

# Summer, 1966

*by Gary Moshimer*

After my mother died, my father shipped me to my uncle's. He hadn't told me she was dying, so he could just mourn alone.

Lena lived next door, Italian, my age -- which was ten -- beautiful. She was watched by goons in black suits. Her parents owned a restaurant.

Across the alley her room faced mine. I watched her brush her black hair. She already had black hair under her arms, while I was still naked.

I put on my funeral suit and paced the sidewalk until she came onto the porch. The goons were there. I plunged my hands into my pockets and frowned. I shuffled as though a great weight was on me. My Aunt yelled to change my shoes, I would scuff them, but I said I never wanted them as shiny as when they reflected the coffin.

"My mother died," I said. "I'm staying here."

Lena shrugged and pursed her lips, which were already kissable. She wore a pretty flowered dress and her hair was swept up with a red rose. She didn't speak to me, and finally her mother screamed for her.

That night she opened her window and swung her hair. "Meet me out back."

I donned my uncle's smoking jacket, which hung to my ankles, but which was black and silky with golden cranes. I wet my hair and combed it back.

She was in the garden. The moon made the roses look black. A goon

stood by the back door, smoking. Lena wore a white linen suit and her hair in a ponytail. She sighed. She did not look happy. She was clearly the virgin flower of the family, guarded at all times. She told me to sit next to her on the marble bench. "He'll shoot you in the head," she said. She smiled just a little.

"It's worth it." I thought how I would not even hear the shot.

We watched the sky. I was used to the stars in the country, but the city sucked them in. After a while she snapped her head and the goon went inside. She had power.

She tilted her head for me to kiss her. We held our lips together for a long time, doing nothing in the way of ten year olds.

Later we talked across the alley. She was lonely. She said she could write me letters at home, but she couldn't see me any more. She drew her shade. I knew her mother was behind it.

I started touching my lips many times a minute. It became a tic, one I have to this day.

