

§ 1. If you walk into any bookstore there is an entire shelf dedicated to books about people who decide to change their lives by relocating to another country. I used to laugh at those kinds of books and wonder why anyone would put themselves through the discomfort of going to live in a foreign country — all in search of a simple life!

§ 2. One day, instead of walking straight past this section, I selected a book to read on the train. It was about an accountant who realised one day how boring her life was, so she bought a ticket to Italy. After reading the book, the idea of moving abroad had lodged (засела) itself in my mind and was turning into a magnificent possibility.

§ 3. I resigned from the hospital where I worked, sold my apartment and moved to the region of Umbria in Italy. Once there, I rented an apartment and hired a little motorbike. I loved sampling the local cuisine and I signed up for a short cooking course. A very charming local man called Francesco ran the course. Each lesson not only did we learn how to prepare an authentic Umbrian dish, we were also rolling around the floor in fits of laughter, since Francesco was a natural storyteller and we enjoyed his talent for imitating people.

§ 4. I also took a three-month Italian language course. It is fair to say that my attempts at cooking were more successful than my attempts to acquire a new language. I tried hard, however, and after a few weeks of lessons I actually had a short conversation with a local — OK, I only asked for directions to the train station. In my mind, though, this was a triumph of communication and I was satisfied with my modest progress.

§ 5. It was at one of these language classes that I heard a fellow student, John, mention that his neighbour, Sandro, was moving to Rome and selling his farmhouse very cheap. John said he wished he had the money to purchase it himself, as the property was sure to **be snapped up** soon. I couldn't believe that it cost less than half the amount that I had sold my tiny apartment for. Would I dare to copy the writers of all those books? I had to go and have a look, of course. The farmhouse was located on the top of a hill, and although it was very **run-down**, it possessed charm. I bought it straight away.

§ 6. The project wasn't without its difficulties, though. The farmhouse was collapsing in several places. My first priority, therefore, was to hire some local workers to add supports to the building. I also strengthened the foundations, installed a new kitchen and renovated the rest of the property. In the end, all the cost and effort were worthwhile, because I felt I belonged here as much as I did anywhere in the world, and I was determined to make it my home. I must say I sometimes look at my collection of books on Italy and think I'd like to have a goal writing one myself I'd like to share my experience and let other dreamers out there know that the difficulty is worth it. I didn't quite find the simple life, but I did find what the Italians call the sweet life — *la dolce vita*.

Определите значение указанного слова в тексте.

run-down (§ 5)

- 1) very low      2) shabby      3) small