

## Lea Park Chapter 2

It would have been unusual to go the park at the weekend anyway. Stephen's Mom and Pa sometimes tried to organize something for him to do on weekends, but the heat often put paid to too much activity. Sometimes a friend would come over, but the apartment was small and the room that he shared with his grandfather was not really suitable for any teenage gossip or loose talk. He always had the feeling someone was listening in, even if they were all in the parlour.

Occasionally they might venture out as a family to buy ice-cream from the store on the corner, but that tended to be the height of their ambitions. Stephen would sometimes go visit Ryan, who lived in the neighborhood adjoining their own. Ryan lived in a house, with a little more space and a back yard. It had a big umbrella over the patio and a small pump-up pool. They spent hours cooling off in there.

The fire seemed to have started just after Stephen had left that Friday afternoon. It even crossed Stephen's mind that he might have been somehow responsible, or at least a suspect. *Scene of the crime* and all that. His Mom had somehow amassed a stack of cheap crime novels which for a period he had read obsessively, and there always seemed to be someone caught up in a situation beyond their control, even if they had not been directly responsible. He thought back to what he had seen that evening, and to whether he might have inadvertently witnessed the perpetrator.

*What did he look like again? What was he wearing?*

Stephen tried to remember. It was Sunday night already and he realized he had not fixed in his mind what he had seen. He tried again.

*How tall? Black or white? An adult, or just a kid?*

His mind then turned to the re-enactments of crimes he had seen on TV. Where they revisited the scene and used actors to jog people's memories. That's what he would do. First thing Monday he'd go back to the shelter and try to dredge up some meaningful thoughts, like a proper investigator.

After all, there was nothing much else to do.