

At Seventeen
Performed by Janis Ian
Written by: Gamble /Huff (1975)

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
'Cause they only get what they
deserve"

And the rich related hometown
queen
Marries into what she needs
With a guarantee of company
And haven for the elderly

So remember those who win the game
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
To cheat ourselves at solitaire
Inventing lovers on the phone
Repenting other lives unknown

They call and say, "Come on, dance
with me"
And murmur vague obscenities
At ugly girls like me at seventeen