

KAREN

This document was created to help characterize Karen Reynolds, our protagonists' estranged mother, in Episode 2 and Episode 5 of *Life is Strange 2*.

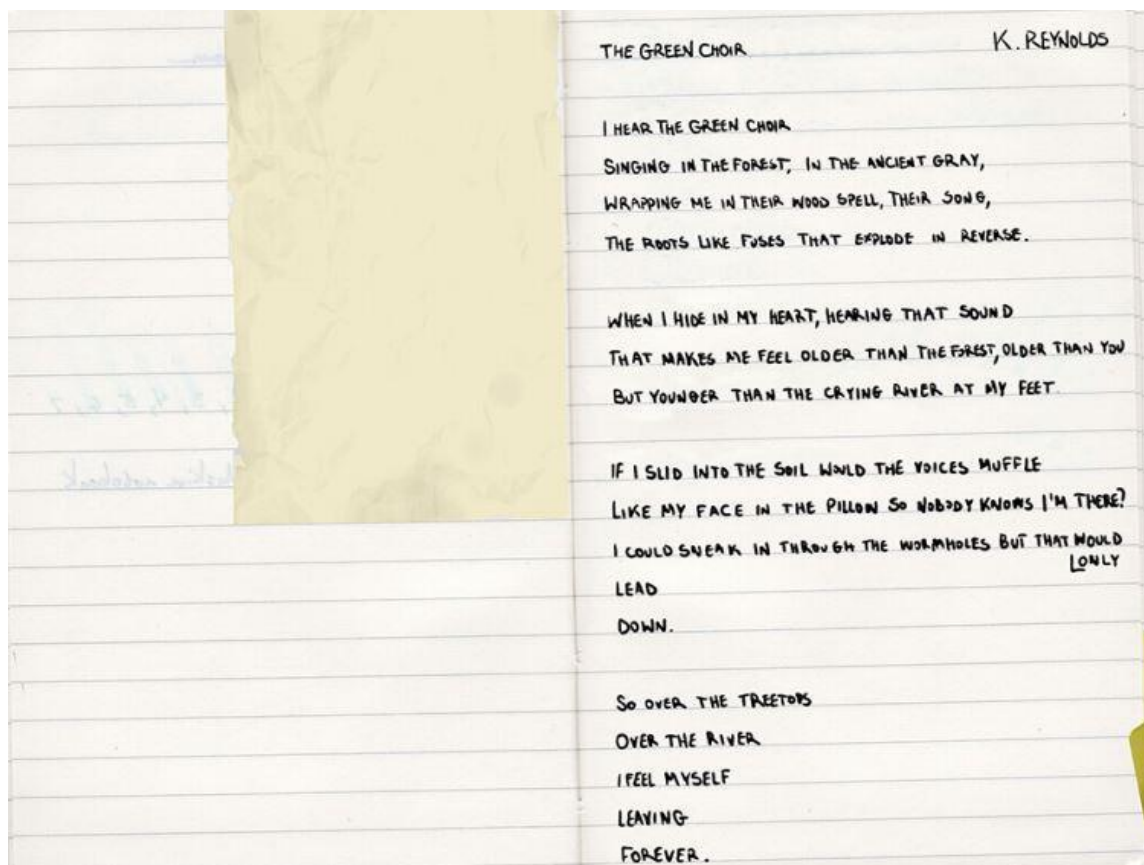
Summary:

Starting as a lonely teen who dreamed of a life of escapism, Karen will rebel and try to take the system – and her fate- by surprise. She will be slapped in the face with reality and hit rock bottom multiple times before ultimately finding balance in a life more aligned with her deepest desires.

Background:

Karen's background is that of a privileged kid who was always painfully conscious she'd been living in a bubble. An only and pampered child, she suffered from loneliness, and was not satisfied with her semi-rural life, cooped up with down-to-earth and fairly old-school parents. Karen was always required to make a picture-perfect public impression by being a straight-A student and staying out of trouble - something she managed to do without much effort or thrill.

But, deep down, Karen was craving freedom and adventure. As a teenager, Karen already harbored an escapist nature. To fight off loneliness, she became a dreamy and angsty teen who escaped her uninspiring routine by making big mental plans for her future. She didn't want a life all mapped out. She dreamed of running away and making a big splash.



A poem (written by writer Christian Divine) that the player can find in Karen's old teenage room. The piece highlights her spleen and her desire for escapism.



Karen Reynolds as a teen (mood board)

TIMELINE

1979: Karen is born in Beaver Creek, Oregon.

Her dad, Stephen, is an esteemed fireman. Her mother, Claire, is a strict nurse who's very involved in town and church events. They are both respected members of their community.



A quiet suburban life with strict, loving parents

1997: After graduating high school, Karen leaves Beaver Creek and heads for Seattle. She starts a university course in Creative Writing.

(FROM EP01) 1998: Karen meets Esteban at a concert in a bar.

(FROM EP01) 1999: After only dating for a few months, Karen and Esteban elope and move in together. Karen and her parents have a huge argument about Esteban's ethnicity. She cuts them both off her life.

(FROM EP01) 2000: Sean is born.

(FROM EP01) 2008: Daniel is born.

(FROM EP01) Late 2008: Karen leaves Esteban and takes off to live in New York City.

She goes back to school. She wants to be a writer. On the East Coast, she reunites with a childhood friend, Emma, who works in an art gallery. Emma introduces Karen to worldly, intellectual, and artistic spheres in New York.

To pay for her classes and expensive creative writing workshops, Karen works as a barista and as a clerk in a movie theater. Some of her better-off friends, who still live off their parents' financial support, tease her for her bohemian lifestyle.

Karen struggles to make ends meet. Her rent and social outings absorb a huge part of her income, but she is determined to take responsibility for her decisions.

She is convinced that, as soon as she is published, it will all be worth a few sacrifices.

NEW YORK DAYS



Social outings in the company of worldly friends accustomed to a more upscale lifestyle.

Early 2009: Emma provides Karen with the contact of Anthony Moon, a friend who works in publishing. After reading her samples, he accepts to publish her first novel and grants her a \$30 000 advance. She must be done with her manuscript in one year. Karen is no longer called Reynolds or Diaz – she signs her contract under her author's name (TBD).

Early 2010: Failing to finish her book, Moon Publishing drops her. Karen must refund the advance that she was granted.

Karen works herself to death to pay off her debt to the publisher, but NYC life expenses get the better of her. Karen ends up being kicked out by her landlord.

She begs her friend Emma to take her in while she recovers financially. Emma accepts, reluctantly, as she is still mad at Karen for letting her publisher friend down. Rooming with Emma is not easy on her pride and morale, but Karen is grateful for her friend and tries to keep a cool head.



Fall 2010: Emma, who met a man a few months ago, tells Karen she is engaged to be married. She will no longer be able to accommodate her, as she's moving in with her fiancé.

Karen is desperate and soon to be homeless. Her posh friends no longer talk to her: in their eyes, she's a leech and a failed artist.

Winter 2010: As her debt to Moon Publishing is nowhere near being paid off, Karen contacts Esteban to ask for his help, but he rebuffs her. She's made her choice and left him to raise their two sons on his own. And even if he had wanted to help her, he couldn't: his salary is barely enough to keep the three of them afloat as it is. Karen doesn't blame him. She blames herself for playing that card.

As a last resort, Karen gets in touch with her parents. They accept to help her pay off her debt entirely, as long as she moves back near them and fights Esteban for custody of her kids. Karen hangs up the phone. Stephen finally gets in touch secretly – for Claire is still too worked up after their last conversation – and helps Karen out with a few thousand dollars. He makes it very clear that it's a one-time thing.

Winter 2010-2011: Heartbroken, homeless, and her literary dreams shattered, Karen leaves New York City. She has found work in a huge amusement park down in Florida and rents a room in a seedy, long-stay motel near the park. She works there for two years.

Working with families 12 hours a day, Karen is overwhelmed with contradicting feelings: she feels guilty for bailing on her kids, but she realizes she was never cut out for motherhood or family life. In a way, she is relieved: there is no way she could have kept pretending they were all a happy family. She would have made her husband and kids miserable. She finds solace in that thought.

But Karen still feels out of place. Her work colleagues are all students or twenty-somethings. What is nothing more than a short-lived, fun summer job experience for them is now her whole life - and the only way for her to pay off her debt.

TWO YEARS IN FLORIDA



Karen lives in a seedy long-stay motel for two years while she gets back on her feet.

<https://www.thrillist.com/travel/nation/working-at-walt-disney-world-magic-kingdom-epcot>

<https://www.hercampus.com/school/nottingham/what-its-really-work-walt-disney-world>



The player can find Karen's old name tag in her trailer in Away, Arizona

2012: Karen meets Maggie, a 56-year-old who just moved next door. Maggie is a “retired” prostitute, who now works as a cleaning lady in a nearby motel. Maggie’s freedom and glibness fascinate Karen. They become good friends. Maggie takes Karen under her wing and helps her go through her depressive bouts.

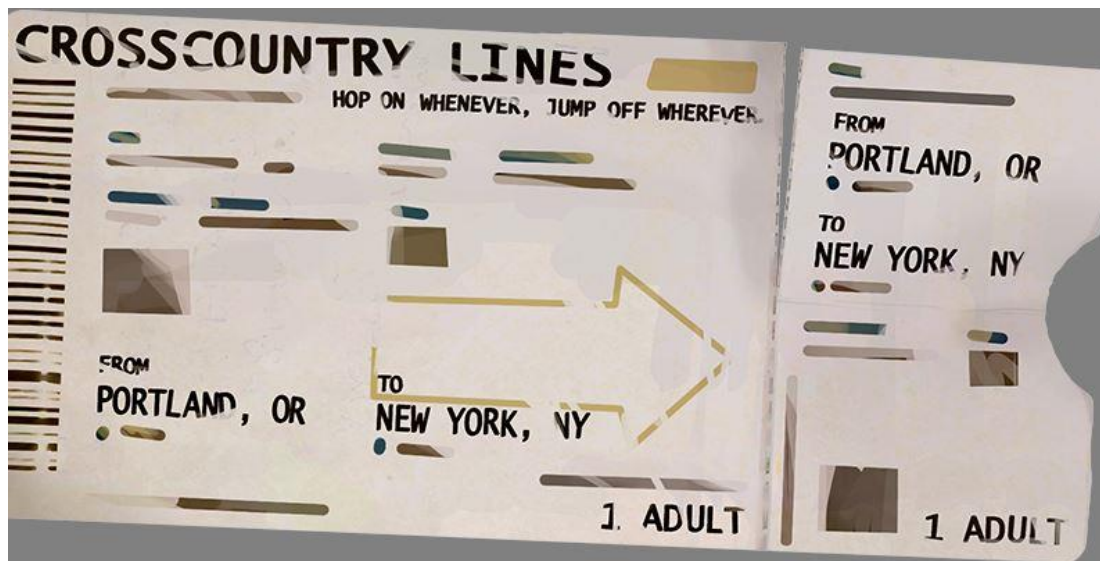


At some point, Karen finally pays off her debt. It’s a huge weight off her chest.

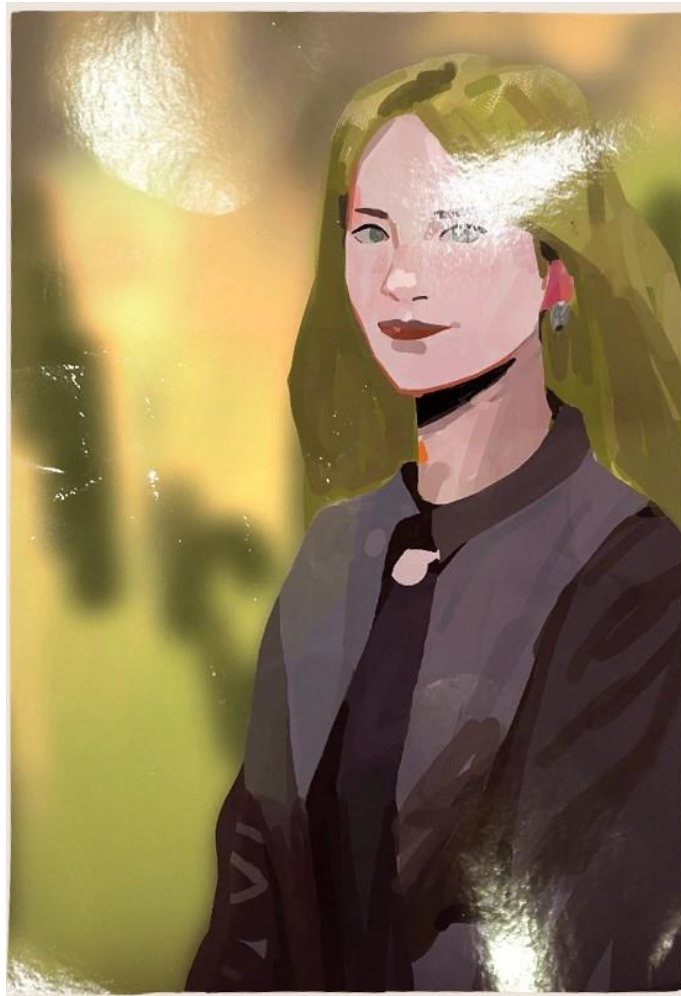
Maggie tells Karen about a “hippie” community in the middle of the desert, in Arizona. Back in the day, Maggie stayed there for a bit, with a former lover. They talk about moving there together.

2013: Maggie and Karen move to *Away, Arizona*. Maggie dies shortly after.

Episode 5 starts as Sean and Daniel get accustomed to spending time in *Away* with their mother, on their way to Mexico.



Collectible found in Episode 2: As a teen, Karen dreamed of moving to NYC and becoming a writer. When she and Esteban split up, it is there she finds refuge, thinking NYC will help her pursue her lifelong dreams. But instead, she strikes a dangerous deal.



Even though they're not in touch, Stephen Reynolds still keeps a picture of his daughter Karen in his study.



Karen and Maggie in Florida



Karen finally settled in Away, Arizona, where she feels she most belongs.

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