

Desolation Row  
Bob Dylan

The special thing about this version is the rhythm, with a 3-3-2 division of the bar.

D

They re selling postcards of the hanging  
G D

They re painting the passports brown  
A

The beauty parlor is filled with sailors  
G D

The circus is in town  
D

Here comes the blind commissioner  
G D

They ve got him in a trance  
A

One hand is tied to the tight-rope walker  
G D

The other is in his pants  
G

And the riot squad they re restless  
D G

They need somewhere to go  
D A

As Lady and I look out tonight  
G D

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 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 fortunetelling 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

Now 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  
He looked so immaculately frightful  
As he bummed a cigarette  
Then he went off sniffing drainpipes  
And reciting the alphabet  
Now 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 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  
A perfect image of a priest  
They're spoonfeeding 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 Outa Here If You Don t Know  
Casanova is just being punished for going  
To Desolation Row

Now 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  
And 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 door knob broke)  
When you asked 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