

WAYWARD

Written by

Stephanie Saavedra

Stephanieasaavedra@gmail.com
(718) 964-8344

FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A car, older, obviously used and well-loved, is parked underneath a streetlamp.

It's a soft glow, the only vehicle in the lot.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE, early 20s, ruffled looking, sleeps soundly in the backseat. She's wrapped in a blanket, curled into herself.

Her backpack is tucked on the floor near her head. Her phone is on top of it.

It starts to BUZZ.

The vibrating slowly wakes her up.

She's disoriented for a few moments before wrestling a hand free from her blanket and shutting it off.

She sits up and yawns. She looks outside at the still dark sky and takes a deep breath.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELLING

The sun is high and bright.

The windows are open, soft MUSIC filtering through the air with gentle beats.

Ellie is at ease behind the wheel, fingers tapping with the music. One hand hangs out the window, catching the air like waves.

As she drives, roads pass with nothing remarkable amongst them. Old buildings and streets that all look alike. Places for people that don't want to be found.

Ahead, she notices a gas station and pulls into it.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Ellie steps out of the small convenience store, a new box of cigarettes in hand. She pops one out and lights it as she looks around.

She walks to her car and leans against the hood as she pulls her phone out of her back pocket.

She stares at it, no new messages or calls, and she swipes it open.

She scrolls through her contact list, her thumb hovering over the name *DAD*. It stays that way for a second before she presses it.

The call goes straight to voicemail.

She doesn't listen to the message. It's not the first time she's gotten it.

Ellie hangs up and stuffs the phone back into her pocket. The rest of the cigarette is quickly finished and flicked onto the ground.

She rounds to the driver's seat and gets in, **SLAMMING** the door.

The car peels off back onto the road.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Ellie's car is pulled off to the side, headlights off.

CRICKETS sound around it, the only quiet noise of the night.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Ellie is fast asleep, wrapped in her blanket. Her phone beside her head.

It **VIBRATES**. She wakes up slowly before shutting it off. She stays laying down for a few moments, staring off at nothing.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELLING

The sun is soft, setting.

An old motel sits tucked into the street that comes and goes. The sign is beginning to glow as the night settles in.

Ellie keeps driving.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELLING

Miles later, the car begins to **SPUTTER**.

Ellie
No, no, no. C'mon.

The drive becomes unstable. She pulls off to the side of the road.

Ellie turns the engine off and tries to switch it back on, but the car only SPUTTERS again, refusing.

She tries again and again, but it doesn't come back to life.

She looks out and around. Nothing else is in the dark.

INT. CAR - NIGHT (LATER)

In the backseat, Ellie lays on her side.

She listens for the sounds of cars approaching, but hears nothing.

She nestles deeper into her blankets and pulls her phone in front of her face. She dials and brings it to her ear.

Voicemail. Again.

She hangs up and tries to sleep for the night.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Ellie stands in front of the popped hood. Her hands are greasy, tools beside her feet.

She moves to try the ignition, but nothing. It can't be fixed.

At a breaking point, she SLAMS the hood of the car down and kicks the tire.

ELLIE
Fuck!

It doesn't soothe her anger, but she does it again regardless.

Out of breath, she looks in both directions and sees nothing.

She pulls her wallet out of her back pocket and opens it. In the front flap there's a picture, an OLDER MAN, her father, and a younger Ellie.

She doesn't look at it, instead opens up to the bills. She makes a quick count, unhappy with the total.

She starts rummaging through her car, picking up and stuffing everything she can into her backpack -- mixtapes, loose clothes, her blanket. It's overly full when she's finished.

The only things of hers she has left, she slings across her back and starts towards the direction she came.

EXT. ROAD - DAY (LATER)

Ellie pulls at the straps of her backpack, uncomfortable with the weight.

In the distance, she spots the motel from the day before.

She keeps walking.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Ellie sits up against the headboard, smoking. She's showered and changed, the most comfortable she's been in awhile.

The television plays in the background, the volume not on. It flickers occasionally, the picture grainy.

She isn't watching, just staring ahead, her eyes glazed over. Her phone sits on her lap clasped in hand, the call list already pulled up.

She clicks *DAD* and puts it on speaker.

There's a quiet lull before the other end starts to RING. Ellie sits up straighter, suddenly more alert.

It rings and rings, and she's hopeful, but it's quickly dashed as the call is sent to voicemail.

She deflates quickly. She wasn't sure what she was expecting. The phone goes slack in her hand, the screen going dark on its own.

She looks over to the night stand and picks up her wallet, pulling out the photo. She looks at it, feeling the edges of the paper against her finger tips.

She takes the lighter beside her and flicks it on, holding the edge to the fire. It starts to burn at the tip, the paper turning black.

She watches it for a moment, her face carefully blank, but she comes back to herself quickly, turning the lighter off and blowing out the flame.

The picture is only slightly damaged, but she checks it over regardless before setting it back into her wallet.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Ellie packs her things. The television plays in the background, the sound still off.

On the night stand, there are a few cigarette butts in the ash tray. Beside it, her phone. Uncharged and off.

She puts her bag on her shoulder and leaves the room, not bringing it with her.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Ellie is away from the motel, a stretch of road in front and behind her.

The sound of a CAR carries and she stops, turning and spotting where it's coming from.

She watches as it gets closer and closer.

A decision made, she sticks her hand out and waves down the car. It slows and stops just ahead of her.

She runs up to the car and throws her backpack in before hopping into the front seat.

The car drives off after a second, joining back onto the road.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELLING

A girl, OLIVIA, around the same age as Ellie, is driving. She catches glances of Ellie from her periphery. She smiles, warm.

The MUSIC playing is low.

OLIVIA
Going anywhere specific?

ELLIE
Not really. Where are you going?

OLIVIA
Cutler, Maine.

ELLIE
What's in Cutler?

OLIVIA
Honestly, nothing, but I have some family up there so I'm visiting for awhile.

Ellie nods, but doesn't offer much else. She watches out the front window as the road comes and goes.

It's quiet for a moment until:

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I'm Olivia, by the way.

ELLIE
Ellie.

OLIVIA
Well, Ellie. I can take you as far as the border, or further if you want. Up to you.

ELLIE
The border's good, I think. Thanks.

OLIVIA
So, where are you from?

ELLIE
Washington.

OLIVIA
That's a long ways away. Why are you all the way out here?

Ellie pauses, wary.

Before she can answer, the car begins to slow to a stop. Olivia curses under her breath.

The rest of the road is closed, barred off by cones and a sign.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Ellie stands and stretches on the passenger's side.

She watches as Olivia exits the small store, a map in hand.

She sets it down on the hood of the car, Ellie looking on. On the map, circles and lines of red.

OLIVIA

Main roads are closed from here for a few miles, but we can go the back way. Takes a little longer, but not by much.

ELLIE

Fine with me, if that's fine with you.

OLIVIA

There's nothing wrong with the scenic route.

She folds the map and whisks off, getting into the car.

Ellie follows behind, amused.

EXT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELLING

A backroad along the coast. Stretches of sand and water come into view.

The car is filled with the usual soft MUSIC.

As the ocean comes closer, Ellie leans forward, staring out the windshield, enamored.

Olivia watches her.

OLIVIA

Do you want to stop for a bit?

Ellie's spell breaks, and she turns to Olivia.

ELLIE

Didn't you say you have to visit family?

Olivia shrugs, unbothered.

OLIVIA

I'm not in a rush.

Ellie nods, smiling. She turns back to the window, captivated.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

They sit beside each other in the sand, staring off at the water.

Ellie digs her bare feet in, her knees against her chest, lost in her own head. Olivia lounges back.

She looks over at Ellie and stands.

OLIVIA
Stand up.

She beckons Ellie. She hesitates before complying.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Yell.

ELLIE
What?

OLIVIA
Everything that's stuck inside of
you. Let it out.

Olivia turns towards the ocean and YELLS. A cathartic force from head to toe.

Ellie watches her, in awe for a moment, a smile on her face. She joins her soon after, turning towards the water and SCREAMING with her, bolder with each second.

Their voices mix with the wind and the waves. They continue together, laughing at themselves.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The sun is low on the horizon, casting a soft golden light. The car is parked overlooking the shore.

Ellie and Olivia lay on the hood, watching the sunset in a comfortable silence.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ellie leans against the car, smoking.

Olivia steps out of a small store and spots her, lifting the bags in her hands filled with alcohol and food, triumphant.

Ellie laughs despite herself and snubs out the cigarette with her foot before getting back into the car.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Empty bottles and food wrappers litter the night stand, smoke hazing the room.

Ellie and Olivia sit on their own beds, bottles in hand.

There's a light laughter between them. Ellie takes a swig from her bottle.

OLIVIA

So, why did you end up leaving
Washington?

Ellie pauses for a moment, taking other drink. Some of her giddiness is gone.

ELLIE

No specific reason. Just wanted
some change.

OLIVIA

So you drove across the country?

ELLIE

Guess so.

OLIVIA

Have you always been a hitchhiker
or is that recent?

ELLIE

Recent. My car broke down and I
don't have even close to enough
money to fix it, so I abandoned it.

Olivia leans forward, far past tipsy, her intrigue getting the best of her.

OLIVIA

What I still don't get is how
someone could just put all their
things in a backpack and set off
across the country for no reason.
There's got to be a story there.

Reality slows starts to settle back in.

ELLIE

Maybe, but not one worth telling.

OLIVIA

In general, or just to me?

ELLIE
A little bit of both.

Olivia leans back, taking a long drink, a smile on her face.

OLIVIA
Everyone's running from something.

ELLIE
I'm not running from anything.

OLIVIA
People don't usually just pick up
their lives for no reason.

ELLIE
Well, I did.

Ellie sets down her bottle on the stand. It's a sudden, quick movement.

She slips on her shoes.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
I'm going for a walk.

She doesn't wait to listen to Olivia's response, closing the door on her words.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

It's quiet, most of the other rooms with their lights out or curtains drawn.

Ellie has a PATRON stopped, the tail end of a quick conversation. He hands her his phone and she nods a quick thanks.

She walks a bit away and stops, her back turned.

She begins to dial, her fingers unsteady, and lets it ring against her ear.

The other end picks up.

DAD (V.O.)
Hello?

Ellie doesn't respond, at a loss.

DAD (CONT'D) (V.O.)
Hello?

A beat.

DAD (CONT'D) (V.O.)

Ellie?

Ellie hangs up momentarily sobered. She stares down at the phone in her hand, the screen bright. Her breath picks up, but she shakes it off.

She walks back to the Patron and hands the phone back without a word. She hurries to her room, not looking back.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

The room is dark. Olivia is fast asleep in her bed, facing away from the door.

Ellie looks at her for a few moments, contemplating turning and leaving. She decides against, toeing her shoes off and crawling into the other bed.

She lays on her side, facing Olivia, and closes her eyes.

INT. CAFE - DAY

The cafe is empty, the day early.

Coffees sit in front of them. Ellie holds hers close, her eyes shut for a few seconds. She's hungover.

Olivia sips at hers, looking out the window.

Ellie looks up and watches her. She then pulls her wallet out of her pocket, opens it, and places it on the table between them.

ELLIE

I've only seen the ocean one other time.

Olivia turns and looks at Ellie then down at the photo.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

My dad and I never really went on vacations. Never had the time or the money, but one summer we drove across the state and stayed near the coast for a few days. It's one of the best memories I have.

Olivia picks it up and runs her thumb over the burnt corner.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

We've only ever really had each other.

OLIVIA

But you left for a reason.

ELLIE

I love my dad, but I felt like I was suffocating. My entire life was me trying to live up to everything he wanted me to be and failing even when I tried my best not to. Nothing I did was ever good enough for him.

OLIVIA

When did you leave?

Olivia hands the photo back to Ellie. She takes it and folds the burnt corner back.

ELLIE

Three months ago. He hasn't forgiven me for it. I can understand why, but I can't begin to fix things if he won't even talk to me.

OLIVIA

What about fixing things before you left?

For the first time, Ellie breaks.

ELLIE

I tried. I tried to be as small as possible and fit into his life the way he wanted me to. I got perfect grades. I dated boys. I did everything he asked. I tried to be this perfect version of a daughter that he wanted and none of it was ever good enough.

For a moment, Olivia seems at a loss.

OLIVIA

Do you want to go back?

ELLIE

Sometimes, but most of the time, no. No, I don't.

Ellie looks away from Olivia, gaining back her composure.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

If I were to die tomorrow, I
wouldn't want his last feelings
about me to be that he hated who I
am.

Olivia finally gets it.

OLIVIA

Fixing things. Trying to make them
right. Maybe that's not your job.

ELLIE

Maybe, but I can't help but feel
like it is. I'm the one who left.

OLIVIA

For a reason.

ELLIE

Reason or not, I still did it.

OLIVIA

If it felt right at the time, like
you really had to for your own
good, that means something.

Ellie puts the photo away.

ELLIE

I'm sorry for last night. You
didn't deserve me just walking
away.

She holds her mug tighter in her hands.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You said that everyone's running.
I'd like to think that I could be
running towards something.

Olivia smiles, sincere.

OLIVIA

The offer still stands. You can
stick with me if you want, or I can
drop you off anywhere along the
way.

Ellie looks shocked.

ELLIE

I've never been to Maine before.

Olivia raises her mug. A peace offering. A cheers.

OLIVIA

To running towards something.

Ellie smiles and picks up her own mug, raising it in response.

They finish their breakfast, finally settling in completely with each other.

INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELLING

The sun shines high and bright, gleaming against the water.

Ellie leans back comfortably in her seat, watching the approaching ocean. Olivia taps her fingers to the beat of the MUSIC.

As the ocean gets closer, Ellie sits up.

ELLIE

Do you mind if we stop here for a second?

The car slows and pulls off the road, against the beach. Olivia turns to her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Can I borrow your phone?

Olivia reaches into her pocket and hands it over.

Ellie steps out.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

She shuts the door behind her.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ellie distances herself, walking onto the sand.

She sits and dials the number slowly. Her fingers hover over the call button before she presses it.

DAD (V.O)

Hey, sorry I can't come to the phone right now, but leave me a message and I'll get back to you.

The phone BEEPS.

Ellie takes a breath, steeling herself.

ELLIE

Hi, Dad. It's me. It's Ellie. I don't know if you've caught on to not answer calls from unknown numbers, or you're just not near your phone right now. I'm in Massachusetts and heading up to Maine with someone I just met, which sounds crazy, but it's the best I've felt in a really long time. I know you don't want to talk to me, and I can understand why, but I just wanted to let you know that I don't regret deciding to leave and I hope one day you can understand that. Maybe not now, but someday soon.

She turns to the car and softly smiles.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

The girl I'm travelling with, this is actually her phone, so if you change your mind, I'll be with her for a bit so you can call me here. Take care. I love you, Dad.

Ellie hangs up and stares down at the phone. For her, a subtle moment of euphoria.

She smiles despite herself and looks out at the ocean. She takes a deep breath before walking back to the car.

She gets in and after a moment, the car drives off, joining back onto the road.

FADE OUT.

THE END.