

LOLITA
Vladimir Nabokov Vintage International, 1955

1

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul.
Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps
down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in
one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was
Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.

Did she have a precursor? She did, indeed she did. In point of
fact, there might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one
summer, a certain initial girl-child. In a principality by the sea.
Oh when? About as many years before Lolita was born as my age
was that summer. You can always count on a murderer for a
fancy prose style.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what
the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, en-
vied. Look at this tangle of thorns.

2

I was born in 1910, in Paris. My father was a gentle, easy-going
person, a salad of racial genes: a Swiss citizen, of mixed French
and Austrian descent, with a dash of the Danube in his veins. I
am going to pass around in a minute some lovely, glossy-blue
picture-postcards. He owned a luxurious hotel on the Riviera. His
father and two grandfathers had sold wine, jewels and silk, re-
spectively. At thirty he married an English girl, daughter of