

# Tara McLean, At Seventeen

I learned the truth at seventeen  
Love was meant for beauty queens  
And high school girls with clear skin smiles  
Who married young and then retired  
The valentines I never knew  
Friday night charades with you  
Were spent on one more beautiful  
At seventeen I learned the truth  
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 their obscenities  
Isn't all it seems  
At seventeen  
A brown eyed girl in hand-me-downs  
Whose name I never could pronounce  
Said pretty please to the ones who served  
Who only get what they deserve  
And the rich relation hometown queen  
Married into what she needs  
With a guarantee of company  
And a haven for the elderly  
Never those who win the game  
Those who love assault and gain  
Endebted us in quality  
And dubious integrity  
The small town eyes will gape at you  
And act surprised when payment due  
And see accounts received  
At seventeen  
To those of us who know the pain  
Of valentines that never came  
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 that came 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  
To call and say come dance with me  
And murmur their obscenities  
To ugly girls like me  
At seventeen