

Title: The Guileless Moth

Soundtrack link: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9NQ7XCt0JudAh-gu1wBGYZlwmm04Nxoy>

Copy:

"Just left house

omw, see you there :)"

11:29PM

Vivi puts her phone in her coat pocket. She walks out the door without saying goodbye, deliberately ignoring her mother's demands to come back.

"A good Christian girl only goes out with her husband."

That old woman's outdated words echo in Vivi's mind as she exits the neighbourhood, the speed in her stride fuelled by the flame of defiance, that typical teen spirit.

For two weeks now, the words of her mother have fallen on deaf ears; Vivi neither intends to be good, nor die a slow death from that garrote dubbed a wedding ring.

"Damn, it's cold," Vivi tells herself, her teeth chattering away in the freezing dark. What was the girl expecting? It's not exactly toasty at quarter to twelve, is it?

She knows what she's doing, but refuses to care. She's feeling brave, powerful, like she's more than what her mother says.

This nerve-wracking midnight walk is her first step in gaining the agency she so ardently seeks.

Vivi's a minute away from the forest. Cicadas chirp through the night, their calls pulsing through the biting breeze. The occasional caw and quick flutter of wings are heard too.

She can already see its shackled entrance, all decrepit and rusty, repulsive to the sane. That doesn't stop her though — even the neighborhood stories of the place slip her teen mind, ousted by blissful visions of her future.

Vivi nears the iron gate, still full of confidence as she drags it open. To her surprise, the thick chains are mere props; the doors turn with less effort than expected.

The girl continues to walk the beaten path of rebellion, determined to meet up with these new friends of hers.

She enters the forest — the wind quickens.

"Guys? You there? Hellooo?"

Vivi calls out to them, hoping to hear their replies.

"Helloooo? Where are you? You said to meet you here."

Her words don't fall on deaf ears — there are no ears around her. There are the animals of course, but they're concealed in the shadows; why do they care about some child?

The teen wants to wait, hoping that they're just held up, just as excited for this walk as she is.

She checks her phone.

"12:05AM"

"Just a bit longer, I'm sure they'll come."

"12:15AM"

Ten minutes pass. She soon opens her eyes, turning back towards home.

As Vivi heads to the entrance, the girl finds herself in the same place as before. The chilly night air intensifies her newfound confusion.

Dismissing that for the moment, she walks the same path once again; minutes later, she still sees no difference in her surroundings.

A second path, this time to the left, past that crooked tree with the eyes.

No change.

A third path, this time to the right, betwixt the jagged stumps.

Oh? What's this? It's looking different to the previous two.

This is great. Vivi continues down this one, faithful that this is her way home.

Wrong, yet again. Silly girl.

"What is going on? Am I just going in circles? For God's sakes.

Wait. What is that?" She sniffs the warm air.

"Smoke... fire?"

Fixing her gaze to the source of the smell, Vivi bears witness to that orange flame, flickering amidst the silhouettes.

Praying for a person behind it, the girl speedily runs to it.

"Excuse me do you..."

It's a man.

Didn't see that coming.

"Who the hell are you? And how did you get in here?"

The man gets up. He's tall. Broad shouldered. His arms are thick yet firm, dense with waves of dark fur. His lack of facial hair makes him look young and innocent and yet, when Vivi sets her little eyes upon his large ones, she can't help but feel overtowered and oddly protected by his presence.

"I...

I want to... I.."

"Speak up." His command bellows through her thin little body.

"I wanna get outta this place. I.. I'm lost, and, I'm going in circles and I'm cold and a bit fed up because my friends said they would meet me here and they're not and I... sorry, I don't wanna trouble you but...

Please? I'd really appreciate it."

"How did you come in again?" He asks.

"Through the iron gate. Wait, how are you in here? It was closed when I arrived."

"There's another entrance." The man responds. "Fine, I'll take you there. But you have to stay close. Don't stray."

"I won't. I promise."

Vivi follows the handsome man through the forest, clinging to his side. The horned newborn suckles her neck, compelling the girl to take his tough hand — he grips her wrist before she can do so.

"What are you doing?" The man questions her.

"I... sorry. I guess I was scared."

He dismisses the action. At his side, she continues to walk through the night, for what feels like several hours.

"I'm.. Vivi, by the way. Hi."

He stops; she stops.

"Damon." He replies, before they resume their advance.

They reach the secret entrance at last. She waves goodbye and parts ways. Beyond the black trees, the rays of sunrise singe her eyes. Still disenchanted with the ones she called friends, Vivi heads home.

Vivi enters. Her mother's not there.

"She's probably in the church. Best to check there."

Vivi runs towards it, looking for the priest.

"Father Reillem, do you know where my mother is-

F-Father Reillem?"

"Is that you, Vivianne?" He sluggishly turns around.

"Uh- Father, where's my mother? She's not at home."

"Come with me, child."

He takes Vivi to the back of the church, amidst the headstones.

"Father, why are we here?... Wait... no... no!"

"I'm, so sorry, Vivianne."

He directs Vivi to the grave beside him.

Mallory Morris

13th February 1976

13th October 2051

Vivi falls to the earth; she breaks into tears.

"Th-th-this-this doesn't-this doesn't-this doesn't make any sense... I.. I was only gone f-for the night... It's still, 20... 21...

Right... Father?"

Total Word Count: 997 words