

# Runaway (Chapter 1 Ella Maclain)

By : [thatdorkygal](#)

In 1963, 13 year old Ella Maclain runs away from home. In 1967, she finds herself in court. Find out how she got there by reading several points of view (Chapter one)



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## Runaway (Chapter 1 Ella Maclain)



### Ella Maclain

-----July 1967-----

Ella winced in the white light as she entered the cold room. In the center of the room was a steel table. She shivered as she saw who sat there. Her mother sat next to a lawyer. As she saw Ella, she stuck her nose into the air, not meeting her eye. Ella gulped as she sat down next to her lawyer. "We just want to come to a fair agreement." Mr. Lawrence, Ella's lawyer said. "So do we." Ella's mother's lawyer started saying, before being cut off by Mrs. Maclain. "I want to sue her! This little brat ruined my life!" She shot up from her chair, and pointed a manicured nail at Ella. "You made us the talk of the town; everyone thought I was a bad parent." She hissed.

"She's not eighteen for another five months; she ought to be back into the custody of her parents." Mr. Simms, Ella's mother's lawyer suggested. "No." Ella said, suddenly. Everyone was surprised by her sudden outburst. "I'm sorry, but no." She repeated. "Could you tell us what happened, Ella? We can't go on without knowing how all of this happened."

Martin Lawrence said, giving her a reassuring pat on the back. "Okay," Ella said, but not with her here. Ella nodded towards her Mother. Mrs. Maclain looked flustered. "You can't just..." She started to protest. Mr. Simms whispered into her ear.

Mrs. Maclain huffed, grabbed her handbag, and waltzed out of the room, the steel door slamming behind her. Ella rolled her eyes. "So what exactly do you want to know?" Ella asked. "Just start from the day you left, and end, well, here." Mr. Lawrence decided. Ella sucked in her breath, and closed her eyes.

-----May 1963-----

I went to my room, and grabbed a back pack, and a suitcase. I stuffed it with the few clothes I had, and a few other belongings. Luckily, after my Dad died, my Mother spent most nights out with her girlfriends, and my two older siblings took advantage of that and snuck out behind her back. I wasn't allowed to go out, and the house was a mess after my sister blamed a secret party on me. I went down the stairs, and out the door. I

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crossed the street to my best friend, Chelsea Carey. Although she lived in a modest house, Chelsea's Dad was very rich. He is president of a company, I think.

Chelsea was standing outside of her house waiting for me. "I called a cab," she said. I thanked her and she pulled out her purse. "I have money, Chelsea." I tried to tell her, but she wasn't listening. "Take my credit card." She put the card into my hand. Before I could protest, she said, "My Dad puts a hundred on it every two days. I haven't used it in a week, and I don't plan to use it." I gulped. "I can't," I said. "Yes, you can. This is my favour to you, and in return, you must come back and see me as soon as you turn 18." Chelsea smiled, but I could tell she was sad that I was leaving. When the cab pulled up, Chelsea paid the driver and told him where to drive. Our town was on the outskirts of Toronto, and I was to drive to the other side of Toronto, a tiny town called, Elora.

Aunt Rose, my Dad's sister, lived there. She was always so kind, but my Mother stopped her coming over the moment my Dad died. I wasn't going to live with her; I knew if she found out I ran away, she would send me back home, no matter how much she missed me. I watched my house fade away, as I disappeared into the night. It was a long four hour drive, but I didn't sleep. All I could think of was my Mother. What would she do when she figured out I was missing? Call the police, or happily let me go? The latter was more likely.

The driver addressed me for the first time as we drove into the quaint town. "Where do you want to be dropped off, Ma'am?" He asked, politely. I squinted out of the window. It was 1:00am. I only hoped a hotel would be open. I suddenly spotted fluorescent lights, and a big pink sign saying, "Gal Pals Hotel." "Can you pull up there, please?" I asked, and the driver obeyed. He lugged my suitcase out of the trunk as I pulled on my backpack.

"Thanks," I said, and bravely went into the hotel lobby. I have always been tall for my age, so I only hoped I wouldn't be kicked out for being too young. Or even worse, be reported to the police. I rang the bell at the front desk, and a young woman, early twenties, brightly smiled as she came to the desk. Her outfit was as fluorescent as the sign outside, and she beamed at me. "How can I help you?" She asked, looking like she was about to burst. I peeked behind her and saw that all the hotel keys were hanging up. No one had checked into her hotel for a while now. "I want to rent a room," I said, as confidently as I could. "You can rent hotel rooms?" She asked, looking puzzled. *Great, she's brand new at this.* "Yes. I pay a certain amount every month, and I get to have a room, permanently." I forced a smile. "Really?" She practically screamed. She grabbed the phone; and twirled the cord as she dialed a number. I had no idea what she was doing.

"Daddy, a woman is going to RENT a room at my hotel! I know, I told you I wouldn't fail. A thousand dollars! Uh-huh. Damage deposit! Okay. Bye, Daddy, love you!" She couldn't contain her excitement as she talked to me. "So, we need you to put down a damage deposit, and pay a hundred a week." She tried to tell me seriously. "How much money do I have to put down for the damage deposit?" I asked. She told me two hundred, and I pulled out Chelsea's credit card. She pointed down the hall to a machine, and I took two hundred out.

She took the money, and rung the bell, still smiling like an idiot. A man hurried through the back door, nodded curtly, and took my suitcase. "All of my rooms have themes." The woman explained, as she took me down the hallway. I realized just how vacant this fancy hotel was, because the woman opened every door we passed, explaining the themes as we went. I finally stopped when we got to the sunset room. The walls were soft orange, and the bed sheets were every colour of the sunset. "Oh, yes, this one is nice." She said, smiling, and signaling the man to put my suitcase in there. "Oh, by the way, my name is Carol, and this is Michael, the doorman. We also have a maid, Debra." The two smiled widely at me. "I'm Ella." I said, shaking both of their hands.

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“Well, we’ll let you get settled. Goodnight.” Carol said, handing me my key, and shutting the door behind her. I sat on the bed. “Room 18! Welcome home.” I said to myself, before passing out on the bed. I woke up the next morning, ready to go. I had a quick shower, and unpacked all of my clothes, put my credit card into my jean pocket, and set off. Across the street, I noticed a department store. *Perfect.* I thought, making my way across the street.

I walked up to the manager’s office, and tapped on the door. A tired looking woman opened the door, and motioned for me to sit down. “Help wanted?” I asked, sitting in a comfortable chair. “How many days a week can you work?” Mrs. Gerald, at least according to her name tag, said. “I can work every day.” I said. Mrs. Gerald smiled. “Good I could use some help around here. This place looks like a dump these days. How many hours a day can you do?” She asked, leaning forward in her chair. I thought for a moment. “I can do 8am ‘til 4pm.” I answered. “Good. You will be cleaning! Just anywhere that looks dirty. You’ll get 20 dollars a day, and double on Sunday. When can you start?” Mrs. Gerald asked looking truly grateful some help had arrived. “I can start right away, Ma’am.” I said, smiling. Mrs. Gerald smiled at me. “Call me Linda, please.” She said, reaching over and shaking my hand.

### -----July 1967-----

Chelsea Carey rubbed her temples, and let her elbows rest on her knees. She was sitting on a steel chair in the police station’s waiting area. Her long, blonde hair fell over her face, but she didn’t care. December 3rd. December 3rd was the day her best friend turned 18. It was July. This couldn’t be good. She flipped back her hair and followed an officer into a room. The hair on her arms prickled as she walked into the room, it was so cold. She saw a dark brown ponytail, and knew her best friend, Ella Maclain, was sitting just a few inches from where she stood. Ella looked up, and smiled.

“Why is she here?” Mr. Simms asked grumpily as Chelsea sat down. “She’s here for support. And maybe she can fill in any holes in the story.” Mr. Lawrence explained. “So! Am I in any trouble?” Chelsea gulped. “No, you were only a minor, you aren’t in any trouble.” Mr. Lawrence reassured her.

“Please continue.” Mr. Lawrence prompted Ella.

### -----August 1964-----

I had been in Elora for over a year now, and I really felt at home. Linda had promoted me for being so good at work, I was making almost double than before! But, as I lay on my bed, reading library books, I realized I hadn’t made any friends. I knew that it could be dangerous to make friends before I turned eighteen. What if I told them that I was a runaway? They could tell anyone.

I stared out the window. The sun was scorching, and the air conditioner wasn’t powerful enough. I finally went against all sense and grabbed my bag. I stuffed my swim suit in there, and made my way to the swimming pool. It was about a 10 minute walk, but it would be rewarded by some fun. Something that hadn’t happened since my Dad had died.

I told myself, *no one will suspect anything. You will just be one of the kids for once.* A smile formed on my face. It would be nice to escape the world of adults for an afternoon. After five minutes of walking, sweat started to line my forehead. I came to a sudden stop, as I looked into the window of a bicycle shop. There, in the window, was the prettiest bike I had ever seen. I told myself from the beginning that I would only use money on the essential things.

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The more I thought about it, though, the more it made sense. A bike would be practical for getting around. The red frame sparkled in the sunlight, and I marched in to the shop. I had been extra careful that month, and had 100\$ left over. "How much does the red bike cost?" I asked the salesman. "It's on sale for 80\$ Ma'am." He said politely, flashing a cheesy smile. That was that. I rode my new bike to the pool, my bag securely in the white basket on the front.

When I was at the pool, I felt like a kid again. I laughed and played with the others my age. No one cared what school I went to, or where my parents were. After a few hours, I decided to leave. I grabbed my bike, and was about to ride off, when a girl stopped me. "Hi! I'm Shirley; you work at the department store downtown, don't you?" I closed my eyes, sucked in my breath, and turned around.

"Yes, I do. I'm Ella." I answered. She smiled, and her bright orange hair waved in the breeze. She had large rimmed glasses, and I knew she was a girl who liked school. *Great, just what I need.* "I haven't seen you at school are you?" Shirley started saying, but then, thankfully, a boy ran out calling her name. "Shirley, I was looking everywhere for you." He said, running up to us. "Sorry Jimmy, I was just talking to my new friend, Ella." Shirley grinned at me.

*New friend when did that happen!* I panicked. "Hi, I'm Jimmy." He smiled, and shook my hand. "Jimmy here is sixteen, and I'm fifteen." Shirley explained. I nodded. "I'm fifteen." I replied. "Where about do you live?" Shirley asked. I had to think fast. I had to rack my brain. "I- My parents let me live by myself. Since I have a job, I- I- umâ *Darn. I can't think.* "You dropped out of school?" Shirley furrowed her brow. I gulped. "Don't look so worried, Jimmy dropped out too, he's continuing his family's business." Shirley patted my shoulder. *Thank goodness.* "I'm a trained mechanic." Jimmy explained.

"I'm still in school, but I want to be a lawyer." Shirley said. "You want to be a lawyer?" I had never heard of a female lawyer before. As I finally started to leave, Shirley called out, "I'll talk to you soon, then." So I suppose now I had two friends, and a very pushy one. Oh well, they were friends none the less, and they suspected nothing. It turned out Shirley studied A LOT. So that left Jimmy and I. Jimmy didn't talk much, but he did have some good ideas. We mostly went outside. He knew trails for bike rides, and trees for climbing. It was nice to get out for a while after work.

We would all sit on Jimmy's porch steps, and just stare at the sky. Well, at least Jimmy and I would look at the sky, and Shirley would fidget a while and start talking about physics. Jimmy's family was so nice, and so was Shirley's. They always invited me for dinner.

One day, when I was walking home from work, Shirley practically jumped in front of me. "Ella, I need your help! We have a school dance coming up, and I don't know what dress to wear!" She looked so frantic; I had to calm her down. "Shirley, how would I be able to help you with that?" I asked. "Well, you're so fashion forward; I thought you could show me what dress looks best on me." She said.

I was about to tell her I wasn't fashion forward, that I just got very cheap deals in the store because I worked there. Her eyes were so wide with excitement, though, so I just said, "Okay, I'll help you." She smiled brightly and dragged me to her house. It was like a fashion show, dress after dress, and style after style. I finally told her that the green dress went well with her eyes, and that the black shoes worked better than the gold ones.

That outing tired me out more than being at work all day. The next morning, Carol came to my door, and was knocking loudly. "There's a Miss Shirley Littler on the telephone for you!" She rang out. I groggily got out of bed and pulled on a skirt and top. "Ella, the dance is tonight, are you sure I look alright?" She asked. It was funny; Shirley had never acted so crazy about her appearance before.

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“Believe me you’ll look great.” I reassured her. “Thanks.” She said, gratefully, and before she hung up I could hear the sound of hairspray being sprayed all over. I peeked at the clock and smiled. She was getting ready for the dance tonight at seven o’clock in the morning.

### -----September 1967-----

Two months after Ella had told her story to the police, she found herself in court. “Why did you leave home, Ms. Maclain?” Ella looked up. “I left because I was tired of living with my Mother.” She answered promptly. “Care to elaborate?” Mr. Simms paced in front of her. “Well, my Mother never cared about me. I didn’t really notice until my Dad died though, because he loved me so much.” Ella said, sighing.

“She wanted to get rid of me, but in her own way. She didn’t want to LOOK like a horrible Mother, so her plan was to send me to college and get me a respectable job, so that I wouldn’t be a complete failure.” Ella looked into her Mother’s eyes.

“A minor cannot inherit a house before they are eighteen.” Mr. Simms explained to the judge. “According to Aunt Rose, I can!” Ella shouted. She covered her mouth. What an embarrassing outburst. Ella’s Mother entered the stand. “Why should you inherit the house, Mrs. Maclain?” Ella’s Mother tried desperately to force out fake tears. “I just want to keep it safe until Ella inherits it!” She screeched, and put her face in her hands.

*No, you want to sell it.* Ella thought to herself. After a few questions, Ella was called to the stand again.

“Ms. Maclain, are you able to tell the court what happened with you Aunt Rose?” Mr. Lawrence asked. Ella didn’t want to. She wanted to stop thinking about what happened.

*This is for you, Aunt Rose.* Ella said to herself. “Yes, sir, I can tell you.”

### -----November 1966-----

I was really enjoying life after three years. I used to tell myself, just three more years until I’m free, just two more years until I can go and see Chelsea. But this year was different. I had bonded so well with Shirley and Jimmy, they felt like family. Shirley was going off to college, and that just left Jimmy and me. I knew she would be back though, she so loved living in that small town.

One day, as I left my room to go grocery shopping, I noticed Jimmy was sitting in the lobby waiting for me. He turned around in a chair when he saw me. “Jimmy, what are you doing here?” I asked. “I was wondering if you wanted to go to the movies tonight. Hey There, Yogi Bear is still showing in the theatre.” Jimmy smiled, and stood up.

I laughed. Was this guy serious? What were we, ten? He looked quite serious, so I stopped laughing, and said, “Of course, that sounds fun.” I excused myself and put on a dress. To me, the movie theatre was a special outing. I had only been once before, when I was seven. When I walked past the front desk, Carol raised her eyebrows at me. I shook my head. Carol couldn’t comment though, because she was on the phone. Carol and that darn phone, she was either gossiping to her friends on it, or lying to her Dad about how many customers her hotel had. “Yes, I know. She was definitely not with him at the dinner last night. Jodie told me, that’s how I know!” I heard her say, and I rolled my eyes.

Jimmy bought the tickets, and even some popcorn. I was telling him about the snooty lady I was trying to help at the store, when I stopped dead. A few feet away from us were my Aunt Rose. What in the world was she doing here? If we were too old for this movie, how could SHE possibly- I stopped myself. Screaming in my

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head was not going to help.

I'll avoid her, I'll just avoid her. There are at least 40 people going in. It'll be fine. I told myself silently as we entered the dark theatre. I barely watched the movie. I just stared four rows down from me, where Aunt Rose sat, munching her popcorn. After the movie, Jimmy talked and laughed about the movie. I wasn't listening though. Where is she? Why can't I see her anymore? I thought, panicking and looking around.

'Are you okay?' Jimmy asked. I snapped out of my trance. 'Yes, sorry, I'm just tired.' I lied. We almost made it out of the theatre when I heard my name called behind me. 'Eleanor? Is that you?' Aunt Rose said, and I tensed up as I heard the click-clack of her heels coming towards me. Aunt Rose had pulled me across the room. 'What are you doing here? Don't you say you're visiting with your family, your Mother would never dream of visiting.' Aunt Rose said in a hushed, angry voice. 'I-I...*Think, Ella, think!*' I scolded myself, but nothing came out. I noticed Jimmy looking more and more confused. I couldn't imagine what he was thinking. He started to walk over to me, obviously concerned.

'You've run away, haven't you?' Aunt Rose stated more than asked. 'You ran away? You ran from home?' Jimmy was looking more confused than ever. It must have suddenly dawned on him just how much I had lied to him and Shirley then, because he left. I was forced to pay more attention to Aunt Rose. 'Where have you been living? How have you been living?' Aunt Rose's anger was sizzling down to confusion. I managed to get her to sit down on one of the lounge chairs, and told her everything.

I told her about the day I left, about Chelsea's credit card, about my job, and the hotel. It all just spilled out, and honestly, it felt nice to be telling the truth for once. That was, until I finished. *She's going to send me home, and I only have a year and a bit left.* I didn't hide how disappointed I was, or maybe I couldn't. 'Okay.' Aunt Rose looked as if she was thinking deeply, weighing the details.

'Let's go and get your things then. I won't have you living alone anymore. You can keep your job, I suppose, but if the police come to my house, I will not lie to them.' Aunt Rose stood up, and started walking away. 'Come on, then.' She called. I stood for a moment. My mouth was wide open, and I knew that looked bad, but I couldn't help it. I wanted to run up and hug her, but I could tell Aunt Rose didn't want to look silly in a public place, so I followed her.

We drove down the street to the hotel, and I started to load up my suitcase. I felt a strange connection to my room, after being there for three years, and I was sorry to let it go. I walked to the front desk. I started to say something, but Carol interrupted me. 'You're welcome back anytime.' She smiled warmly, but I felt bad. I was Carol's main lie to her father. She told him the thousand coming in every month was 20 different people checking in.

I knew she would be alright, though. She definitely wasn't poor. I left the hotel with a heavy heart, knowing I wouldn't be living there again. As we drove up a hill, to her house, I found myself staring at her. She looked so much like my Dad. Her blonde hair was tied back in a bun, and her blue eyes practically matched mine, and my Dad's.

As we approached the house, I noticed how big the house was. Its red brick exterior was so old looking; I was surprised it was still standing. This was the house my Dad grew up in. I pulled my suitcase into the big living area. It looked so new inside, well compared to the outside. The wooden floors didn't creak and appliances looked brand new. 'I know it's a little much.' Aunt Rose said, hanging her jacket on the coat rack. 'No, it's beautiful.' I said, and it was.

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She showed me upstairs where all the bedrooms were, all four of them. My room was huge, but then again, so were all of them. Aunt Rose was tired, to say the least. She was yawning every two minutes. We went to bed early, and decided to talk the next morning. As I settled down in my duvet, I noticed a picture on the bedside table. I sat up straight and examined it. My Dadâs big blue eyes were looking straight at me, and his smile was wide as always. It was an old picture of him, but it was still a picture. My Mother had thrown out all evidence of my Dadâs existence after he had died, and I never even got to keep one picture. That was the first time I wanted to run away, a mere week after his death.

I got up at 8am that morning for breakfast. Aunt Rose wasnât there. I thought she was a late sleeper so I waited a while. At noon I was getting concerned, so I peeked into her room. âAunt Rose?â She was lying in her bed; her usually rosy cheeks were a pale grey. âAre you okay Aunt Rose?â I rushed to her bedside. She slowly opened her eyes. âIâm not feeling very well today, if you let me rest, weâll talk tomorrow.â She said frailly. âDo you want me to call a doctor, orâ âI started to ask her.

âNO! Now, donât you have to go to work? You should also explain to your little friend what happened last night.â Aunt Rose said, and quickly fell back asleep. Jimmy, I had almost forgotten. I called Linda and told her I was taking a sick day. I pedalled speedily down to Jimmyâs house. *Please be home.* I thought to myself. *Please, please be home.* I slowed down as I approached his driveway. He was leaning against the porch, and Shirley was sitting on the steps. âHello stranger.â Shirley said, but she wasnât kidding.

She was looking right at me. Jimmy, on the other hand, was looking everywhere but me. âCan I explain?â I asked. âPlease do.â Shirley motioned for me to sit next to her. I told them about my Mother, and the reason I didnât tell them. âWait, so you think you can just go home when youâre eighteen, and no one will do anything about it?â Shirley asked. âI did nothing illegal.â I replied. Shirley looked dumbfounded. âI guess not.â She said, deep in thought. âIâm sorry, Jimmy.â I said. Jimmy hadnât said anything yet. âI forgive you.â He said, looking at me for the first time.

When I went home that evening, I discovered Aunt Rose hadnât moved the whole day. âMaybe Iâll need a couple days to recover. Weâll have that talk soon, hon.â Aunt Rose told me. We never had that talk. By the third day, I called Aunt Roseâs doctor, against her wishes. When he finally came downstairs, he said to me, âLooks like sheâs had a downturn again. Iâm sorry, but it doesnât look like sheâll make it through this one.â Before I could ask what was wrong with her he had left.

I ran upstairs and burst into her room. âAunt Rose, that doctor- he said you- Aunt Rose, whatâs happening?â Tears were forming in my eyes. âIâm just sick, my dear.â She answered calmly, stroking my hair as I knelt down beside her bed. Five and a half months. I got to spend a whole five and a half months with my dear Aunt Rose. She never told me what was wrong with her, like she really believed it was just the flu. Every day when I came home from work, I would make her soup. She would smile at me and drink some, then tell me to go and make myself some dinner, say that I was too skinny. On May 15th, 1967, my Aunt Rose died. The doctor had come in just a few hours earlier to check up on her, and he sympathetically told me that she wouldnât make it more than a few more days.

Before she died, she said to me, âMy will is on the chest of drawers.â As the undertakers took her away, I didnât care about her will. I slammed my bedroom door and collapsed on my bed. I donât know how long I was in there, but I wasnât once hungry. The next thing I remembered was Linda coming into my room. She heaved me up into a standing position.

âYouâre coming with me.â She said, half dragging me to her car. She took me to her home, where she tucked me into her spare bed. âIâm so sorry, sweetie.â She whispered to me, before leaving, for work presumably. I just stared, red eyed at the ceiling. I knew Aunt Roseâs death was coming. At least I was, somewhat prepared this time. That didnât make me feel better, though. I curled up in a ball and

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stayed like that until Linda came back.

Linda force fed me every day for ten days. One day I said to her, "I'm ready to go home." I could tell she didn't approve. She probably didn't think I was ready to be in that big house alone. She hesitantly nodded. When I walked into Aunt Rose's room, I had to shut my eyes tight to stop from crying more. The smell of her perfume still filled the air. I went to the chest of drawers, and held my breath as I read Aunt Rose's will.

To whom it may concern,

I leave all of my belongings, including my house, to my dear niece, Eleanor Maclain. Under no circumstances may the house be taken from her, she is the sole owner.

Sincerely,

Roseland Maclain.

I smiled under my tears. I couldn't believe that was what she thought of in her final days; me. After a few days I was starting to feel normal again. I went to work. I rode home on my bike, and I cooked my dinner. One day, Jimmy came over. When I opened the door, he hugged me right away. "I'm so sorry, Ella. I just heard today, or I would've come sooner." He said. "It's okay." I replied, holding back tears. It was 4:30 and I was just making dinner. "Do you want some?" I started saying when I was interrupted by another knock on the door.

I went to get it, and there stood my Mother. She was sneering. "I hear your poor Aunt Rose died." She said menacingly, and I gulped. "May I come in to use the phone? It appears I've just found my long lost daughter."

"I didn't invite you in." I said, blocking her entrance. "Feisty. Alright I'll have to go back downtown to use a phone. Do you think you can run away fast enough before I get back with the authorities, *darling*?" She turned on her heels and sped down the hill. I looked at Jimmy anxiously. "You'd better get going. I can drive if you want." He suggested. "No. She did that on purpose. She wants me to run so she can have the house. No, I'm staying, for Aunt Rose." I said.

I went into the living room and pulled out a chair into the front foyer. "You'd better get going." I said to Jimmy. He must have sensed the authority in my voice, because he left right away. I went upstairs and put on my nice black dress, the one that Linda had helped me buy for Aunt Rose's funeral that was meant to be the next week. I sat in the chair facing the door, Aunt Rose's will in hand. I tied my hair in a bun, and kept staring at the door, even as the police let themselves in, my Mother trailing behind.

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