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JIMMY DANCER

"Sorry" the nurse said "Thought you knew
Hasn't the doctor talked to you?"
"No" I heard this stranger's voice say
"Been overseas, just got back yesterday
A neighbour told me she'd been brought here"
And in that stranger's voice I thought I heard fear
Of anticipated grief and guilt already assumed
And a hint of tears - but tears for whom?
"The tests were positive, I'm afraid there's no doubt"
"What bloody tests, what are you talking about?"
"I'm sorry sir, I can't say any more
The doctor will tell you what you need to know"
"Christ, I'm her son for pity's sake
Is it cancer?" and the word hissed like a snake
That had coiled between us right from the start
Only a word - but a word to freeze the heart
I felt it's venom fill that sterile room
On her face I saw angry pity bloom
"Yes" she said, avoiding my eye
"It's cancer - she's going to die"

Someone's weeping, who can it be?
I turn around, it's only me.

Chorus:

You're hard and you're cruel Jimmy Dancer
You just don't take life, but dignity as well
But one day, one day we'll find the answer
And Jimmy Dancer, we'll send you back to hell.

Nancy died during visiting time
Whose hands held her, were they mine?
Did I stay to rage against the dark
To hear the last beat of her heart
Did I quench my fears, did I stand fast
Did I stay with her until the last
Did I comfort her as best I could
Did I cry for her as a loving son should
Did I hold her hand as she died?
I said I did - but I lied
Just to myself at first, to dull the pain
Ease the guilt erase the shame
The more the lie soothed and seduced
The more I believed it to be the truth
Told others the tale believed it myself
How I was there until her very last breath
In my mind how fine the picture had become
Dying mother - dutiful sorrowing son
But the truth, oh the truth, screams to be heard
No more lies, no more lies, no more lies! - I was not there.

I could not, I would not, stay
So I ran - I ran away.

In the mens' cancer ward late at night
When the visitors have gone, the nightshift comes on
And they turn down the lights
Then the daytime masks that these men wear
To keep their loved ones and themselves from despair
Slip from their faces as courage ebbs
As alone with their thoughts they lie in their beds
Wait for the drug trolley, or the release of sleep
Some lie quietly, some quietly weep

It's not just the pain or the fear
It's the loneliness that brings the tears.