

## Siti Nurhaliza

### "At 17"

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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 nights,  
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  
Desp'rately re[mained] at home inventing lovers on the  
phone  
Who called and 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 home-town queen marries into what  
she needs  
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 received at seventeen

To those of us who know the pain of valentines that  
never came,  
And those whose name were never called when  
choosing side at 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, 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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