

## Elsa

### "At Seventeen"

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(Janis Ian)

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  
Say "pity, please the ones who serve, 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.

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 receives at seventeen.

To those of us who knew the pain of Valentines that  
never came  
And those whose names where never called  
When choosing sides for basketball.

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.

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