

Desolation Row

Bob Dylan

They're selling postcards of the hanging, they're painting the passports brown
The beauty parlor is filled with sailors, the circus is in town
Here comes the blind commissioner, they've got him in a trance
One hand is tied to the tight-rope walker, the other is in his pants
And the riot squad they're restless, they need somewhere to go
As Lady and I look out tonight, from Desolation Row Cinderella, she seems so easy, "It takes one to know one,"
she smiles
And puts her hands in her back pockets Bette Davis style
And in comes Romeo, he's moaning. "You Belong to Me I Believe"
And someone says, "You're in the wrong place, my friend, you'd better leave"
And the only sound that's left after the ambulances go
Is Cinderella sweeping up on Desolation Row Now the moon is almost hidden, the stars are beginning to hide
The fortune telling lady has even taken all her things inside
All except for Cain and Abel and the hunchback of Notre Dame Everybody is making love or else expecting rain
And the Good Samaritan, he's dressing, he's getting ready for the show
He's going to the carnival tonight on Desolation Row Ophelia, she's 'neath the window for her I feel so afraid
On her twenty-second birthday she already is an old maid
To her, death is quite romantic she wears an iron vest
Her profession's her religion, her sin is her lifelessness
And though her eyes are fixed upon Noah's great rainbow
She spends her time peeking into Desolation Row Einstein, disguised as Robin Hood with his memories in a
trunk
Passed this way an hour ago with his friend, a jealous monk
Now he looked so immaculately frightful as he bummed a cigarette
And he when off sniffing drainpipes and reciting the alphabet
You would not think to look at him, but he was famous long ago
For playing the electric violin on Desolation Row Dr. Filth, he keeps his world inside of a leather cup
But all his sexless patients, they're trying to blow it up
Now his nurse, some local loser, she's in charge of the cyanide hole
And she also keeps the cards that read, "Have Mercy on His Soul"
They all play on the penny whistles, you can hear them blow
If you lean your head out far enough from Desolation Row Across the street they've nailed the curtains, they're
getting ready for the feast
The Phantom of the Opera in a perfect image of a priest
They are spoon feeding Casanova to get him to feel more assured
Then they'll kill him with self-confidence after poisoning him with words
And the Phantom's shouting to skinny girls, "Get outta here if you don't know"
Casanova is just being punished for going to Desolation Row "At midnight all the agents and the superhuman
crew

Come out and round up everyone that knows more than they do
Then they bring them to the factory where the heart-attack machine
Is strapped across their shoulders and then the kerosene
Is brought down from the castles by insurance men who go
Check to see that nobody is escaping to Desolation Row Praise be to Nero's Neptune, the Titanic sails at dawn
Everybody's shouting, "Which side are you on?!"
And Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot fighting in the captain's tower
While calypso singers laugh at them and fishermen hold flowers
Between the windows of the sea where lovely mermaids flow
And nobody has to think too much about Desolation Row Yes, I received your letter yesterday, about the time
the doorknob broke
When you asked me how I was doing, was that some kind of joke
All these people that you mention, yes, I know them, they're quite lame
I had to rearrange their faces and give them all another name
Right now, I can't read too good, don't send me no more letters no
Not unless you mail them from Desolation Row

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