

Lily, Rosemary, And The Jack Of Hearts

Tom Russell

The festival was over the boys were all plannin' for a fall
The cabaret was quiet except for the drillin' in the wall
The curfew had been lifted and the gamblin' wheel shut down
Anyone with any sense had already left town
He was standin' in the doorway lookin' like the Jack of Hearts
He moved across the mirrored room
"Set it up for everyone", he said
Then everyone commenced to do
What they were doin' before he turned their heads
Then he walked up to a stranger and he asked him with a grin
"Could you kindly tell me friend what time the show begins?"
Then 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 she was hopin' for a third to match her pair
Outside the streets were fillin' up the window was open wide
A 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' so dandy and so fine
With his bodyguards and silver cane and every hair in place
He took whatever he wanted to and he laid it all to waste
But his bodyguards and silver cane 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
"Sorry darlin' that I'm late", but he didn't seem to hear
He was starin' into space over at the Jack of Hearts
"I know I've seen that face before", 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 the Jack of Hearts
Lily was a princess she was fair skinned and precious as a child
She did whatever she had to do she had
That certain 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 which 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 drillin' 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 nothing would ever come between Lily and the king
No nothin' ever would 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 had 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 washed her face took her dress off and buried it away
"Has your luck run out?", she laughed at him
"Well I guess you must have 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 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 going on" he said "I can just feel it in the air"

He went to get the hangin' judge but the hangin' judge was drunk
As the leading actor hurried by in the costume of a monk
There was no actor anywhere better than the Jack of Hearts
Lily's arms were locked around the man that she dearly loved to touch
She forgot all about the man she couldn't stand
Who hounded her so much
"I've missed you so" she said to him and he felt she was sincere
But just beyond the door he felt jealousy and fear
Just another night in the life of the Jack of Hearts
No one knew the circumstance but they say
That it happened pretty quick
The door to the dressing room burst open and a cold revolver clicked
And Big Jim was standin' there ya 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 the boys finally made it through the wall
And cleaned out the bank safe it's said that they got off with quite a haul
In the darkness by 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
The next day was hangin' day the sky was overcast and black
Big Jim lay covered up killed by a penknife in the back
And Rosemary on the gallows she didn't even blink
The hangin' judge was sober he hadn't had a drink
The only person on the scene missin' was the Jack of Hearts
The cabaret was empty now a sign said "Closed for repair"
Lily had already taken all of the dye out of her hair
She was thinkin' 'bout her father who she very rarely saw
Thinkin' 'bout Rosemary and thinkin' about the law
But most of all she was thinkin' 'bout the Jack of Hearts