

Tom Russell

"Lily, Rosemary, and the Jack of Hearts"

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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

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