

Ruby Jewel Was Here

Allison Moorer

In nineteen and double-aught
A harlot who was hot to trot
Gave a fine little bijou to the world
With a blacksmith for a makeshift doc
In a cathouse far from camelot
Her gold mine brought to bed a baby girl
When the child screamed from life's first slap
The bawd said kid get used to that
You'll never meet a day that isn't cruel
Then she wrapped her babe in a petticoat
Grabbed a bottle and made a toast
Here's to my gorgeous bastard ruby jewel
And the man at the piano played a tune
And everybody sang and danced in the saloon
Except ruby, no not ruby, ruby jewel
Reared among the guttersnipe
While her mama puffed the chinese pipe
The salad days for ruby didn't last
Forced to work and pay her dues
Inside that poor man's moulin rouge
The snot-nosed kid had to grow up fast
Night and day she'd toil and sweat
While brothel patrons placed their bets
On who would be the first to break her in
Then one night the madam screams
Ruby get to room thirteen
There's someone there who thinks you're quite a gem
And the man at the piano played a tune
And everybody sang and danced in the saloon
Except ruby no not ruby ruby jewel
In done up hair and a borrowed dress
She climbed the stares scared to death
Said a prayer and tip-toed through the door
But on deaf ears her prayer fell
Cause through her tears she stared at hell
Standing there in nothing but his drawers
She recognized the whiskered chin
Bloodshot eyes and foul-mouthed grin
He was the man who wore the silver star
She tried to turn around and run
But he pulled out his big six gun
And said whore you won't get very far
And the man at the piano played a tune
And everybody sang and danced in the saloon
Except ruby, no not ruby, ruby jewel
Ruby jewel woke up in bed
A crimson pool between her legs
Naked as the day that she was born
But lying there next to him
Made her wish she hadn't been
If this was all that living had in store
Making sure he was asleep
She quietly got to her feet
Found his gun and aimed it 'tween his eyes
She kept it there 'til he came to
So he could stare down the barrel too
Pulled the trigger once and watched him die

And the man at the piano played a tune
And everybody sang and danced in the saloon
Except ruby no not ruby ruby jewel
On a rainy night in nineteen-twelve
Locked inside the town's new jail
Ruby carved a message in the stone
When morning came hacks led her out
In ankle chains right through the crowd
Who waited in the mud to watch the show
They walked her up the gallows steps
But the rope around her neck
Dropped the trap as all the watchers cheered
But on the wall of her cell
In a tiny scrawl and misspelled
Were the words ruby jewel was here
And the man at the piano played a tune
And everybody sang and danced in the saloon
Except ruby, no not ruby, ruby jewel