

Lily, Rosemary And The Jack Of Hearts

Joan Baez

The festival was over and the boys were all planning for a fall
The cabaret was quiet except for the drilling in the wall
The curfew had been lifted and the gambling wheel shut down
Anyone with any sense had already left town
He was standing in the doorway lookin' like the Jack of Hearts

He moved across the mirrored room, "Set 'em up for everyone", he said
Then everyone commenced to do what
They've been doin' before he moved their heads
He walked up to a stranger and he asked him with a grin
"Would you kindly tell me, Mister, what time the show begins?"
He moved into the corner, face down like the Jack of Hearts

Backstage the girls were playin' five-card stud by the stairs
Lily had two queens and she was hopin' for a third to match her pair
Outside the streets were fillin' up and the window was open wide
The gentle breeze was blowin', you could feel it from inside
Lily called another bet and drew up the Jack of Hearts

Big Jim was no one's fool, he owned the town's only diamond mine
He made his usual entrance lookin' oh, so dandy and so fine
With his bodyguards and his silver cane and every hair in place
He took whatever he wanted to and he laid it all to waste
But his bodyguards and his silver cane
They were no match for the Jack of Hearts

Rosemary combed her hair and took a carriage into town
She slipped in through the side door lookin' like a queen without a crown
She fluttered her false eyelashes and whispered in his ear
"I'm sorry, darlin', that I'm late", but he didn't seem to hear
He was staring into space over at the Jack of Hearts

Well, I know I've seen that face somewhere
Big Jim was thinkin' to himself
Maybe down in Mexico or a picture up on somebody's shelf
But then the crowd began to stamp their feet
And the house lights did dim
And in the darkness of the room there was only Jim and him
Starin' at the butterfly who just drew up the Jack of Hearts

Lily was a princess, she was fair-skinned and precious as a child
She had that certain something
It was a kind of a flash every time she smiled
She'd come away from a broken home, had lots of strange affairs
With men in every walk of life who took her everywhere
But she'd never met anyone quite like the Jack of Hearts

The hangin' judge came in unnoticed and was being wined and dined
The drilling in the wall kept up but no one seemed to pay it any mind
It was known all around that Lily had Jim's ring
And nothin' could ever come between Lily and the king
No, nothing ever could except maybe the Jack of Hearts

Rosemary started drinkin' hard and seein' her reflection in the knife
She was tired of the attention, tired of playin' the role of Big Jim's wife
She'd done a lot of bad things, even once tried suicide
Was lookin' to do just one good deed before she died

She was gazin' to the future, riding on the Jack of Hearts

Lily took her dress off, buried it away
"Has your luck run out", she laughed at him
"I guess you must've known it would someday
Be careful not to touch the wall, there's a brand-new coat of paint
I'm glad to see you're still alive and you're lookin' like a saint"
Down the hallway footsteps were comin' for the Jack of Hearts

The backstage manager was pacing all around by his chair
"There's something funny goin' on, I know, I can just feel it in the air"
He went to get the hangin' judge but the hangin' judge was drunk
And the leading actor hurried by in the costume of a monk
But there was no actor anywhere better than the Jack of Hearts

Lily had her arms around the man that she dearly loved to touch
She forgot all about the man she hated, who hounded her so much
"I've missed you so", she said to him and he thought she was sincere
But in the hallway he felt jealousy and fear
Just another night in the life of the Jack of Hearts

Well, no one knew the circumstance
But they say it happened pretty quick
The door to the dressing room burst open and a cold revolver clicked
And Big Jim was standin' there, you couldn't say surprised
Rosemary right beside him, steady in her eyes
She was with Big Jim but she was leanin' to the Jack of Hearts

Two doors down and the boys finally made it through the wall
Cleaned out the bank safe, it's said that they got off with quite a haul
And in the darkness of the riverbed, they waited on the ground
For one more member who had business back in town
But they couldn't go no further without the Jack of Hearts

Well, the next day was hangin' day
And the sky was overcast and black
Big Jim lay covered up, killed by a penknife in the back
And Rosemary on the gallows, boy, she didn't even blink
And the hangin' judge was sober, Lord, he hadn't had a drink
And the only person on the scene missing was the Jack of Hearts

Well, the cabaret was quiet now and a sign said, 'Closed for repair'
Lily had already taken all of the dye out of her hair
She was thinkin' 'bout her father whom she very rarely saw
Thinkin' about Rosemary and thinkin' about the law
But most of all she was thinkin' about the Jack of Hearts