



1458 words

"What will you do with the house?" asks my mother. I stare down at my shoes. "Not sure," I mutter "why'd she give it to me anyways?" "I don't know," Gravel crunches beneath my mum's feet "well, Valerie, your 18 now, you decide," she swings the door open and slinks through to the main hall.

This is all so stupid. I didn't want my aunt to give me her stupid old house. I guess it would be nice to move like morena. Well if I move there I'll be about 2 hours away and the house is creepy as hell, apparently. But on the other hand, I don't really have anything to hold on to here.

I slide into the main room past the floods of people, my footsteps cut through the silence. A pine coffin sits in the centre, pink tulips, red roses and lavender sprawls along the surface. Beside, a delicate gold rimmed photo of aunt ellowen: hair as white as a cat's claw, sharp collarbones and long lasses soaring away from amber eyes. Bye auntie.

I'm stating to think this is a mistake, I stare out the window while city turns to town and town turns to mile upon mile of fields, Tree branches reach out to the car, Cows and sheep speckle the distance and white daisies swish in the breeze.

And there it is, arching windows, black roof tiles, gray wooden walls and patio. I hop out the car and feel gravel crack beneath me, I twist a gold key. Dead or dying plats line the wall, dusty rugs spall over mahogany floor. The midday sun dances through arching windows, casting yellow and white patterns across wooden walls. I drag my hand along a smooth brown banister as i climb the creaking stairs. My bedroom door unfurls at the end, metal ivy winds along the headboard and purple sheets lay messy upon the bed. This is all mine, wow.

My first night was restless but calm, all night branches clacked and wind wisped. I awoke to the warm sun on my face; I hobble down to the kitchen where I pound back a glass of ice water. I lean back and more wood streaks the bare skin of my back. I should get dressed soon-ish since i want to go out to pick some flowers to brighten up the place at least a little.

I pull a denim skirt over my legs and a gray shirt over my head and shrug on a puffy jacket and slip on boots as i approach the door. And then... knock! Knock! Someone hammers across my door. What? There is almost none for miles. I hobble to the front door and my shaking hands pull the door toward me.

"Hello I'm Ailla!" sings a short blond girl "I live on one of the fields nearby" she's not exactly the ghost face murderer id expected to meet. Impossibly, long blond hair curls behind her back and she looks up to me with blue doe eyes. "Um...hi," my obviously shocked voice is scarily deep next to her light sig song. "So how long have you been in the area?" she asks,

this is probably a situation where it's best to lie but I tell the truth anyway "oh only a day," she smiles in answer. An awkward silence fills the air "I should probably go now but i might visit you if that's ok!" she asks "yeah of course," as I close the door she skips back toward the woods. Maybe I would have a friend here after all.

It's been hours since Ailla left, and I'm so board! Mum used to say I get too easily attached but maybe it's more true than i thought. Its only 1:30 but I still need to venture out to the shops and of course I have to use a buss; the most annoying form of public transport.

The buss is old older than i thought, it rolls down the hill, hitting bumps and busses as it trundles along. The bus driver is even older than the buss with a face full of wrinkles and a stern gray brow, "one euro, than." I hand him my wrinkled note. I take my seat as far away from the gang at the back as possible. I watch as the now familiar countryside turns back to town.

Plastic bags lacerate my palms while I stumble through the bustling town centre its only been a day but I already feel out of place.

My house looms over me, while I approach it. Crack! A branch. Whispers. Pounding of running. I stop dead in my tracks like a deer in the headlights. There's only row of tree against row of tree but then. A flash of white fabric gone as quickly as it appeared. A familiar knock! Knock! Interrupts my thoughts. Ailla. "Oh hi!" she waves me over "what are you doing out here?" she giggles. "Nothing" I reply wiping my head round.

It's been days and the cracks of branches, wisped speech and running feet seems never ending "probably an animal you're not I the city anymore Val," my mum had assured me on the phone. So that's what I'm choosing to believe. I wish I could pretend I'm not a little scared though, all day I've sat in almost dead silence waiting for the noise, sometimes it's here sometimes not.

A clock ticks through my house, three o'clock. The itch black of the world swallows me but I lie awake, I mean what are the odds of getting killed by an animal here? 1 in a million? Less? More?

I slowly creep down stairs a poor an icy glass of water; the kitchen light casts bright shadows upon the wooden floor. Crack! A branch, I stumble backwards and stub my heal on the table, "ow!" crack! Again. I rush to the window and look out to the darkness. A flash of white slices through black. Then suddenly something switches, i don't want to be scared anymore, and then I'm running. The light of the kitchen grows smaller behind me; pebbles and moss crush beneath my bare feet. And then I see white again, I run quicker still. The white stops and i slam into a tree, I pear around and press my back flush with the bark.

As my eyes adjust, I watch more white clothed barefooted women file out, then i see the familiar short black haired girl. Ailla. I step forward to look closer, then the worst thing happens, crack! A brittle branch crushes underneath me. Their heads whip around. My legs turn to run but before i can take a step arms wrap around my wrists. I yelp like a wounded dog as I'm pulled back.

I stand, shaking, staring at the girls. All have long hair and white dresses crutch to their bodies. A surprisingly young girl glares into my eyes, arms crossed. I can't believe this is how I'm going to die. "Who are you?" demands a tall brunet "I'm... I'm friends with Ailla" I stutter. Ailla loos into my eyes and whispers "Ailla please go home ill come tomorrow." Suddenly she rips the hands on my back away and pushes "go!" she yells and I do.

I slam the door shut and sprint the stairs. I crawl into bed, cocooning myself inside the duvet. And slowly I slip back into drowsy sleep.

Knock! Knock! Sun splits through my swaying curtains; I fall down the stairs and swing the door too. As I expected, Ailla is stood there, "I'm sorry, please let me explain," she begs, I nod "so, when I said I live in the area it wasn't really a lie but..." she pauses "I live in the woods and those girls um where all in a coven." She looks back up to me as tears pool at her eyes. "I'm sorry" she cries. Her arms reach around my sides and wraps me into a tight hug, I o the same. This is one of those things you have to rip of like a plaster and every opportunity given you must take it. My mother's words echo back 'well, Valerie, your 18 now, you decide'.

"Could I join you?"

Like last night we all stand in a circle, Ailla's running around introducing me to everyone, like they can't remember. The same young girl glares through me, "don't worry shell come around" Ailla sings catching my eye line. I look around, glittering sunlight winds through braches, swaying branches clatters and clicks, green moss and grass springs from dirt. I've never been gladder I came here, I might finally be free.

I breathe and crisp air fills my lungs.