

The Summer She Turned

17

by Lillian Ann Slugoeki

The summer she turned 17, she had to hold all the pieces of herself together with a red ribbon she tore off an old dress. It wound its way around her neck, her heart and her throat. It snaked down to her hips, the curve of her thighs, and wrapped itself tight around the muscles in her calves.

She was the darling girl, the blond with the great ass, the small tits and the flashing green eyes who could quote poetry, who wanted to be a singer, who collected fireflies in glass jars, hoarded pieces of broken jewelry, and watched heat lighting dance off the tops of houses.

She was the girl all the local boys followed home from summer school every day, chanting, *wanna take a walk, wanna take a walk?* This was code to slink down to the woods beyond the public swimming pool and make out. She wasn't feeling it because most of them had sharp noses and acne on their chin and cheeks.

She was the girl the pervert followed, the priest tried to kiss when no one was looking, the girl who inflamed her stepfather, her English teacher, her gym coach and half the football team and all the time she had to hold herself together with that bright piece of red ribbon because overnight, the summer she turned 17, she'd become a stranger in her own body.

