

I learned the truth at seventeen that love was meant  
for beauty queens  
and high school girls with clear skinned smiles who  
married young and then retired  
The valentines I never knew, the Friday night  
charades of youth  
were spent on one more beautiful  
At seventeen I learned the truth  
And those of us with ravaged faces lacking in the  
social graces  
desperately remained at home, inventing lovers on  
the phone  
who called to say - "come dance with me"  
and murmured vague obscenities  
It isn't all it seems at seventeen

A brown eyed girl in hand me downs  
whose name I never could pronounce  
said "Pity please the ones who serve  
They only get what they deserve"  
The rich related hometown queen marries into  
what she needs with a guarantee of company  
and haven for the elderly

Remember those who win the game and lose the  
love they sought to gain  
in debentures of quality and dubious integrity  
Their small-town eyes will gape at you in dull  
surprise when payment due exceeds accounts  
received at seventeen

To those of us who knew the pain of valentines that  
never came  
and those whose names were never called when  
choosing sides for basketball  
It was long ago and far away, the world was younger  
than today  
when dreams were all they gave for free to ugly  
duckling girls like me  
We all play the game, and when we dare, we cheat  
ourselves at solitaire  
Inventing lovers on the phone, repenting other lives  
unknown  
that call and say "Come dance with me" and murmur  
vague obscenities at ugly girls like me, at  
seventeen