

At Seventeen

Regine Velasquez

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 those 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
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 payments due
Exceed accounts received
At seventeen

Adlib

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
And dreams were all they gave for free
To ugly duckling girls like me

We all play the game and when we dare
To cheat ourselves at solitaire
Inventing lovers on the phone
Repeating other lives unknown
Who call to say "Come dance with me"
And murmur vague obscenities
At ugly girls like me, at seventeen