



KEY EXCHANGE by Kevin Wade

LISA: When I was very young, my mother got cancer, and it had spread too far by the time they diagnosed it to do anything but let her die. For about six months she lay in the terminal ward at Sloan-Kettering. When she first went in, she told my father that her only wish was to see her family grow up, but that that was impossible, so to kiss her goodbye and leave and don't hang on for this bumpy ride, as she put it. But the most important thing in the world to my father that she have her last wish, so he left his job, sold the house, moved us into the city, went through miles of red tape, and arranged for a permit to build a sandbox and swing next to the parking lot outside her window, where she could see us. And every day that summer, and after school and on weekends that fall, he would take me and my brother there, and we would play, and when my brother asked "Why here?", my father said that Mom was in heaven, but she had a good view of that particular sandbox.

My aunt told me that story when I first started going out with boys. She said, "What your father did for your mother, Lisa that is love. Be smart Lisa. Save your honor for the man who loves you." It was a long time before I could even give a decent kiss without somewhere asking myself whether or not this guy would stand outside my window for six months while I died.