

THE ROAD WE LEAVE

Written by

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INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT

Laura enters her old childhood home. Her footsteps echo through the large, empty space as she gazes around. From the entrance, she can see the remnants of the kitchen and living room. To the right, a spiral staircase leads upward to the bedrooms.

She rubs her arms, trying to warm herself as the cold seeps into her body. Slowly, she walks toward what used to be the living room.

Faint screams of a woman are heard echoing through the house.

LAURA
(mutters)
I already hate it here.

V.O
(faint, muffled)

The weather's supposed to be sunny.

LAURA
Maybe this was a mistake.

INT. LAURA'S MOM'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK (2005)

On Laura's 16th birthday, her mom, Rachel, watches as Laura opens her presents, surrounded by three friends: JENNY (16), the outspoken one; MARCUS (16), the quiet observer; and TESSA (16), always ready with a laugh.

RACHEL
Alright, let's start with Jenny's present.

Jenny hands her wrapped gift to Laura.

JENNY
This one's something you need more than anything.

MARCUS
I hope it's a video game console!

LAURA
I hope it's a million dollars!

TESSA
Yeah, we had to rob a bank so you'd better appreciate it!

Laura opens the present revealing a blow-up doll.

LAURA

A blow-up doll! Just what I always wanted! How did you know?

TESSA

Now you can finally have the boyfriend you always wanted.

JENNY

Just make sure to send us the sex tape when you're done!

MARCUS

Gross, Jenny.

Laura looks at Marcus with confusion.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I mean—not that I think you're gross. I think you're... hot. No, I mean—

TESSA

Please, stop.

JENNY

I bet that's not the first time he's heard that from a woman.

MARCUS

Ouch.

Jenny and Marcus share a laugh together.

LAURA

You guys are the best. I'll always remember you guys being there for me when I needed it the most. I love you.

The friends move in for a group hug, and the flashback scene ends.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

After scanning the downstairs area with her eyes, Laura decides to slowly move up the stairs toward the bedrooms. With each step, she feels increasingly sick, making it harder to continue. By the time she reaches the top, tears start to blur her vision.

Summoning what little strength she has left, she walks toward the first bedroom on the right—her old bedroom.

Right before opening the door, she pauses.

V.O
(soft, faint, desperate)
STOP! STOP!

Laura opens the door and steps into her old bedroom. The faint smell of dust and aged wood stirs memories she thought she'd buried. She walks to the window, looking out at the pouring rain and the rumble of thunder. Seconds later, the storm vanishes, and she blinks in disbelief as sunlight floods the room.

INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK (2005)

RACHEL
Did I ever tell you about the time
I accidentally hit someone with my
bicycle?

LAURA
What!?

RACHEL
I was riding down a hill, and an
elderly man was walking his dog. I
lost control and crashed right into
him. Thankfully, he was okay, but
I've never forgotten that day. It
reminded me how precious life
is—and how everything can change in
the blink of an eye.

LAURA
Did you just drive away?

RACHEL
No, I visited him every day for the
next five years until he sadly
passed away. Even after all these
years, I still think about him. He
was such a sweet old man.

LAURA
You must have really cared about
him.

RACHEL

We all have things we regret or wish we could take back. What matters is how we face the obstacles life throws at us. We can't let the past weigh us down like an anchor. Do you understand?

LAURA

Yea.

RACHEL

Oh, I forgot to tell you! I saved the best present for last.

Rachel reaches under Laura's bed and pulls out one last birthday present.

LAURA

It's not another blow-up doll, is it?

They both share a laugh.

RACHEL

No, and you have to promise me you'll wait to use it.

Laura looks confused but continues to unwrap the present, revealing a tiny white box. She opens it to find car keys. She looks at her mom in shock as her smile widens.

LAURA

Oh my God!

RACHEL

You have to promise me you won't drive until I've taught you and you get your license. I was thinking we could start today since the weather's supposed to be sunny the rest of the day.

LAURA

Thanks, mom!

RACHEL

Well, don't thank me yet. I expect a lot of chores to be done for the next 50 years.

They embrace with a big hug.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

Laura suddenly hears a noise coming from the hallway just outside her bedroom door. She steps forward, heart racing, and cautiously opens the door. She peeks into the hall, her eyes scanning. At the end of the hallway, a figure stands with their back to her, facing a closed door. The figure is still, but there's something eerily familiar about the shape of them. As she takes another step forward, the dim light catches something unusual—something like a mask—covering their face.

LAURA

Who are you? What are you doing in
a place like this?

Just then, the masked person turns around.

MASKED PERSON

This is my home.

Laura stands motionless, her mind racing, paralyzed by confusion. She opens her mouth but can barely force out the words.

LAURA

(frozen, voice trembling,
struggling to speak)
W-What do you mean?

MASKED PERSON

(low, firm)
You're the intruder.

As the masked person steps closer to Laura, they remove their mask, revealing that it's Teen Laura.

TEEN LAURA

(agitated, angry)
You abandoned me! You abandoned us!
You're the reason I've been stuck
here for the last 20 years!

LAURA

I never meant for any of this to
happen—I just—

TEEN LAURA

You just what!? Never cared about
what would happen to the rest of
us!?

LAURA

I didn't know what else to do. I
couldn't cope.

TEEN LAURA

(calm, disturbed)

So you ran away? Left me all alone
in this house...forever?

LAURA

I've spent the last 20 years
regretting that day—thinking about
what I could have done differently.
I've lost everything since then: my
husband, my friends... my life.

TEEN LAURA

YOU KILLED MOM!

Laura finally breaks down, tears flowing down her face.

LAURA

I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!

Teen Laura watches Adult Laura break down and begins to feel
empathy

TEEN LAURA

(calmer)

I know. That's why I'm here: to protect what's left of this
house, the last piece of my memories. Once this house
disappears, so do I. That scares me. I don't know what's
going to happen to me.

Teen Laura walks closer to Adult Laura, kneels down, and
places her hand on Laura's shoulder to comfort her.

LAURA

I thought coming back here would
change things.

TEEN LAURA

You CAN change things. Want to play
a game?

LAURA

What do you mean?

TEEN LAURA

You have two choices. Stay or
leave.

Teen Laura looks down the hall toward Mom's bedroom door.

TEEN LAURA (CONT'D)
If you enter her room, you're
trapped in there forever.

LAURA
How did you get out into the hall
if you went in there?

TEEN LAURA
I never actually went in there, but
I have this strong feeling that if
I open the door, I'll never be
allowed out. She's in there. I can
hear her screams. It's taking
everything I have not to go in and
save her, but I know that if I do,
I'll never come back.

LAURA
I don't want to hear her screams
anymore.

TEEN LAURA
The game gives you another option:
if you leave, you can finally be
free. But you have to choose. I
don't have much time left.

Laura finally stands and walks toward her mom's door,
straining to hear what might be inside. Faint screams reach
her ears, followed by the sharp sound of screeching tires.

LAURA
Mom!

Laura struggles to hold back her tears again as she places
her hand on the doorknob, as if she wants to open it. She
slowly turns her body toward Teen Laura, who stands behind
her, her hand still on the doorknob.

LAURA (CONT'D)
What will happen to you if I leave?

TEEN LAURA
You'll never see me again.

Laura faces her mom's door once again but slowly removes her
hand from the doorknob and takes a step back, retreating from
the door.

LAURA
Goodbye mom. I love you.

Laura walks down the hall, pausing at the top of the stairs to glance back at Teen Laura. They share a final moment as Teen Laura waves goodbye.