

Paper Gown

Caroline Herring

Small town stars shine bright for a day
The moon lights up a watery grave
Woods move in the nighttime breeze
That lifts from the lake through the trees
On the night that defined my name
Fantasy or monster, you say
Watched my boys ride the incline down
All for a paper gown

Long ago I used to be
A little girl on my daddy's knee
Dreams lie like diamond rings
Babies and pretty things

I watched my car sink silently
My lover's sweatshirt wrapped around me
On a black man I blamed the crime
With moans and screams and cries
Then I waited for him to call
My ready-made family gone after all
While the world mourned an alibi
My hopes began to die
Long ago I used to be
A little girl on my daddy's knee
Dreams lie like diamond rings
Babies and pretty things
Day by day
All the promises faded away
No one but me
Controls my destiny

The sheriff sat me down to pray
At the First Baptist Church on the ninth day
"Susan, make your conscience clean"
"Sheriff, I've done a terrible thing"
I confessed that, for love's sake,
I drowned my children in John D. Long Lake
They're with Jesus, looking down
At me in this paper gown

Long ago I used to be
A little girl on my daddy's knee
Dreams lie like diamond rings
Babies and pretty things
Long ago I used to be
A little girl with dreams I believed
Dreams lie like diamond rings
Babies and pretty things