

A Lonely Night in Algiers

lyric · January 1, 1990

It was a hot summer night down south in Algiers
In a bedroom near the swamps the sweat was dripping off the wall
In the corner sat Carlos his hands over his ears
Didn't want to answer the phone though he was waiting for a call

Iris picked it up after she ran across the room
She knew Carlos had to go and he had better be leaving soon
"There's a shipment coming in, " she said, "up on pier forty-two
and if anything goes wrong they're gonna put the blame on you"

It was another lonely night for Carlos and his gun
And if someone had to die he wished that he would be the one
All the years of this job had worn away his will to live
But it was his love for Iris that kept him in this place
Howe he longed to hold her hand and kiss her sweet face
If only she knew just how much love he had to give

Down on pier forty-two things were getting underway
Carlos did the dirty work his boss got richer every day
To them he was a pawn, quiet, useful on the side
Pay him well enough to keep him but not enough to save his pride

At first it was the danger that drew Carlos in
It was the counting of the cash and the killing of the men
But one night something changed as he lay bleeding on the floor
If I make it out alive I cannot do this anymore

It was another lonely night for Carlos and his gun
Full of bullet holes and knife wounds he swore his job was done
Only to return within the week
And it was his love of Iris that kept him in this place
How he wished that they would fall in love and leave without a trace
All the pleasures of the world together they could seek

Carlos did the job everything went according to plan

“Now it’s time to lock up and get my money from the man”
He strode into the warehouse and spoke to his friend Slim
“When I get the cash I’m taking off, you won’t see me again”

Carlos faced the boss man when he spun around his chair
He said “You did all right, I’ll see you get your share”
Carlos said “I want it now, I’m leaving here tonight
It’s time to quit this game and get the hell on with my life”

His boss he looked surprised but still held out his hand
He said “Go home and count it boy and rethink your foolish plan”
“I’m tired,” Carlos said, “of living on the wrong side of the tracks
and you can let me walk away in peace or you can shoot me in the back”

It was another lonely night for Carlos and his gun
As he walked out of the warehouse he swore his job was done
Never to return again
But it was his love for Iris that plagued him night and day
If he could only make her feel his love and take her far away
Maybe just this once he could win

Carlos packed his things he planned on leaving there that night
He scribbled a note to Iris then he drove on out of sight
The note was plain and simple it said “Dear Miss McGill
I love you, I always have and I always will”

He drove down to the Algiers swamps and jumped out of his car
And with more pride than he’d ever felt before strode right into the bar
He sat down in the corner where he’d been so many years
And to think of leaving Iris nearly brought him to tears

It was another lonely night for Carlos and his gun
As he sat down in the corner he thought of what he’d done
He knew it was the right choice to make
And though his love of Iris had kept him in this place
He had to give her the note and leave and probably never again see her face
It was a chance he simply had to take

Iris spotted Carlos and began to walk across the room
Carlos jumped up and shouted “No!” as he sensed his oncoming doom
Three men burst through the door and one was his friend Slim
Who shouted as they drew their guns “Yeah over here, that’s him!”

“I know you’re planning to go out of this town
But the boss don’t want you alive so he sent us to shoot you down”
Eight bullets hit Carlos before he hit the floor
His lips they whispered “Iris” but he would speak nevermore

Iris knelt beside him – she knew that he was dead
But in his hand he clasped a note, which she quickly read
And as she read the words they struck her heart with pain
For all the years that she had known him she had felt the same

It was another lonely night for Carlos and his gun
As he lay dying on the floor he knew his time had come
Just as he had found the will to live
Though it was his love of Iris that had kept him in this place
How he longed to hold her hand and to kiss her sweet face
If only he knew just how much love she had to give...

J Wilford 1990