

Dear Eric,

I'm selling the house. I know, I know; I promised I would never sell it, even if my shirt was in shreds across my back and I had to burn my birth certificate to keep warm. And yet, in spite of this, I sold it and the owners are ones you would hate. Why? Did I even put it up for sale, I mean. It's an accumulation, really, and it all makes sense. If you want me to state it in one sentence- because I couldn't bear to live there for one more day. But I know you'd want more of an explanation than that, so I'll list the reasons here.

1. The house reminds me of Janaya, before she ran off to do whatever she's doing. I don't know, maybe she's happy in some big city with clubs and excitement and taxis to take you anywhere in the world- but there were several years when she could actually sit in her room without moving, just staring out the window. She would watch the grosbeaks trip from tree to tree, not necessarily wanting to reach out into their world, but instead ingraining herself further into her environment. A queen in her castle. Yes, there would be fingerprints all over the panes, and maybe it was just her wasting time...but I never got that impression. Do you remember that breathless grin she'd get, her eyes wide and mouth straining to show how happy she was? Every time I pass the window, I see her smiling. She always smiled. Even the night she came home with us and flung toothpaste all over the bathroom because she didn't want to be "fostered" by us, she thought it was a joke. The Ja-nay-nay Smile. Well, it's gone now: enough of a reason to sell as any. I don't need an empty room with an empty window to waste heat, especially if it pains me to see it every time I walk past.

2. Okay. Well that was reason number one. Number two is a bit more roundabout, but it's making more sense to me as I ponder it. Do you remember the hollow oak tree at the back of the property, the one next to the shed and just beyond the patch of foxgloves? It occurred to me several months back that I should go visit it, because it had been so long since I'd been out there, and the shed might be needing repairs. As I walked and the fresh fall leaves crunched underneath my feet, I started to think back to when it was you and me out there and we had hours of time on our hands. (which, incidentally, wore brand-new wedding rings: I still wear mine, in case). Right there, in front of the tree, you suddenly kissed me, and I'll forever remember that moment. Maybe it was because I was so used to being single and hands-off, protective, but that kiss was the purest exchanging of joy. I can't put it into words. And then after that moment (or however long) you noticed the tree still had a bit of a stump inside, enough to sit on. We clambered in- it was shelter from the wind- and sat there peeking out and talking about all the things that were on our minds, from finances to snow cones. I loved it, loved marriage. Anyway, I thought about these things as I walked, until I got to the tree. It's changed, a lot. The top was broken off. Inside I found used needles and cigarette butts. It was disgusting and frightening to see. So that evening, I set out again (with Wallace trotting at my side, in all his blindness) with a set of matches, and I tossed a lit one into the center of the stump. The tree burned magnificently. There was no wind or anything else to spread the flames, so I just stood there and watched. Maybe I prayed. I don't recall; my mind was blank and numb and on my lips burned a memory. Sorry, I find myself waxing poetic here. I suppose there was something strangely poetic about the whole thing, but at the time I didn't think so. Can you understand why this is my

second reason? It scares me to step onto the front porch and wonder what's happening on the edge of the woods, both the woods in front of me and the woods in my mind.

3. Reason number three is simpler. The house is falling apart. Last December, right before the Christmas party, it must've snowed at least five inches. Everything was coated, crystalline, and gorgeous. Even Wallace thought it was great fun! He sniffed and wiggled his wet, cracked nose through the cold clods that were collected on the front doormat. He even dipped a paw in off the porch, but then pulled it back in apprehension. I thought that the snow was good for him, that it would take his mind off his problems (the arthritis in his hips is worse, so he sleep in the kitchen most of the time). It was horrible, then, to see what the snow did to him. On the last day of Hanukkah, a warm front blew through the area and melted everything; it was at that time I decided to try keeping Wallace in the basement at night, because he'd taken to randomly peeing all over the floor, and at least the basement has concrete floors. So the next morning, I heard the melted snow gushing through the pipes, but I didn't mind it or worry about it. Only when I smelled a sharp, tangy wet-dirt scent did I wonder why on earth it was there: maybe it was just my coffee. I opened the basement door at 9, and there was Wallace huddled on the top step, soaked and shivering, because the basement was flooded with four feet of muddy, swaying water. The drainage system had backed up and dumped all the water into there, forcing Wallace up the stairs. I called the plumber and the vet and both came. They seemed hesitant, though, to answer. I don't know why. You were always great with fixing things- why didn't you fix. Okay. I'll stop that sentence. To conclude, the house is falling apart.

4. My final reason is that it was never “my” house. It was Janaya’s, David’s, Sarah’s, Tyler’s, Wallace’s, and yours. I feel like I’m living on borrowed property (and sometimes borrowed time). It was yours, I guess, from the moment you seized my hand in your rough, warm, splendid one and said, “Look! It’s like a house by the sea. A widow’s walk, a porch swing, and storm shutters.” We signed the papers and sealed our fates. I haven’t gone out on the widow’s walk since “that” day, but I tell you, every time I approach the house and see it- I want to burn it all down. Everything, let it crumble and quietly fade. Like the tree. Except this is a house, and money I suppose.

Come back, Eric. Fill our house the way you used to. You meant to leave, didn’t you, even though all the reports said your plane disappeared and crashed in the fog. Did you know not to fly in fog, or did you mean to leave me with this house. I’m selling it now, Eric. I’m moving to a different city and finding a house in Suburbia. And one more thing- Eric, I will always, always love you.

Katy