

THE *WAYWARD*

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ACT I

SCENE 1

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

ANDREW sits alone at the table furthest from the coffeehouse entrance. There are two closer tables filled with PATRONS socializing and enjoying refreshments. ANDREW nurses a cup of coffee. A second cup sits in front of the empty seat across from him.

Visibly nervous, ANDREW'S restless leg won't stop shaking. Clearly waiting for someone, he sporadically checks his watch before glancing over at the entrance door. He tries to calm himself with a deep breath before cleaning his glasses. He's startled by the sudden BUZZ of his phone sitting on the table in front of him. He checks the caller-ID with dread, taking a moment to mentally prepare before answering...

ANDREW

(into phone; nervous)
Hey, honey...Yeah, still at the office. You know, crunching those numbers...Why didn't I answer my office phone?....Because...(beat; briefly stumped)...I'm not in my office. I'm...(re: coffee mug)... Getting coffee. In the lounge...
(listens; checks watch)
...No, I don't know how much longer...(confused)...Why? I thought the menu was finalized...Your aunt's allergic to what?...Well, tell her not to eat the shells...Now, what's that supposed to mean?...Oh, don't be like that, of course I'm taking it seriously, it's our wedding...I don't like being here either, but if we want to start a family someday I need to be able to support one, right?...

MOXIE LURE enters, scantily dressed to allure any would-be customers. She turns the heads of the other patrons as she makes her way towards Andrew's table.

ANDREW (CONT'D):
(into phone;
defensive)
...I'm not being defensive...Well,
okay, yes, I am...Because I wasn't
expecting an interrogation...Yes, you
are...You're acting like I'm just
blowing you off to go do something
sordid behind your back...

Moxie stands next to Andrew, putting her hand on his
shoulder to get his attention. She smiles seductively.

ANDREW (CONT'D): (cont'd)
(into phone)
...Gotta go.

Andrew hangs up.

MOXIE
Hey there.

ANDREW
(nervous)
Hey there yourself...there...

MOXIE
Andy, right?

Andrew stands to greet Moxie.

ANDREW
(nervous)
Right. That's me. Andy. Andy Perduto.
Well, Andrew, actually, but, uh,
Andy's fine, it's...And-And you're
obviously...

MOXIE:
Moxie Lure, at your service...

Moxie offers her hand. Andrew shakes it awkwardly.

ANDREW
Moxie Lure. Awesome. Awesome. Thank
you for coming. Please, have a
seat...

Moxie and Andrew sit across from each other. Moxie takes out
a pack of cigarettes from her purse and puts one in her
mouth. She rummages for a lighter, but can't find one.

MOXIE
Got a light, Andy?

ANDREW
No, sorry, I-I don't smoke. Not sure
you're allowed to...

Moxie reaches in her cleavage and pulls out a lighter.

MOXIE
(re: lighter)
Ah...Old faithful.

Moxie lights her cigarette and takes a drag.

MOXIE (cont'd)
Nervous, Andrew?

ANDREW
What? Me? No. No, I'm...

Andrew lifts his coffee cup and saucer for a drink, it
RATTLES in the saucer from his unsteady hand.

ANDREW (cont'd)
(re: shaky hand)
....Too much caffeine. Makes me
all...Would you like something to
eat? I took the liberty of ordering
you a, you know, but you might need
it heated up or--

Moxie pulls a FLASK out of her purse.

MOXIE
Way ahead of ya.

Moxie pours the flask into the coffee. She offers it to
Andrew. He waves it away. Moxie opens a locket and scoops a
bump of cocaine with her long pinky-fingernail as Andrew's
cell phone VIBRATES on the table top. He stares at it, but
doesn't answer.

MOXIE (cont'd)
Need to take that?

Moxie sniffs the coke from her fingernail.

ANDREW
No, no it's...It's just my
girlfriend. Fiance` actually.

MOXIE
Congratulations.

ANDREW

Thanks. Wedding's in three weeks, so we're both a little...But Connie, she's-she's great. She's really doing all the heavy lifting, I'm just...(sighs)...She wouldn't understand...this.

MOXIE

Never do, kid...(takes a drag)...You know, I'm on the clock, sweetie, so, you wanna get this rolling or...?

ANDREW

Yes. Yes. Definitely. Definitely. We should get this...Let's roll it...I-I was thinking--or hoping we could, you know, I don't know, just talk. For a bit.

Moxie makes herself comfortable.

MOXIE

Your dime, baby. What do you want to talk about?

Andrew considers this a moment. He tries to speak, but nothing happens. Moxie waits patiently. Andrew tries again, scoffing at his own inability to form words.

ANDREW

You know, I can't tell you how many times I practiced this...What I'd say. How you'd respond. How I'd respond to your response...But now I...I don't even know where to start.

MOXIE

Perchance I might offer a topic?

ANDREW

Sure. Yes. Of course.

MOXIE

How'd you find me?

ANDREW

Oh...That's actually kind of a long story--

Moxie motions for Andrew to move it along...

MOXIE
(not interested)
Cliff's notes.

ANDREW
Right. Okay. Well...uh...My
parents...They're both gone. Passed
away--

MOXIE
(feigned concern)
Aw.

ANDREW
Thanks, yeah. My mother when I was
really young. My Dad...Few years now.
Going through his stuff; some old
boxes, I found the paperwork. The
adoption papers.

MOXIE
(amused)
Well, ain't that a kick in the taint.

ANDREW
Yeah, pretty much. Pretty much...Kick
to the 'ol... Anyway, over the
years...Well, it's harder than you
think to get information on
biological parents. Had to start
doing my own research. Looking into--

MOXIE
Why?

ANDREW
(confused)
Hmm?

MOXIE
Why?

Andrew takes a moment. He doesn't know how to answer.

ANDREW
(shrugs)
Normal reasons, I guess--

MOXIE
Normal reasons--

ANDREW
You know, find out who I am and--

MOXIE
Don't know who you are?

ANDREW
Well, yes, I know who I am, but, you
know...I wanted to find out where I
came from.

Moxie leans back, opening her arms to present herself.

MOXIE
Is it everything you dreamed?

ANDREW
(scoffs;
uncomfortable)
Uh...

MOXIE
Look, kiddo, what exactly you think
you're gonna get outta all this?

ANDREW
(confused)
What am I going to...Oh, no, it's not
like that. I don't...I don't want
anything from you--

MOXIE
No?

ANDREW
No--

MOXIE
I look like I got whacked with the
stupid stick?

ANDREW
(confused)
No...

MOXIE
You don't spend a few years looking
for someone if you don't want nothin'
from 'em...(takes a drag)...I know
exactly what you want. And I think
you do, too. But, like I say, it's
your dime. So we can keep dancing
'round the mullberry bush if you
want, or you can just get it over
with.

Andrew summons his courage.

ANDREW
Okay...Okay. I guess...I guess I'd
like to know why?

MOXIE
(takes a drag)
No.

ANDREW
(confused)
No?

MOXIE
You know why. You just don't like it.
What you want, what you really want,
is for me to take you by the hand and
say it ain't so. But I can't do that,
Andrew. 'Cause that'd be a lie. And I
am many, many things -- but a liar I
ain't. What I will do, for your
troubles, is cast aside any lingering
doubts...

Moxie leans close. She motions Andrew to do the same. He
does.

MOXIE (cont'd)
I gave you up -- 'cause I didn't want
you.

Andrew is frozen. That hit hard. Moxie sits back, making
herself comfortable.

MOXIE (cont'd)
Last I saw, you were wiggling around
the bottom of a toilet in some
shithole gas station. And the hardest
decision I had in that moment was
whether or not to flush.

Moxie casually takes a sip of coffee. A stricken Andrew
takes a few moments before sitting back.

MOXIE (cont'd)
Wish there was more to it. Something
more...I don't know...Disney? But,
yeah, that's pretty much it. Work
hazard. That's all.

ANDREW
(confused)
Work hazard?

MOXIE

The acceptable risks of my chosen profession: a bun occasionally gets popped in the 'ol oven. Kinda thing you usually take care of...(shrugs) ...Sometimes you don't get around to it. Hell, if I knew you'd be knockin' on my door a few years down the road...

Moxie takes another sip as Andrew tries to regain his composure.

ANDREW

And...(clears throat)...My...uh...My father?

Moxie stares in disbelief. She can't help but smirk at Andrew's naivete as she shakes her head in dismay.

MOXIE

Any one of a hundred guys.

The wind is taken from Andrew's sails.

MOXIE (cont'd)

But, hey, if it's a walk down memory lane you're a-lookin' for, let's see...

Moxie mixes more liquor from the flask into her coffee as she thinks back...

MOXIE (cont'd)

...It was the blessed night of your birth. Contractions kicked in on my way for some smokes. Snorted a few lines to dull the pain -- completely medicinal. Stopped at a gas station. Plopped you out. Grabbed a forty...(air quotes)... "forgot to pay for it"...and darn it all if the cops don't drag my ass to county. Children's Services did the rest...

Moxie pauses for a drink. a WAITRESS enters with a pot of coffee and attends the other tables.

MOXIE (cont'd)

And I'll tell ya, Andy, at the end of the day, it was a goddamn relief. I was barely twenty years old, I couldn't handle another kid.

Moxie takes a drink. She notices Andrew's shocked expression.

MOXIE (cont'd)
(beat; realizing)
Oh. You didn't know.

Andrew quietly shakes his head. WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS:
Hi. Can I get anyone anything?

MOXIE:
Top me off here, would ya, sweetie?

Waitress pours more coffee in Moxie's mug. She offers the same to Andrew.

WAITRESS:
Sir?

Andrew politely waves it away.

WAITRESS: (cont'd)
I'm sorry, ma'am, there's no smoking allowed.

MOXIE:
No problem...

Moxie tosses her cigarette into the Waitress' coffee pot. Waitress stares at her pot in disbelief and simply leaves.

Moxie makes sure she's gone before lighting up another cigarette.

ANDREW
How many?

MOXIE
(takes a drag)
Hmm? Oh. Right. Three. Two girls and another boy.

ANDREW
And you--you kept them? You raised them?

MOXIE
Tried making lemonade outta those friggin' lemons. Thought of it as an investment. You know, like a retirement plan.
(MORE)

MOXIE (cont'd)
Figured it might be best to have
someone who could take care of me in
my golden years. Or at least be a
compatible organ donor.

ANDREW
Where are they now?

MOXIE
Shit, let's see...Your brother Joey
thought it'd be easier to skip town
than pay his bookies. Cops found
pieces of him in a metal drum
floating down the river. Your sister
Susie OD'ed before she was twelve.
Another tragic tale of wasted youth.
And my eldest gal took up the family
business last I heard. Fell off the
radar after that. Hey, maybe you can
look her up next, huh? Have a little
family reunion.

Moxie chuckles to herself at the thought as she finishes her
coffee. Andrew can only sit in stunned silence.

MOXIE (cont'd)
So...What else you want to talk
about?

Andrew sullenly shakes his head. He's got nothing.

MOXIE (cont'd)
(checks watch)
Welp, then, I guess that's about
that...

She drops her cigarette in her mug and stands to leave.

MOXIE (cont'd)
It's been a trip, Andy. Thanks for
the coffee, good luck with the
wedding, and, uh, keep on keeping on.

Andrew is too stricken to respond as Moxie heads for the
door until...

ANDREW
(low)
Wait...(louder)...WAIT!

Moxie stops at the door. Andrew takes a moment to compose
himself.

ANDREW (cont'd)
(sheepishly)
Come with me...

Moxie stares in confusion. Other patrons look on curiously. Andrew gathers his courage and stands.

ANDREW (cont'd)
It doesn't have to be this way. You don't have to go back to all...that. Come with me. You can meet Connie. You can meet everyone. All of us. We can be a...(falters; catches himself)...Things -- can be different.

Moxie stands quiet for a moment, as if considering Andrew's offer. She finally approaches Andrew, standing before him -- and SMACKS him hard across the face.

MOXIE
Only decent thing I ever did in my life was abandon you. Don't you dare try and take that away from me. Don't you ever.

Moxie stares Andrew down. She turns to leave. Andrew grabs her arm, pulls her back -- and embraces her.

At first Moxie doesn't know how to respond. She finally returns the embrace. Andrew steps away and walks back his table. Moxie looks on longingly as if wanting to say something, but is unable. She turns and leaves.

Andrew sits, taking in all that has happened. His phone BUZZES. He picks it up, about to answer. He decides not to. The phone continues to BUZZ on the table as Andrew rests his chin on his folded hands in front of him; lost in thought.

THE END

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANDREW PERDUTO: A nerdish, kind-hearted, naive young businessman in his early twenties mere weeks away from marriage.

MOXIE LURE: A veteran prostitute in her forties, street-wise and cynical.

WAITRESS: Friendly coffeehouse employee

COFFEEHOUSE PATRONS: At least four, no more than six