. And they always played the most exciting music, because they were inventive and made up tunes as they went along.

But Charles the shac-shac player in the Brute Force was bored with what he was doing. He was tired of shaking the shac-shac. He felt a strange urge to scrape something instead. On Christmas Eve, full of rum, he passed by on the sidewalk outside Mr. Nizam’s curio shop and he happened to spy Mr. Nizam’s beautiful gourd hanging there in the moonlight. He lurched inside.

"Mr. Nizam," said he, "that’s a handsome fine cricket you’ve got there hanging by the gourd in the window, but I can’t imagine what you’re wanting with it!"