

# I AND YOU

A DRAMA BY

Lauren Gunderson



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*For*  
*Sarah Woolf, Jonathan Oakley, and Thomas Hauk*

*Thank you, Nathan.*

*And your very flesh*  
*Shall be a great poem.*

—Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

## Cast of Characters

ANTHONY, a boy, 17. He is neat, poised, mature for his age. African-American. He's an "A" student, a team player, a nice guy. He's not really great around girls. He takes his homework very seriously. When he likes something (jazz music) he is all in. Throughout the whole play he looks at Caroline like he's trying to figure her out. Like he really needs to know who she is.

CAROLINE, a girl, 17. She is in comfy clothing, she does not expect company, she is sick but mainly just looks a little weak and frumpy. She doesn't go out. She is cynical, over it, does not let a stray "feeling" near the surface. White.

## Casting Note

The race of each character can be altered. The only essentiality is that the characters not be the *same* race.

## Setting

Now.

In your city. (I imagine Atlanta, Georgia.)

In Caroline's room. A girl's room but not girly. Lots of tech.

This is the room of a person with a serious illness, but she tries to limit the look of sickness. There is no IV or hospital bed. There is a small tray or table with her meds and a medical alarm.

## Production Notes

Walt Whitman's 1881 edition of "Song of Myself" is italicized or in quotes throughout the script to denote direct quotation.

Hyphens denote cutoffs.

Ellipses denote uncertainty.

Stair-step line progression denotes speedy line pickups.

For high school productions, curse words may be replaced with: "crap/crappy" for "shit/bullshit/shitty"; "what!" for "what the hell!"; "screw you" for "fuck you"; "jerk" for "asshole", and simply omit "fucking."

*Grammar Note:*

A character's emotional and vocal emphasis should attempt to build the progression from normal to intense suggested by the following punctuation and fonts.

Normal

Elevated!

*Intensified*

REALLY INTENSE

THE MOST INTENSE!

*More Here:*

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Rachael Tice and Thaddeus Fitzpatrick in *I and You*, Olney Theatre Center, Olney, Maryland (2014). Photo: Stan Barouh.

# I AND YOU

by Lauren Gunderson

## ONE.

*(Caroline's room—a girl's room—busy, colorful but not girly—a big many-pillowed bed—laptop, speakers. Pop music BLASTS through the room.)*

ANTHONY *has just shown up*—CAROLINE *has just turned to the door—why the hell is he here. She might brandish a brush.*)

CAROLINE. *(Yelling over the music:)* WhoaWhoaWhoa, what the hell!

ANTHONY. *(Over the music:)* “I and this mystery—”

CAROLINE. *(Over the music:)* WHAT DO YOU WANT?

ANTHONY. *(Over the music:)* “Here we stand.”

CAROLINE. *(Over the music:)*      ANTHONY. *(Over the music:)*  
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT IS      Wait! Sorry! I'm sorry!  
THIS? WHAT?

*(She slams off the music. CAROLINE is defensive, ANTHONY calming.)*

ANTHONY. I'm sorry. Hi.

CAROLINE. What. Is going. On.

ANTHONY. Ok. So. “I and this mystery. Here we stand.”

CAROLINE. Here we *stand*. In my *room*. *Why?*

ANTHONY. Uh— No— See. It's Whitman.

CAROLINE. Who's Whitman?

ANTHONY. The quote's from Walt Whitman. From *Leaves of Grass*.

CAROLINE. Leaves of what? Why are saying that in my room? Who are you?

ANTHONY. I'm Anthony—sorry— Hello, I'm Anthony.

CAROLINE. Who's Anthony? *(Calling:)* MOM. *(To him:)* Who's Anthony?

ANTHONY. Anthony from school, Jesus.

CAROLINE. *Why are you here?* Are you like a bad guy or like a delivery guy or like—what kind of guy are you?

**ANTHONY.** I'm just a guy that has our project.

**CAROLINE.** A project? A *project*? (*Calling to Mom:*) MOM, I'M SERIOUS COME HERE NOW.

**ANTHONY.** Your mom just gave me cookies! (*Revealing plate of oatmeal raisin cookies.*) I just met your mom—at the door—which she opened—for me—because I'm Anthony from school. And she gave me cookies, and she said you were in your room, and she said I should just come up.

**CAROLINE.** Just come up? Just come right up? (*To Mom:*) THIS IS NOT YOUR ROOM, MOM. (*To ANTHONY:*) And those are not your cookies, *guy*.

**ANTHONY.** Ok, look. I'm sorry if this is weird, but she pointed upstairs—I came upstairs because she pointed, and we have work to do so—

**CAROLINE.** Is this a trick? Is this a joke?

**ANTHONY.** No. What? No. I'm here so we can work.

**CAROLINE.** WHAT WORK? I DON'T WORK.

**ANTHONY.** We have that project we're supposed to do—the American Lit project—for American Lit.

**CAROLINE.** Miss Branson sent you?

**ANTHONY.** Yes, Miss Branson, she said she emailed you.

**CAROLINE.** Who checks email anymore?

**ANTHONY.** OhMyGod.

**CAROLINE.** There are like forty cooler ways to communicate.

**ANTHONY.** *Not for Miss Branson.*

**CAROLINE.** *Look, pushy.* I wasn't expecting you, you were not expected, and I don't understand or approve of this invasion so you're going to explain this to me before I...

**ANTHONY.** What.

**CAROLINE.** Pummel...you.

**ANTHONY.** I don't think you're going to pummel me.

**CAROLINE.** I have pummeled before.

**ANTHONY.** I'm like twice your size.

**CAROLINE.** (*Re: herself:*) Small but mighty. Like a dachshund.

**ANTHONY.** A what?

CAROLINE. They bite. Your heels.

ANTHONY. Ok. Great. See. I just came here for homework—which *I don't want to do* either—but I have to and so do you and here's my shitty posterboard which should prove: one) that this is not a joke, and two) how much I need your help.

*(He reveals a really crappy half-finished, not artistically done tri-fold poster board with a picture of Walt Whitman somewhere.)*

CAROLINE. That is super shitty.

ANTHONY. ThankYouHelpMe.

CAROLINE. Why would I help you? In what planet in what universe would I help with a school project when I'm not, in fact, *in* school right now. Like at all.

ANTHONY. I know that, but—

CAROLINE. 'Cause I'm kinda sick. Like everyone knows I'm sick and everyone is freaked out about it and no one comes here and brings—what is that?

*(Points to his bag.)*

ANTHONY. Waffle fries.

CAROLINE. And brings waffle fries and bad posters to my house—So why are you bringing poems and fries and posters to me, in my room, in my house—why are you doing anything in my room, in my house right now, guyIdon'tknow whatthehell.

ANTHONY. Ok. I'm Anthony. Which I might have mentioned. And I have our assignment for American Lit, which she was supposed to email you about. And I didn't hear back from her or from you, so finally, like an idiot, I just came over, *in person*, which people still do. So please, *please*, can you calm down, pitch in, or at least sign the poster so it *looks* like we worked together.

CAROLINE. I'm not signing that piece of crap.

ANTHONY. Then I'm not leaving.

CAROLINE. Then I'm having some of your fries.

*(Pause.)*

ANTHONY. Accepted.

CAROLINE. Well. Accepted. Back.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** Also why did you say that weird “mystery” thing when you came in?

**ANTHONY.** Making an entrance, I don’t know, girls are supposed to like poems.

**CAROLINE.** Like *love*y poems, duh. P.S. That poster is tragic, did you pass preschool? P.P.S. I’m not doing your project.

**ANTHONY.** You don’t have to do anything except like—not kick me out right away. Can we try that?

**CAROLINE.** I mean. We can try. Gimme fry.

*(He offers her the fries. She eyes him.  
He makes a point of eyeing her back. She offers him a cookie.  
They eat. He looks at her.)*

**CAROLINE.** What.

**ANTHONY.** Nothing.

**CAROLINE.** You’re looking at me.

**ANTHONY.** There’s no one else to look at.

**CAROLINE.** Well don’t hover in the corner like a weirdo, you can come in. Come in. *(She starts to make herself look more presentable.)* It’s a mess or—it’s always a mess—whatever. Don’t look at me.

*(ANTHONY looks anywhere but her.  
Lands on the plush turtle on her bed.)*

**ANTHONY.** Ok. Nice turtle.

**CAROLINE.** Don’t bring turtle in to this.

**ANTHONY.** ComeOn, would you give me a chance here. Why do you assume that you don’t like me?

**CAROLINE.** Why do you assume you’re so likeable?

**ANTHONY.** Wow, you are impossible.

**CAROLINE.** True.

**ANTHONY.** Why?

**CAROLINE.** What?

**ANTHONY.** *Why* are you impossible?

**CAROLINE.** It makes a shitty life a lot more fun.

*(Pause. That was meant to scare him away. He doesn’t flinch.  
He doesn’t look away. He looks right at her.)*

ANTHONY. Ok.

CAROLINE. "Ok?" That my life's super shitty? ThanksSoMuch.

ANTHONY. That not what I meant. It sucks. I get that it sucks. I'm just saying that I'm not scared of...it. You're upset, you push. I get it—I'm saying that I get it.

CAROLINE. I really doubt that you get it. And I'm not "upset," I'm sick.

ANTHONY. I'm just saying that I understand why you push people.

CAROLINE. Thanks for that, but you don't understand me, and I don't "push people," and you should go.

ANTHONY. I'm sorry, come on— No— I was trying to say that I see where you're coming from and— Fine. Be impossible. Be anything you want, I don't care. I just don't want to get an "F" just because I couldn't convince you that Walt Whitman is amazing, which like all of humanity agrees on.

CAROLINE. Uh huh.

ANTHONY. Don't hate the poem, it's a good poem, a *great* poem. A really long old great poem.

CAROLINE. You're making it worse.

ANTHONY. Please just go with me on this. You don't have to be nice to me, but be nice to Walt Whitman.

CAROLINE. Wait. Oh god. Ohhhh god. Did my mother set this up? Did she do this? She would totally do this—make up some stupid thing to make me feel *involved*. I have a life, ok. I text. A lot.

ANTHONY. I promise I just want an "A" on this project.

CAROLINE. Then fix your poster!

ANTHONY. That was going to be your job!

CAROLINE. Oh yeah, well, if this is a scheme to make me feel included, (*Yelling to her mother:*) *it's not working*.

ANTHONY. Whoawhoawhoa, dachshund. There is no scheme. There is a guy with a snack. I am that guy and this is that snack and there is an email and you should check it and maybe find some super clear information and maybe—just maybe—though it seems you really like the high stakes perspective—try to de-freak yourself out.

CAROLINE. I don't care if there's an email, if there is an email it's gonna be about a book I don't want to read, and the only good thing about this bullshit is that I don't have to read anything I don't want to.

**ANTHONY.** Well I do, and I have school in the morning, and I'm sorry you're sick, and I'm sorry you're impossible, but you can take your *small-dog rage* and put in on YouTube because I don't actually have time for this—*OhMyGodGirlsAreAwful*.

(Pause.)

**CAROLINE.** Girls are pretty awful. (Pause.) Also you're in my room so we should be friends. Facebook. Check it.

**ANTHONY.** When in the five minutes that I have been here have you had time to friend me on Facebook?

**CAROLINE.** I haven't friended you, *IForgotYourNameAlready*.

**ANTHONY.** Anthony.

**CAROLINE.** *Anthony.* You have to friend *me*.  
Friend me Friend me Friend me.

**ANTHONY.** *I will friend you when I'm not in the room trying desperately to be friends with you.*

(CAROLINE maybe smiles at him. A "friend me" smile.  
A loud, short BEEP in the room.)

**CAROLINE.** Ugh—are you kidding me?

**ANTHONY.** What's that?

**CAROLINE.** Fire thing.

**ANTHONY.** Smoke detector?

**CAROLINE.** All day. My dad's out and my mom doesn't know where any of the *two* things you need to change the batteries are.

**ANTHONY.** Do you want me to help? Or something. Or whatever.

(Small pause.)

**CAROLINE.** Uh. Yeah. Thanks...newguy.

**ANTHONY.** Sure. But I might have to stay...for a minute.

**CAROLINE.** You can stay. God, that beeping is becoming—like—part of my spine. Stay. Yes.

**ANTHONY.** Great. And I fix stuff like this all the time at my house so it's not a big deal. My dad is real smart and everything—like professor smart, he teaches at the university, so he knows *nothing* that helps change a battery.

**CAROLINE.** Well you're a handy intruder, aren't cha.

**ANTHONY.** It's not that complicated to fix.

CAROLINE. It's housework. I like *just* figured out what Woolite is.

ANTHONY. Do you have a nine-volt?

CAROLINE. Uh...

ANTHONY. It's a battery?

CAROLINE. How many "A's" does it need?

ANTHONY. No. These are the boxy ones. Nine-volt.

CAROLINE. Yeah I don't know these things. I'll just text my mom.

(ANOTHER BEEP.)

CAROLINE. *(To the alarm:) You are ruining my life. (To ANTHONY:) You see what I deal with? My body hates me, my house hates me, and here you come with homework.*

*(He has removed the battery from smoke detector.)*

ANTHONY. *I and this mystery, here we stand.*

CAROLINE. Ok—really? Do we need to keep saying that? It was weird before it's weird now.

ANTHONY. It's not weird, I like it.

CAROLINE. Why?

ANTHONY. I dunno.

CAROLINE. What does it even mean?

ANTHONY. I just like it, I don't know what it—like—means. It's an American classic.

CAROLINE. I don't get it.

ANTHONY. It's what all classics are about. It's about death.

CAROLINE. Yeah, that's what I need more of.

ANTHONY. Or life.

CAROLINE. OhMyGod.

ANTHONY. Or it's all a mystery.

CAROLINE. This is why I hate poetry. They ask you what *you* think it's about and then they're like, "*wrong*, it's these other fourteen things that are *not* obvious."

ANTHONY. You do not hate poetry.

CAROLINE. I really do.

ANTHONY. How do you hate poetry?

CAROLINE. With verve.

ANTHONY. *Well this is a poetry project. About poetry.* And this poem is actually, fundamentally awesome if you *stop hating on it for no reason—ugh—* I can't believe I signed up for this— Just— Whatever—I'll do it by myself, ok? Just— Excuse me for interrupting your verve.

*(He starts to go.)*

CAROLINE. Wait. What does "sign up" mean?

ANTHONY. What does what? I never know what you're talking about.

CAROLINE. You said: "I signed up for this." Just a second ago.

ANTHONY. No I didn't.

CAROLINE. Yes you did—what is "this"? Is "this" me? Did you sign up for *me*?

ANTHONY. Stop making me sound creepy when I'm not.

CAROLINE. Then tell me what you signed up for. Is this Key Club, extra credit, what?

ANTHONY. It's not Key Club.

CAROLINE. *Then what did you sign up for?!*

ANTHONY. *I just asked if we could be partners.* I volunteered. I asked. Whatever.

*(Pause.)*

CAROLINE. You asked.

ANTHONY. Yes.

CAROLINE. For me.

ANTHONY. Well that makes it sound weird.

CAROLINE. It's kinda weird.

ANTHONY. No it's not.

CAROLINE. Why did you ask?

ANTHONY. I don't know.

CAROLINE. But it's not extra credit?

ANTHONY. No.

CAROLINE. Charity for sicko?

ANTHONY. *No.*

CAROLINE. THEN WHY.

ANTHONY. I DON'T KNOW I JUST WANTED TO... You're this mystery at school, and I thought you'd get it, and I was...curious... about you.

(Pause.)

CAROLINE. So we're dating?

ANTHONY. WHAT? NO.

CAROLINE. KiddingGross.

ANTHONY. OhMyGod.

CAROLINE. Totally kidding.

ANTHONY. Jesus.

CAROLINE. That's what you get for homework bombing a sick girl. Now. What do you mean "I would get it"? I would get *this*?

ANTHONY. Uh. Well. Yeah. I just thought *you of all people* would totally get this stuff. You were gonna be my secret weapon but you are really sucking at that.

CAROLINE. First, you suck at picking weapons. Second, why would I "get it"? Why *Me Of All People*?

ANTHONY. Because. All the shit you've been through? The poem is about...how the body is beautiful. Despite pain and death and broken stuff, there's still life, and I thought you'd—I don't know... appreciate it.

CAROLINE. Yeah you obviously don't know. You thought I'd have some wisdom? I'm your tragic fairy of hope? Screw you.

ANTHONY. No—that's not—wait, I thought you'd understand what the guy means when he writes: "your very *flesh* shall be a great poem"!

CAROLINE. *I don't want to talk about flesh or bodies or any of it, ok.* Why the hell would *I Of All People* want to talk about that—I don't—and I'm not your Sick Kid Poster Child and Walt Whitman can bite me. (Pause, looking at his poster:) And yes I do realize that I am literally your Poster Child.

ANTHONY. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way. I just thought... Ok, what if I told you it's not—like—a nice poem? If you'd read it you'd see that it's wild and weird and truly *not nice*. Which I'm starting to get is your thing. Ok just...lemme read this one thing.

CAROLINE. No.

ANTHONY. One thing.

**CAROLINE.** No. This is stupid. Really don't—

*(Then he goes for it—reads from the book, performs this for her—launches in like he is Walter Whitman himself—talking to her, talking about her, yeahyeahyeah!)*

**ANTHONY.**

*“The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me—  
he complains of my gab and my loitering.  
I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.”*

*(Pause. She liked that. Won't admit it.)*

**CAROLINE.** Ok.

Well.

What is a “barbaric yawp”?

**ANTHONY.** It's. Uh. Like your biggest, loudest...yawp. I don't know, but it's apparently on a roof. Crazy right?

**CAROLINE.** Lemme see that.

*(Hands her a hard copy of Leaves of Grass.  
She looks at that passage.  
She likes it.  
Getting to her computer...)*

Ok I'm not saying that I'm doing the project, I'm just saying...  
What do I Google?

**ANTHONY.** Or—you know—read.

*(She growls at this “reading.”)*

Just glance at it, just skim.

**CAROLINE.** *(Reluctantly being nice to him:)* Do you want a Coke or something? While I read?

**ANTHONY.** Uh. Yeah. That'd be great.

**CAROLINE.** Cool. I'll text my mom. *(Gets out her phone.)*

**ANTHONY.** I can run down and get it.

**CAROLINE.** Nono, it's like drive-thru.

**ANTHONY.** Ok.

**CAROLINE.** It's an efficient system. And my mom says God hates shouting. P.S. Don't touch my turtle. He's easily startled.

**ANTHONY.** You are the strangest person in the world.

**CAROLINE.** Certainly North America.

ANTHONY. So. Um. The project? Which I know you're not doing, but I thought you might want to consider as you read...is about pronouns.

CAROLINE. Uh...

ANTHONY. (*Getting out a worn notebook—reading the assignment:*) Yeah. "A critical analysis of Whitman's use of the pronouns 'I' and 'You' in 'Song of Myself.'"

CAROLINE. Pronouns.

ANTHONY. He's very big on pronouns.

CAROLINE. How can you be "big" on pronouns? They're pronouns.

ANTHONY. Well—

CAROLINE. Is there a lot of confusion about what these things accomplish?

ANTHONY. No I think—at least this is what the project is about—it's about what he *means* when he says "I" or "you" or "we." The meanings shift during the poem. And I think we're supposed to track it.

CAROLINE. Track it.

ANTHONY. Yeah.

CAROLINE. See? I hate poetry.

ANTHONY. Nonono wait—

CAROLINE. I mean nobody else gets to "change grammar"—

ANTHONY. Wait.

CAROLINE. "*A lot.*"

ANTHONY. OkYes it's kinda crazy, but don't worry about the grammar, just focus on the *point* of the poem. The point is unity, and beauty, and—

CAROLINE. Okokok it's the best poem in the world. Just. Gimme a week and I'll read it.

ANTHONY. Oh. So. Yeah. I...can't do that.

CAROLINE. What does that mean.

ANTHONY. I can't...give you a week.

CAROLINE. I bet if you try real hard you can.

ANTHONY. No. Because it's due... I mean... Tomorrow.

CAROLINE. *It's due tomorrow?*

**ANTHONY.** Sorry.

**CAROLINE.** What the hell!?

**ANTHONY.** Sorry! I just— I don't know.

**CAROLINE.** It's due tomorrow—are you insane?!

**ANTHONY.** I don't know how it happened! I was busy and then it was due.

**CAROLINE.** Then *you* can do it by your-damn-self. I am not—no—ok—you can go—just go— WhatIsHappening?

**ANTHONY.** I'm so sorry— I just kept waiting and then it was due tomorrow and then it was weird to barge in.

**CAROLINE.** It's weirder now!

**ANTHONY.** I know—

**CAROLINE.** I'm not doing this for you.

**ANTHONY.** Of course not—and I'm sorry and I've done most of it already if you wanna just use mine, and you don't have to worry. And I'm sorry— Seriously I can seriously do the rest on my own and I'll take the blame.

**CAROLINE.** YES YOU WILL.

*(Pause. Tension. Is she going to kick him out? Unclear.)*

**ANTHONY.** I'm really sorry.

*(Pause. Is he gonna go?)*

I'm sorry.

*(He starts to go—she stops him with...)*

**CAROLINE.** WAIT.

I told Miss B I could keep up. And I'm gonna keep up. So why don't take your damn smellyfood to the corner, and—  
*It's due tomorrow? Come on.*

**ANTHONY.** I. Am. Sorry.

**CAROLINE.** Yes. You. Are.

*(She looks at him. He looks at her. They are connecting.  
Her look that was a glare is now...interest.  
A shift in purpose.)*

Wait.

OhWaitDon'tMove.

(CAROLINE walks up to him, taking a picture with her phone of some paperclips or something near his arm.)

ANTHONY. What are you doing?

CAROLINE. Capturing— Hold on.

ANTHONY. Capturing what?

CAROLINE. Detritus— Hold on.

(She takes the picture.)

ANTHONY. What was that about?

CAROLINE. The small stuff. Minutiae. It's what I do. It's arty. I like it.

(Shows him the picture on her phone.

It might appear on her desktop computer so audiences can see.

He actually thinks it's pretty neat.)

ANTHONY. You did that just now?

CAROLINE. Yeah, I'm a ninja with that mess.

ANTHONY. Wow. Really.

CAROLINE. The light was cool. It's easy. Whatever.

ANTHONY. Yeah I would have never seen that. That's like...that's good.

CAROLINE. Well then I have a gift. And a lot of time to waste.

ANTHONY. Can you do that to the poster? Make it look like that? I mean creative like that. I tried to make it look good but I can barely read my own handwriting and I'm starting to think I'm more than a little color blind. Please. You don't have to do anything else. Just the poster. Please. (In the voice of "the poster board":) "Help me!"

CAROLINE. Just. Back away from the craft project.

ANTHONY. OhMyGod really?

CAROLINE. This isn't me helping, this is triage.

ANTHONY. Whatever. I just hated art class. It always made me feel like a moron. I'm like art-deficient.

CAROLINE. Yeah that's super clear. Is construction paper too advanced? How do you feel about glitter?

ANTHONY. Philosophically? I'm agnostic on glitter.

CAROLINE. (Actually finds this funny, maybe smiles a little bit:) Shut up. (Then very serious:) Glitter is amazing. (Looking at the poster...) Ok just... I'll start it.

**ANTHONY.** AwesomeGreatThankYou.

**CAROLINE.** I just can't abide...irresponsible crafting.

*(She starts to work. ANTHONY watches her. Pause.)*

**ANTHONY.** So. You've been out of school for a while, huh?

**CAROLINE.** Uh. Yeah. But I'm still gonna graduate and everything.

**ANTHONY.** That's great. Good for you. That's really great.

**CAROLINE.** Yeah—duh. Ok. Rules number one through four hundred: don't be nice to me.

**ANTHONY.** What?

**CAROLINE.** You were starting to be nice, like using that "way to go!" voice, and I'm telling you right now that I am not delicate and everyone thinks I'm delicate and it makes me wanna break glass.

**ANTHONY.** Ok. Don't be nice to you. And don't touch your turtle. And don't look at you.

**CAROLINE.** Well not while I'm texting yeah, my face looks weird.

**ANTHONY.** I'm just trying to keep it all straight.

**CAROLINE.** When everybody is so nice, nice is...fake.

*(Beat.)*

**ANTHONY.** I hear that. I do.

People are weird, right? Like sometimes my dad just laughs when he says hi to people. He's like: "Hello, Bill! Hahaha!" Why does he do that? It's not funny. It feels fake. Like you were saying. Nice can be fake.

*(Pause. She whips out her camera phone...)*

**CAROLINE.** Boo.

**ANTHONY.** What?

*(She snaps a picture of him making an unflattering "what?" face with her cell phone.)*

**CAROLINE.** PhotoTackle!

**ANTHONY.** Hey.

**CAROLINE.** That was beautiful.

*(Cackles as she proceeds to Instagram it.)*

**ANTHONY.** You're not—whoa— Are you posting that?

**CAROLINE.** Of course-alutely I am.

ANTHONY. Without a veto option? Come on!

CAROLINE. You were being nice. Something had to be done.

ANTHONY. You are making me hate the internet.

CAROLINE. Fly away little picture!

ANTHONY. Noooo. I was agreeing with you, come on.

*(It's not letting her upload the picture.)*

CAROLINE. Post, internet. Haste!

ANTHONY. See, even the internet doesn't want that picture.

CAROLINE. What is wrong with this thing? I swear to god if I lose wifi? I'd rather lose my nose.

ANTHONY. Would you put down the phone? Just put it down. *Can* you put it down? You're obsessed and you're what's wrong with America.

CAROLINE. Um hello. This is my lifeline to—like—life.

ANTHONY. Is it? Is it really?

CAROLINE. Yeahitis, I don't see anyone like at all anymore.

ANTHONY. Except for right now. The time in which I am here, seeing you.

*(Small pause. She hears him. Maybe puts down the phone...)*

CAROLINE. Well. The only people that get that upset about phones are geriatric. Take your Anthony-suit off, grandpa.

ANTHONY. *(Picking up Whitman's book:)* I'm just saying. The thing about paper is that it generally always works. I promise if you read it, you'll love it.

CAROLINE. *(Reading the cover:)* Yeah. *Leaves of Grass*. Sounds exhilarating.

ANTHONY. I know. But ok. At first it's like everything else they assign—like “oh my god why is this so important and old” but then I was like “oh damn that's pretty cool.” I mean it's a *long* poem but—ok—he talks about humanity and America and nature, because he was writing during the Civil War right, like bullets flying by your face, so there's a lot about death and life—

CAROLINE. And grass.

ANTHONY. Yeah but it's like spiritual—like the *way* he writes is, it floats off the page—I mean he's legit crazy, like a rambling crazy homeless guy, but in this *genius* kind of way—and ok—if you're ever

afraid of dying or anything? Read this and it'll make you feel pretty great about it, 'cause Walt is like: "Hey Death. You wanna be a jerk? Fine. But you can't stop this barbaric yawp, baby!"  
Or whatever.

*(Beat.)*

CAROLINE. Why would I be afraid of dying?

ANTHONY. I didn't mean that you were.

CAROLINE. Because I'm fine with it.

ANTHONY. Ok.

CAROLINE. Are you afraid of dying?

ANTHONY. I don't know.

CAROLINE. That surprises me.

ANTHONY. Why?

CAROLINE. You seem like the type.

ANTHONY. What does that mean?

CAROLINE. Cocky.

ANTHONY. Hey.

CAROLINE. And a boy.

ANTHONY. What the hell?

CAROLINE. Boys are all tough but...they get scared too. They don't admit it but they are so scared. Like they totally bail when shit gets weird.

ANTHONY. I don't bail. And I'm not scared. *(Pause.)* Except of fish.

CAROLINE. What?

ANTHONY. Their eyes.

CAROLINE. Fish?

ANTHONY. We don't have to talk about it.

CAROLINE. And I will try very hard not to use that against you later. And. Don't pity me. Is what I'm asking.

*(Pause.)*

ANTHONY. I can't pity you. I don't even really know you. So.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** So. This is my room, this is my phone, I've been sick pretty much ever since I was born. That's me. Yawp.

*(Pause. ANTHONY wants more info...)*

**CAROLINE.** They tried a ton of stuff and now we're at the point where I just need a new thing. So I wait. But I'm a pretty good candidate because I'm young and I came by this crap honestly (It's genetic—yay!). Anyway “livers are a robust organ” so it's not as sketchy as it can be, but the whole process is kinda crazy, so my life is kinda crazy, so I'm kinda crazy. Like I've always been *kinda* sick but not you-can't-go-to-school sick, which sucks like so much. I mean I'm a *senior*. I have crucial things to do and then, out of the blue, my house is like this crappy clinic and my mom is on constant red alert and everything is so weird now. Even the crap people post on my Facebook is weird—like it's suddenly full of kittens and winky faces and “We miss you, girl!” and that is NOT my style. So.

**ANTHONY.** So.

**CAROLINE.** You wanted to know.

**ANTHONY.** I did.

**CAROLINE.** Now you know.

*(Pause.)*

**ANTHONY.** Yeah. I still don't know really anything about you.

*(CAROLINE smiles. Well done, new friend.)*

**CAROLINE.** I'm a Virgo.

**ANTHONY.** *(Re: himself:)* Taurus. Actually I'm on the cusp so I just go with the better horoscope. *(Re: her:)* What else?

**CAROLINE.** Uh. I know a little Spanish.

**ANTHONY.** Excelente. My dad made me take Latin. Keep going.

**CAROLINE.** I...I kinda really like old Elvis movies.

**ANTHONY.** Are you like 80?

**CAROLINE.** ShutUpIt'sVintage. Have you seen that man in uniform? Total winner.

**ANTHONY.** He died on a toilet.

**CAROLINE.** Jealous.

**ANTHONY.** I'm really not.

**CAROLINE.** Okok. I used to swim. And one time I died my hair purple. And I was into American Girl dolls for all of *no* minutes. And penguins are hilarious. And there is no flavor of ice cream better than Chunky Monkey—none—period—donotcrossmeonthis.

**ANTHONY.** And. (*Looks at her pictures on the wall of a cat in costume:*) You have, or stalk, a stripey cat who has a lot of...hats.

**CAROLINE.** She likes to accessorize.

**ANTHONY.** What's her name?

**CAROLINE.** Bitter.

**ANTHONY.** Is your cat's name?

**CAROLINE.** Does she look amused?

**ANTHONY.** You are so strange. And then you like Elvis.

**CAROLINE.** Whoa. He's still the king. *Jailhouse Rock*? Come on.

**ANTHONY.** (*Teasing:*) Nono—all this makes you very *special*.

**CAROLINE.** Alright, SecretGramps.

**ANTHONY.** Alright, CatLady.

**CAROLINE.** *Junior* CatLady ok? There is a hierarchy.

**ANTHONY.** Ok. I'm just saying. You're not...you're not *only* your... thing.

**CAROLINE.** My what?

**ANTHONY.** (*Not quite sure if this is the right word:*) I dunno, what do you call it...your...thingthing, your...

(ANTHONY does a "your liver" gesture that makes no sense. He might outline where he think the liver is but it's too low [it's actually just under your right lung].)

**CAROLINE.** My terrible dance?

**ANTHONY.** Your sick thing— I don't know— You knew what I was saying.

**CAROLINE.** Yes I did.  
And you should learn some anatomy.  
It's higher.

(*Perhaps she shows him where his liver is.  
Perhaps there is the smallest touch from her.  
Pause. Pause.  
This is not the right segue but he goes for it...*)

**ANTHONY.** Ok. My dad and I were watching the Discovery Channel. And they said that when you take a kidney and put it into somebody? They ice it first, right. Then when they're ready? They slap it.

**CAROLINE.** Uhh.

**ANTHONY.** They slap the kidney so that it "wakes up" before they put it in you. Which is completely insane to me.

**CAROLINE.** Slap it?

**ANTHONY.** Yeah. Like— (*He mimes slapping a kidney with a sound effect.*) I mean— What?— Crazy.

**CAROLINE.** Crazy. You do know that kidneys and livers are different things?

**ANTHONY.** Yes, but, ok. Do they slap everything? Do they slap brains?

**CAROLINE.** They don't transplant brains.

**ANTHONY.** But like hearts? Or your thing?

**CAROLINE.** I really try not to think of it too much, 'cause I kinda think about it all the time and it still weirds me out, so.

**ANTHONY.** But it's pretty cool that they can even do that. That it's kinda simple. Like it's a body *part*, like a Lego.

**CAROLINE.** Awesome.

**ANTHONY.** And it's weird that it's so normal when that stuff is *bionic*.

**CAROLINE.** (*À la SHUT UP:*) THANKS SO MUCH.

(*Pause. CAROLINE texts again.*)

Where is that Coke. We ordered it like a month ago.

**ANTHONY.** I can just go get it.

**CAROLINE.** This is how we do it in this house. It's fine.

(*Pause. CAROLINE puts on a sweatshirt.*)

ANTHONY *can't help but watch her: girls + clothes = titillating.*)

**ANTHONY.** I—uh—like your room.

**CAROLINE.** Thanks.

**ANTHONY.** It's not as girly as some...girls.

**CAROLINE.** And if I needed a slogan that'd be it.

**ANTHONY.** No, I mean. The pictures and stuff. It's...lively.

**CAROLINE.** Yeah, I don't edit.

**ANTHONY.** Then it's...Expressionist.

**CAROLINE.** So I live in one big weird collage.

**ANTHONY.** No it's great. My room looks like a ten-year-old left and never came back for his stuff. I'm talking fire truck wallpaper.

**CAROLINE.** Eesh. I mean. If you wait long enough it'll be ironic.

**ANTHONY.** Ok go with me on this. I don't know but...you and Walt are kinda alike.

**CAROLINE.** Uh, superdoubt that.

**ANTHONY.** No like with your room and— Ok so he only wrote one book his whole life. One. He just kept adding to it. You know.

**CAROLINE.** What are we talking about? Why didn't he just write new books?

**ANTHONY.** They were new. *And* old. See he would release a new version with all this new stuff because he added and adjusted and kept building on what he had. Even on his deathbed he was...amending.

**CAROLINE.** Ugh. I hate that word.

**ANTHONY.** *Amending?*

**CAROLINE.** *Deathbed*—hello.

If I knew that was my deathbed I'd be like—can I have another bed?

*(Pause.)*

*(ANTHONY turns to a page in Leaves of Grass.)*

**ANTHONY.**

*"All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier."*  
Page 22.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** Luckier?

**ANTHONY.** Yeah I dunno about that but..."different."  
Is a new idea.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** I heard or read somewhere something...that in some cases you can feel it coming.

**ANTHONY.** What.

CAROLINE. Like. Dying.

ANTHONY. Oh. Uh...

CAROLINE. And sometimes you obviously can't. Like it's a pretty big surprise. Like a bus. (*Like a bus is coming at her:*) Ah!

Anyway. For me? It's like...out there there's a billion ways to die. In here, there's only one or two. And I know exactly how the first one works. The other ones—I dunno, zombie attack or something. Not really worried about it.

(Pause. ANTHONY points to the smoke detector.)

ANTHONY. (*Not a great offering, but a good point:*) Or fire. That'd be a way to go.

CAROLINE. Yeah, fire would do it. Thanks.

ANTHONY. You asked your mom for batteries right?

CAROLINE. Ohhhhhh *that's* what's taking so long. She never puts things in the same place twice. And then she asks *me* where *I* put them. Like I go around hiding all the small stuff just to piss her off. I'm not a *gnome*.

ANTHONY. My dad does that too. Like I would ever in the history of recorded time know where he put the paprika. If it's not a Pop-Tart I'm not sure what's going on.

CAROLINE. You are such a boy.

ANTHONY. What.

CAROLINE. All you do is eat crap. Try a plant sometime.

ANTHONY. If it's in a Pop-Tart.

CAROLINE. You're so dumb.

ANTHONY. You're so cranky.

CAROLINE. Well you're...really not what I expected to happen today.

(Pause. Was she being nice? Unclear.

He reads from the beginning of Whitman...)

ANTHONY.

*"I celebrate myself,  
and what I assume you shall assume,  
for every atom belonging to me as good belongs to...you."*

(He looks at her...

*this is the beginning of their love story.)*

(Blackout.)



## TWO.

*(A little bit later that same night.*

*ANTHONY is up reading while CAROLINE works on the poster.)*

**ANTHONY.**

*"I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look under your boot-soles."*

**CAROLINE.** Under your boot-soles...

**ANTHONY.**

*"You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless.  
And filter and fibre your blood."*

**CAROLINE.** Filter and fibre...

**ANTHONY.** ShhGodI'mAlmostDone.

*"Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you."*

*(The end. Pause. ANTHONY waits to hear a reaction...)*

**CAROLINE.** That's the end?

**ANTHONY.** It's great right? Isn't it great? Didn't you like it? You liked it.

**CAROLINE.** HoldupWaitJust...gimme a minute...

*(She takes a minute to catch up with her feelings...)*

It's like...this is going to sound so dumb but, it's like, at the end at least...like he's talking to *me*.

**ANTHONY.** It's not dumb. I thought the same thing.

**CAROLINE.** You did? Ok 'cause that was getting spooky for a minute.

**ANTHONY.** That's just how good it is.

**CAROLINE.** Or how creepy.

**ANTHONY.** No see. When you read it—that feeling is, to me I mean, it's like he's *here*, like he's *with us* here because we're reading it and he's...reborn in us.

**CAROLINE.** Which is creepy.

**ANTHONY.** Ok, but the music of the words. It's epic, right? It *churns*.

**CAROLINE.** *Churns*? No. I think it's more—I don't know—*happy*. I mean he's singing and yawping and I'm pretty sure I sense a frolic in this thing.

**ANTHONY.** I don't think Walt Whitman frolicked.

**CAROLINE.** Oh he's *way* into frolicking.

**ANTHONY.** This was written during the *Civil War*. It's not cute, it's defiant.

**CAROLINE.** You can *defiantly* frolic.

**ANTHONY.** He was working *in* a war hospital. Like he was in there with the wounded, the dying, he held their hands, and he still writes about beauty and life and I think that is just...

**CAROLINE.** It's fearless.

**ANTHONY.** *Fearless*. Yeah. I like that.

(*Writing down "fearless."*)

**CAROLINE.** Alright. It just happened. IKindaLikeThisGuy. And we are gonna *win* this project.

**ANTHONY.** Oh *we* are, are *we*?

**CAROLINE.** OhMyGodYesYouWereRight. No gloating.

**ANTHONY.** I'm not gloating. I'm just glad we agree that he's a badass.

**CAROLINE.** He *is* a badass. Walter Whitman: National Badass.

**CAROLINE.**

**ANTHONY.**

That could be our title!

That's *not* going to be our title.

**CAROLINE.** But he was! For 18-something? When was this again?

**ANTHONY.** 1860s.

**CAROLINE.** I'm basically asking if ladies were still in corsets.

**ANTHONY.** Oh they totally were.

**CAROLINE.** Ok. So here's this time when the country is divided, like *in two*, and ladies are all locked into their clothes, and it does not sound like anybody's having any fun— And then there's this wacky hairy guy yawping from the roof about "oneness" and we're-all-in-this-together kinda stuff which must have sounded insane to them. Like it *sounds* insane now, the *actual sound* of it. (*Shocked by how much she digs this:*) Ok. Like I'm kinda really excited about this.

**ANTHONY.** Right? I told you.

**CAROLINE.** Aww. Without your sneaky intruder shenanigans I would have missed out.

**ANTHONY.** You're welcome?

**CAROLINE.** Like this might be my new favorite thing. I need Whitman t-shirts and a phone cover and I am totally changing my Twitter background.

*(She checks her smartphone or computer.)*

**ANTHONY.** Please don't tweet Walt Whitman.

**CAROLINE.** His genius must be shared! Widely!

**ANTHONY.** OkOkOk before you broadcast this? You *do* get that this book is kinda—like—racy.

**CAROLINE.** What?

**ANTHONY.** Uh. Dude's having a lot of sex in this.

**CAROLINE.** Nuh uh!

**ANTHONY.** Oh totally yes he is. And I dunno but he sounds a little gay.

**CAROLINE.** Shut up! What?

**ANTHONY.** Were you listening at all? Come on.

**CAROLINE.** He is not gay. He is classic.

**ANTHONY.** You know how many classic dudes were gay? Like all of Greece.

**CAROLINE.** I don't care that he's gay I care that he's having sex all over my brand new poem! Walter, nooo...

**ANTHONY.** Well people had sex back then.

**CAROLINE.** But not like...*sexy* sex.

**ANTHONY.** They invented sexy sex.

**CAROLINE.** Ew. Ewwwwww.

**ANTHONY.** I can do a quick Google check.

**CAROLINE.** DO NOT SEARCH "WALT WHITMAN SEXY SEX" ON MY COMPUTER.

**ANTHONY.** I'm just saying that it's a free love kinda poem.

**CAROLINE.** No, perv. It's sweet. It's about families and America.

**ANTHONY.** Yeah but it's like throbbing with—

**CAROLINE.** *Ew*, don't say throbbing, *ew*.

**ANTHONY.** I'm saying it's passionate. He's a passionate guy. Sometimes about America and sometimes...dudes.

**CAROLINE.** Nope. No. He lusts only for America.

**ANTHONY.** Uh, it's totally there. It's right on the page. It's in the—like the—small stuff. The description of the small stuff...look.

*(He references the book.)*

*"This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of hair. This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning."*

*(They are a little too close. Pause.)*

Small stuff.

**CAROLINE.** Uh huh.

**ANTHONY.** You see the way he—

**CAROLINE.** GotIt.

*(Awkward pause.*

*Hyper awkward transition. The following is fast.)*

Have you ever seen that website Stuff White People Like?

**ANTHONY.** Uh.

**CAROLINE.** It's funny.

**ANTHONY.** What?

**CAROLINE.** They have this massive list with stuff like NPR and sea salt.

**ANTHONY.** Uh.

**CAROLINE.** Which is so true.

**ANTHONY.** That's great.

**CAROLINE.** Sea salt.

**ANTHONY.** You went weird.

**CAROLINE.** What?

**ANTHONY.** Just then. That got weird.

**CAROLINE.** *(Covering the awkward:)* It did not. How was your day? You had a day, let's talk about it— Take a break— We need a break— Does this have too much glitter? What's your favorite music? Do you play a sport?

**ANTHONY.** Oh my god, what just happened?

**CAROLINE.** What sport? Sports are things.

**ANTHONY.** Basketball. And we are on fast forward right now—chill out.

**CAROLINE.** *(Slower:)* Do you. Enjoy. The Basketball.

**ANTHONY.** You're so weird.

**CAROLINE.** *You're* so weird. What's your issue? I had waffles for breakfast, I'm not ashamed—what'd you do?

**ANTHONY.** I went to school, I played a game, I came here, I think the amount of glitter is adequate, let's keep working.

**CAROLINE.** Did you win your game?

**ANTHONY.** I... No. I dunno.

**CAROLINE.** You don't know if you won your game?

**ANTHONY.** We had to stop before it was over.

**CAROLINE.** Ok, I'm not very sporty but that's unusual right.

**ANTHONY.** Uh, yeah. This is due like first thing tomorrow.

**CAROLINE.** Why did you stop the game?

**ANTHONY.** You're not done with the poster and the presentation is all on me so can we just keep going?

**CAROLINE.** You don't seem to realize how rare it is for me to care about the outcome of any sport, like any of them, and I've heard there's a lot of them—

**ANTHONY.** OkOkFine. (*Breath.*) It's just...you'll hear about it, but it's...it's pretty bad.

**CAROLINE.** What is?

*(Pause. This is not fun to re-tell.)*

**ANTHONY.** This kid.

We were at the end of the third quarter—down by 5—and this kid... This kid just falls over in the middle of the court. Just drops.

**CAROLINE.** Whoa.

**ANTHONY.** Yeah. He was playing fine, he was so quick a senior had to guard him, and then the kid just starts breathing weird and like touches his chest and just collapses.

**CAROLINE.** Oh my god.

**ANTHONY.** He fell on the floor—the court—the wood of the court—

*(To himself:)*

How do they get it so shiny?

**CAROLINE.** Was he ok?

**ANTHONY.** Polish?

(To CAROLINE:)

No. He died.

CAROLINE. He *died*?

ANTHONY. On the floor of the court.

CAROLINE. What?

ANTHONY. Yeah. In front of everybody.

CAROLINE. Wait. What?

ANTHONY. In like two minutes he was just dead.

CAROLINE. *Holy shit.*

ANTHONY. I told you.

CAROLINE. Yeah but. Oh my god. That's horrible.

ANTHONY. Yeah.

CAROLINE. Oh Jesus.

ANTHONY. I know.

CAROLINE. Are you ok?

ANTHONY. Am I ok?

CAROLINE. Yeah that's crazy. That's intense. That is completely messed up.

ANTHONY. It is. It's totally messed up.

CAROLINE. Jesus. He died?

ANTHONY. And I was...like the whole game I was thinking of that stupid line—I mean I was busting my ass on this project and reading the stupid poem and it was like stuck in my head the whole game—and I work the ball, look for the open man, pass, move, *landthismysteryherewestand*—why am I thinking that, you know? But it sticks to my brain—and I say it and play and I say it and play—and then he falls over and we all stop—we're panting, sweating, what the hell is going on—I *and this mystery*—what's wrong with him? *landthismystery*—why isn't he getting up? *landthismysterylandthis*—Then he's dead. He's dead. Here we stand, he's fucking dead.

(Pause. CAROLINE inches awkwardly to his side, puts her arm around him. Not exactly the right move but now she's done it...)

ANTHONY. Um.

CAROLINE. (Re: her arm placement:) This is wrong, right?

ANTHONY. Well.

CAROLINE. I don't know what to do.

ANTHONY. I'm fine.

CAROLINE. You don't have to be fine. That's the most—I don't know, but you don't have to be fine.

ANTHONY. But I am.

CAROLINE. Ok. (*Removes her arm. Pause.*) I mean. What did people do? Did they pray?

ANTHONY. Pray?

CAROLINE. Yeah. For the guy.

ANTHONY. I don't know, they were pretty much freaking out.

CAROLINE. Were his parents there?

ANTHONY. I think so.

CAROLINE. Oh shit.

ANTHONY. They got us off the court pretty quick but...I think I heard the dad.

CAROLINE. God. That is the worst kind of awful. That makes my stomach hurt. And like the back of my eyes. That just hurts everywhere.

ANTHONY. Yeah.

CAROLINE. Ow. (*Pause.*) I wonder. Sometimes I wonder. What people are thinking. What he was thinking.

ANTHONY. When?

CAROLINE. When it started. Or before. Or—

ANTHONY. Probably about basketball, I don't know.

(*Pause.*)

CAROLINE. So you came here to do homework after you watched some kid die?

ANTHONY. Well.

CAROLINE. That's not weird?

ANTHONY. The whole thing's kinda weird.

CAROLINE. Why wouldn't you go home?

ANTHONY. This thing is due.

CAROLINE. But you should be with someone.

ANTHONY. I am with someone.

**CAROLINE.** Someone who can help you.

**ANTHONY.** I don't need help, that kid needed help, no one could help him.

**CAROLINE.** What was wrong with him?

**ANTHONY.** Who knows! Who cares!

**CAROLINE.** Ok, but—

**ANTHONY.** He died in front of his entire school, and no one could help him and he died.

**CAROLINE.** Ok. It's ok.

**ANTHONY.** Is it? Is that ok? I don't think that's ok.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** Did that really happen?

**ANTHONY.** Check Twitter, check the news, yes it happened, I was right there.

**CAROLINE.** *(Getting her phone to check Twitter:)* It's just weird that no one told me.

**ANTHONY.** *Please don't,* it was terrible and messed up and I really don't want to see it again.

**CAROLINE.** *(Putting her phone away:)* Ok. Sorry.

**ANTHONY.** Can we work or something. I mean I have actual school in the morning, ok?

**CAROLINE.** OkOk.

**ANTHONY.** And talking about how awful it was doesn't really make it less awful.

**CAROLINE.** Ok.

*(Beat.)*

**CAROLINE.** So I was thinking. What if we focus on the *ending* lines? Like we end where *he* ends or something? 'Cause everyone's gonna do the beginning, right. But the ending is the most important part.

**ANTHONY.** The ending is not the most important part.

**CAROLINE.** But it's what—like—ends the whole thing and it's beautiful and... What is your problem with the ending?

**ANTHONY.** It's boring.

**CAROLINE.** It's *boring*?

ANTHONY. It doesn't even really end.

CAROLINE. What are you talking about? You love this poem.

ANTHONY. "*You will hardly know who I am or what I mean.*"  
Is the ending. And what the hell does that mean.

CAROLINE. No, no the ending is:  
"*Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.*"

ANTHONY. Because he just said no one will know who you are!

CAROLINE. That's not what he said!

ANTHONY. What's the point if everyone's alone!

CAROLINE. What are you talking about?!

ANTHONY. It ends with nobody *knowing* anyone and nobody *finding* anyone, and no one means anything because they're all *alone* with some *grass*.

CAROLINE. (*Calming:*) Anthony.

ANTHONY. The best part is this:  
"*I know I am deathless.*"  
Page 30. Best part.

(*Pause.*)

(*She goes to him again – not awkward.*)

CAROLINE. I get that you're upset, I would be a wreck but—

ANTHONY. I'm gonna go.

CAROLINE. Wait.

ANTHONY. I have shit to do.

CAROLINE. Anthony.

ANTHONY. If we're not gonna work—

CAROLINE. We *are* working.

ANTHONY. I just wanna finish this.

CAROLINE. Me too! I'm covered in glitter!

ANTHONY. I just wanna finish and feel good about it and go.

CAROLINE. I know! Fine! Yes. Leave! You have shit to do and I obviously don't— I obviously have nothing to contribute because I live out of my stupid room.

ANTHONY. That's not what I was trying to say.

**CAROLINE.** Well if it's all about death and dying and all the shit you're afraid of then you might want me and my expert opinion on the matter.

Because my whole conscious life I have been...like...prepared to die. Or thinking about it. Or planning for it. Or staring it back in its asshole eyes because if I didn't I'd just quit.

So. It's not this weird, awful, evil thing. It's just a thing. That happens every day. Get over it.

*(Pause.)*

I don't really know what I'm saying.

*(Beat. Beat.)*

**(CAROLINE suddenly lays back on the bed, exhausted.)**

**ANTHONY.** Is it weird to say...thanks. For saying that.

**CAROLINE.** It's a little weird.

**ANTHONY.** Thanks anyway.

Are you ok?

**CAROLINE.** I'm just tired.

**ANTHONY.** I can go. I'm sorry.

**CAROLINE.** Nono. It always happens to me. I just have to "take everything slower." I'm fine. Really.

**ANTHONY.** 'Cause I can go.

**CAROLINE.** Not if you want to finish this thing. We still have to tape my part.

**ANTHONY.** We don't have to tape it, I'll read the ending for you.

**CAROLINE.** No you're not. It's mine now, you can't have it.

**ANTHONY.** God, you refuse to make anything easy.

**CAROLINE.** Correct. Hand me turtle.

*(He grabs her turtle. She curls up with it, she's feeling gross.  
Pause. He doesn't know what to do next.)*

**ANTHONY.** Um. Question. Do you...like jazz?

**CAROLINE.** Uh.

**ANTHONY.** I like jazz. A lot.

**CAROLINE.** Ok.

**ANTHONY.** The music.

**CAROLINE.** I know what jazz is.

**ANTHONY.** I'm just saying we could break for minute. Regroup. Recharge.

**CAROLINE.** Fine. Jazz me.

**ANTHONY.** Sorry I got...anyway.

Ok. So we have a lot of options. We could go Bill Evans, we could go Miles Davis. Do you like Coltrane? I love Coltrane. Coltrane is the king—ok, this is great. I haven't met anyone at school who gets it like I do.

**CAROLINE.** And you still haven't.

**ANTHONY.** Oh. But you've heard some of it before?

**CAROLINE.** Of course I've heard it.

In *elevators*.

**ANTHONY.** Do not even—no. Jazz is the heartbeat. Of the universe. True jazz is the actual way the world—I mean, it's the chaos—the order out of chaos. The musical form of—I dunno—like—giddy. Perfect. Math.

**CAROLINE.** And what instrument do you play?

**ANTHONY.** Saxophone.

**CAROLINE.** Of course you do.

**ANTHONY.** What?

**CAROLINE.** Watch out for guys who play sax.

**ANTHONY.** What? Why?

**CAROLINE.** Because it's the kind of instrument that gets people in trouble.

**ANTHONY.** Who said that?

**CAROLINE.** My grandma.

**ANTHONY.** HoldOn. Saxophone is an instrument that is flexible and sonorous and textured and it carries the human range and it's made for jazz and jazz is the essence of our creativity—as a species—it's a perfect—syncopated and improvised perfection in this life.

**CAROLINE.** OhMyGod let's hear it already. Hand me your phone.

*(He gets out his phone to give her.)*

**ANTHONY.** YeahBut. Ok. Don't look at my texts—this girl sent me weird stuff.

**CAROLINE.** Well look at you.

**ANTHONY.** Shut up.

CAROLINE. A sexting jazzman.

ANTHONY. It's not sexting.

CAROLINE. Whatever. Everyone leads a double life in text.

ANTHONY. Shut up.

CAROLINE. "Hello ladies, would you like some"—awesomopause—"jazz?"

ANTHONY. Shut *up*. Come on.

CAROLINE. I bet the girls like it.

ANTHONY. *Ugh*.

CAROLINE. Oh yeah. The "*I'm already grown up*" thing you do.

ANTHONY. I do not.

CAROLINE. Oh you totally do—you read poetry and play jazz and have—whatever—some feelings. You have like a trillion girlfriends. How many Facebook friends do you have?

ANTHONY. I dunno.

CAROLINE. Everyone knows.

ANTHONY. A lot but they're mostly basketball guys.

CAROLINE. AND you play basketball! You are such a senator.

ANTHONY. I JUST LIKE JAZZ. (*He takes the phone back—plugs it in.*) It is not about girls. I do not get girls. They get all weird, and then they get mad, and then I'm supposed to know what they want and I really don't, so I try to avoid the whole thing because they seem to be a lot of stupid work for no real purpose.

CAROLINE. Thank you.

ANTHONY. Not you. The sixty ones.

CAROLINE. Ah.

ANTHONY. I don't mind you.

CAROLINE. Thanks again.

ANTHONY. You know what I mean.

CAROLINE. Do I?

ANTHONY. I mean. You're real. Whatever. Would you just listen?

*(Pause. That's probably the nicest thing a guy has ever said to her. John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme—Part 1: Acknowledgement" plays from the speakers.)*

**CAROLINE.** Does it have a title or is too cool for that?

**ANTHONY.** It's called "A Love Supreme."

It's the best thing Coltrane ever did. It's his version of...prayer, I think. There's four parts all recorded in one day, in one sitting, and the parts have these great names, this one is "Acknowledgement," and "Pursuance" is the third one, which is cool because they all make up this *journey*, like he's wandering, like he's trying to find something, you know?

**CAROLINE.** What's he trying to find?

**ANTHONY.** I think, like...peace.

*(They just sit. Still.  
She's enjoying it actually.  
He is concentrating.)*

**ANTHONY.** Now. What do you hear?

**CAROLINE.** I...uh...notes?

**ANTHONY.** No, *in* the music what do you hear? Or *see*—what do you see when you close your eyes—close your eyes.

**CAROLINE.** Ok.

**ANTHONY.** Ok. Feel it for a sec. Then just follow it. Where does it go?

**CAROLINE.** Um...a city.

**ANTHONY.** What kind?

**CAROLINE.** A big city. At night. And there's a lot of people—not kids though—real people—and they're walking—with like purpose—like strutting through the city.

**ANTHONY.** New York City.

**CAROLINE.** Yeah.

**ANTHONY.** At midnight.

**CAROLINE.** Yeah. And there's...music...and restaurants and everything's open late and all these people are wandering around this big city and they're drinking and talking about big things, and—oh! Taking cabs!

**ANTHONY.** Awesome.

**CAROLINE.** And one of them is an actress, and one writes for a magazine—

**ANTHONY.** And one's a fighter pilot.

**CAROLINE.** *(Trying to go with this...)* Or a fighter pilot.

**ANTHONY.** Or like professor of poetry or something.

**CAROLINE.** And one's a science guy—girl—a science girl.

**ANTHONY.** She studies dark matter.

**CAROLINE.** She's so smart. She wears Ray-Bans.

**ANTHONY.** And they're all friends, and they love music, and stay up late and they go back to someone's apartment—and the apartment has a roof deck, and they go up and look out and see the whole city—the whole thing—and it just...shines.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** I like that.

**ANTHONY.** I'd love to go to New York.

**CAROLINE.** My mom's taking me when I get better. That's where I told her I wanted to go first.

**ANTHONY.** I've never been.

**CAROLINE.** You'll go. *(Pause. He turns down the music.)* 'Cause I kinda want to work for a magazine or something. Photography.

Because I wanna see the world. But like *actually* see it. And show other people. Because if you can see it—the good stuff, the bad stuff—if you *see it*, it becomes a part of you. Right? You can't un-see, and that's power, and that's like...how we start to change...things. I guess.

I mean I think the camera is the best thing humanity ever came up with. That and maybe...sleeves. Anyway, I'm gonna go to New York. And I'm gonna go to school there and then I'm gonna travel and I'm gonna show people.

**ANTHONY.** Show them what?

**CAROLINE.** What matters. Or at least what's really there. Or something.

**ANTHONY.** That's cool.

**CAROLINE.** You should come. Play jazz.

**ANTHONY.** That'd be nice.

**CAROLINE.** So, I'll see you in New York.

**ANTHONY.** See you there.

*(Pause. Pause. CAROLINE turns off music.)*

**CAROLINE.** *(Tease:)* I don't know but...that sounded a lot like you being nice to me.

**ANTHONY.** Uh, excuse me. *You* were being nice to *me*.

**CAROLINE.** That has not been confirmed.

**ANTHONY.** I'm saying, it's not fair if *you* get to be nice to me, but *I* can't be nice to you.

**CAROLINE.** Whatever, Senator.

**ANTHONY.** Whatever, ShutIn.

**CAROLINE.** Whoa! ShutIn? Nice.

**ANTHONY.** Oh no. I was instructed to never be nice to you.

**CAROLINE.** And your "not nice" is just adorable, thanksforthat.

**ANTHONY.** Nono, I think we're on to something here. You told me your big dream. We're friends now.

**CAROLINE.** Take it back.

**ANTHONY.** Nope. Caroline cares about something. And I know what it is. And that is something friends do.

**CAROLINE.** Well you can rest assured that all of my big plans are basically fiction. I don't really look forward to things...actively. Or "like" things. Or people. I kinda can't.

**ANTHONY.** But I thought... Sorry.

**CAROLINE.** No, it's ok. I *do* want all that, I just... Please don't freak out.

**ANTHONY.** I'm not. I just...liked hearing about what you liked.

**CAROLINE.** Well. I also like...nights. Weeknights, late. No one else is really doing much—they have school or whatever so I guess I don't feel like I'm missing anything. For once. And I can think. And I like the moon. And my music.

**ANTHONY.** Ok. Now we're talking. What's your music?

**CAROLINE.** No. No. You'd hate it.

**ANTHONY.** Probably not.

**CAROLINE.** Probably yeah you would. It's very "white people."

**ANTHONY.** I like white people.

**CAROLINE.** Shut up.

**ANTHONY.** What's your music?

**CAROLINE.** You're not gonna like it.

**ANTHONY.** People get along even if they don't agree on stuff.

**CAROLINE.** Not when they don't agree on music. That's a relationship-killer.

**ANTHONY.** "Relationship-killer."

**CAROLINE.** It's true.

**ANTHONY.** I shared *my* music. Gimme yours.

**CAROLINE.** Nope.

**ANTHONY.** That's not fair!

**CAROLINE.** That's not my problem.

**ANTHONY.** I wanna know your music.

**CAROLINE.** And I wanna care, but I don't.

**ANTHONY.** Who are you? What's your music? And what's your thing with that turtle?

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** Somebody gave it to me and I think it's for toddlers but I kinda love it anyway it's a turtle that's a planetarium so even if I can't get outside all the time I can still see the stars which is really lame I know but also makes the dark not so dark.

So.

**ANTHONY.** *(Appreciative:)* So. *(Sneaky:)* What's your music?

*(He smiles. She glares.)*

**CAROLINE.** Ok.

But. Preface...

I already know that you'll think it's weird, and I already don't care, but if you ruin my song for me I will post that WhatFace picture of you.

**ANTHONY.** Yes. Understood. The suspense is killing me.

**CAROLINE.** Well don't get *too* excited.

Ok.

Ok.

*(She presses play on her computer and we hear...*

**"Great Balls of Fire" as performed by Jerry Lee Lewis.**

*During the song CAROLINE goes from tapping her finger to a full-on air piano dance-a-thon...*

*After the first stanza ANTHONY talks over the song.)*

**ANTHONY.** OkOne. Did not expect that.

**CAROLINE.** I told you! I didn't want to like it, but my mom would play it nonstop when I was a kid, so it was kinda pre-baked into me. WhichIsNotBadBecauseIt'sAwesome.

**ANTHONY.** You do realize he stole this from black people.

**CAROLINE.** The point is, it's crazy.  
You like it don't you? You like it.

**ANTHONY.** I like that...*you* like it.

**CAROLINE.** Aw come on, come on— You feel it, don't you. I know you do. You feel the fire. The Great Balls of Fire—

**ANTHONY.** I *do not* feel the Great Balls of Fire. And can we talk about the unfortunate name of your favorite song?

**CAROLINE.** It's powerful visual imagery.

**ANTHONY.** No one wants that on fire. Come on.

**CAROLINE.** You come on. Wait for it...wait for the....

*(After the piano solo starts...)*

Piano solo! OhMyGod what happened to piano solos.  
And who rocks like this anymore? No one. No one.

*(During the piano solo which she mimes the hell out of she starts to have fun, she starts to dance, she starts to feel like a girl...)*

**ANTHONY.** You realize you're playing the air piano.

**CAROLINE.** Hell yes I am.

**ANTHONY.** Just...wow.

**CAROLINE.** Wow is right. This guy was a piano GOD. A PIANO GOD.

*(During the final part of the song CAROLINE starts to weaken, falter, cramp. Her body is stopping her from having fun. She hates this, tries to power through it, gets weak quick, she stops singing, gets mad, gets sadmadMAD.)*

**ANTHONY.** Oh, are you ok?

**CAROLINE.** Yes.

**ANTHONY.** Should I go get your mom?

**CAROLINE.** NO—I'm fine—I'm fine.

**ANTHONY.** Are you sure?

**CAROLINE.** YES. DON'T.

**ANTHONY.** Lemme go get your mom.

**CAROLINE.** NO—STOP—STOP— Just stop. Just stop.

*(He stops the music. She rips off her sweatshirt—trying to get control of herself—trying to breathe.)*

**ANTHONY.** Can I help?

**CAROLINE.** No. I'm ok. I'm ok.

**ANTHONY.** I think I should get your mom.

**CAROLINE.** *Do not call my mom I swear to god I'm ok— GOD—just—just...*

*(And then CAROLINE is on the floor or bed, she is trying not to cry, she doesn't want to cry, can't stop crying, frustrated, furious, can't stop crying, embarrassed, hates that her song was ruined, that her life is ruined, that she ruins every single fucking thing. She throws a shoe or something out of utter frustration with herself, her world, her life. Turns on him.)*

**CAROLINE.** Get out.

*(Blackout.)*

### THREE.

*(Ten minutes later. ANTHONY is not leaving her, but he is giving her space, waiting for instruction.)*

CAROLINE *has burrowed under her covers on her bed. And will not come out.*

*After a while...and from under the covers...  
Extending her hand with the following directive...*

CAROLINE. Kleenex.

*(ANTHONY rushes to find and deliver the Kleenex to her outreached hand, which retracts under the blanket with the spoils.)*

*Snorting sound from under the covers.*

*Another hand with another directive.)*

CAROLINE. Turtle.

*(ANTHONY rushes to find and deliver turtle.*

*Pause.)*

CAROLINE. Thank you.

ANTHONY. You're welcome. Anything else you need? Water? Or, *(Digging through his backpack)* I think I have some bubble gum or some... *(Seeing his treasure:)* nevermind.

CAROLINE. What.

ANTHONY. Pop-Tarts.

CAROLINE. *(Suddenly out from under the covers:)* You have Pop-Tarts in your backpack?

ANTHONY. I'm hungry all the time!

CAROLINE. See, *you* are what's wrong with America.

ANTHONY. They never go bad!

CAROLINE. They're gross.

ANTHONY. They're perfect!

CAROLINE. They're gross. *(She goes back under the covers.)*

ANTHONY. NoNoNo stay out, come on. Caroline. Please.

CAROLINE. I think it's better for everyone if I stay in here.

ANTHONY. No it's not. Why?

**CAROLINE.** Because I look like mascara attacked me.

**ANTHONY.** You do not. Come out.

**CAROLINE.** I think...never.

**ANTHONY.** Please. I'm here and you're here and it's weird if one of us is hibernating.

**CAROLINE.** Shut up.

**ANTHONY.** I'm saying I'm on your side. I am right here and I'm not scared. Whatever you need, even if it's rockabilly, I am *on* Team Caroline.

*(She flips down the covers, emerges.  
Grateful but has to be snarky.)*

**CAROLINE.** Team Caroline is a very poor choice of team.

**ANTHONY.** No it's not.

**CAROLINE.** Team Caroline never wins the Super Bowl.

**ANTHONY.** Do you even know what sport you're talking about?

**CAROLINE.** Team Caroline is a big old freak who freaked out and ruined perfectly good air piano. Which must have been superweird for you.

**ANTHONY.** No it's—whatever—I just didn't know what to do. And for the record your air piano was way weirder than your freakout.

**CAROLINE.** Turtle loved it. Two against one.

**ANTHONY.** Yes. You totally win. *(Pause.)* So... What... What happened? I mean you don't have to—but...you were fine and then suddenly...

**CAROLINE.** Yeah it just happens like that sometimes. I get tired and...so mad...at everything. And thanks for not calling my mom, she goes crazy but it always passes, it's just...all this bullshit in my life right now. And it pretty much sucks the fun out of the world and poisons everything and I hate it. It's like bad follows bad.

**ANTHONY.** What do you mean "bad follows bad"?

**CAROLINE.** I mean...that there's a reason why the stupid fire alarm kept going off and it's because my dad isn't here, and the reason for *that* is my mom and dad are separating, and the reason for that is kinda...me. I know it's not *me* me, but it's all my stuff. And it ruins everything.

So that's one of the many *super* discoveries of the past few months: nothing is good ever. So yeah.

ANTHONY. Whoa.

CAROLINE. Mmmhm.

ANTHONY. That completely sucks.

CAROLINE. You have no idea.

ANTHONY. Caroline, I'm so sorry. He just left?

CAROLINE. Well he's very much *not here*. And the house falls apart and my mom cries about everything and...you know what? My soap opera is not your problem. Sorry.

ANTHONY. It's ok.

CAROLINE. How about your dad. Is he cool?

ANTHONY. Uh. Yeah. I mean he's lame but cool. We go see movies a lot. He's funny. And that man can cook.

CAROLINE. Nice.

ANTHONY. Like old school food. Like casseroles and meatloaf.

CAROLINE. Wow. Yeah. I imagine your family is like—the perfect family.

ANTHONY. What? No we're not.

CAROLINE. Your dad is hilarious and cooks and I bet he dresses up for Halloween and hands out really good candy.

ANTHONY. This is ridiculous.

CAROLINE. And then there's *you*.

ANTHONY. *Me*, what?

CAROLINE. You are like the perfect son.

ANTHONY. *What?*

CAROLINE. Aren't you.

ANTHONY. No.

CAROLINE. You are. You totally are. You come in here, *with homework*, which you excel at—

ANTHONY. "*At which* you excel," but whatever.

CAROLINE. *OhMyGod*.

ANTHONY. Sorry.

**CAROLINE.** You stay on task, you do group sports, you obviously get “A’s” and everyone likes you, you’re like a model citizen.

**ANTHONY.** I have no idea who you’re talking about. He sounds nice. He does not sound like me.

**CAROLINE.** Can you stop being charming for like a second?

**ANTHONY.** Fine. I eat cold hot dogs.

**CAROLINE.** What?

**ANTHONY.** Cold hot dogs. Often.

And I never floss. Like ever. And I do *not* think babies are cute I think they look like potatoes. And I kinda cheated on my French final last year. Model Citizen.

**CAROLINE.** Child’s play.

**ANTHONY.** Alright. I also dumped my girlfriend that I dated *forever* for this really stupid sophomore on the drill team the first week in high school. No reason. She was just prettier.

**CAROLINE.** Ok I get it—you’re human.

**ANTHONY.** No no. It was so bad. Mandy posted pictures of us all over Alana’s page and tagged her in them, and even though I tried to warn her and dumped Mandy like *that afternoon*, Alana was so humiliated that she took down all her accounts for like a week.

**CAROLINE.** Whoa.

**ANTHONY.** *A week.* The first week of high school. Yeah. That was me being such a good guy.

*(Pause.)*

**CAROLINE.** Nope. See. You realized your fault which means you learned which means you *are* a stellar human being, you jerk. Why can’t you just be pissed off and out of shape like everybody else.

**ANTHONY.** Why can’t *you* just be *not funny* and *totally normal* and *super boring* like everybody else.

**CAROLINE.** Stop.

**ANTHONY.** And you’re honest. About yourself. Which I’m not always.

**CAROLINE.** Uhh. YeahRight. You’re like the most genuine guy ever.

**ANTHONY.** Yeah well sometimes one big lie is easier to keep than a bunch of small ones.

*(CAROLINE doesn’t know what to make of this.)*

**ANTHONY.** But you. You are completely yourself. You take these pictures, you're not afraid of yourself, you're way more real than I am. You should have your own TV show. I'd watch it.

*(Pause. Was he flirting? No...yes...undecided.)*

**CAROLINE.** Well. I'm sure it would be on PBS at like 3am. So. You like the pictures?

**ANTHONY.** I do.

**CAROLINE.** I like the close-ups. Textures and light and stuff.

**ANTHONY.** They're really good.

**CAROLINE.** Like there's this beauty that most of us miss because you can only see it in like...miniature.

**ANTHONY.** Small stuff.

**CAROLINE.** At least I can't ruin the small stuff.

*(Pause.)*

**ANTHONY.** I know it sucks for you. To be in here all the time. I mean I don't *understand*, but I...you know.

**CAROLINE.** Yeah. Thanks. I just... Like I can't even have fun. Like *fun is hard*. What's the point.

**ANTHONY.** What's the point of what?

**CAROLINE.** Anything.

With all the doctors and hospitals and stuff. Everybody is trying to make things "upbeat" and "positive" and it's like *I'm not an idiot I get what you're doing and it's just making it worse*. And my mom—ugh—she worries—well, her support group worries, and boy does she support that group—anyway—she worries that I'm not being a teenager and that's gonna mess me up and I'm like—Mom, I'm already messed up—and then she says I'm being dark and I'm like—Mom, I'm naturally dark—and she hates that and I say—well you're not the one that's going to die first.

And that kinda stops the interaction.

**ANTHONY.** You're not going to die.

**CAROLINE.** I might.

**ANTHONY.** No, you're not. Don't say that. You're not.

**CAROLINE.** If things don't work themselves out in a hurry.

**ANTHONY.** Don't talk like that, I'm serious.

CAROLINE. I'm just saying that if it's *going* to happen it should just go ahead— It's like fix me or kill me already.

ANTHONY. *Jesus, Caroline. What the hell.*

CAROLINE. What.

ANTHONY. You don't mean that. That's not what you mean.

CAROLINE. Please don't tell me what I mean.

ANTHONY. You can't talk about going to New York and traveling the world and say that to me. That is not fiction. That is your life.

CAROLINE. It's really not.

ANTHONY. But it could be.

CAROLINE. But it probably won't and nothing pisses me off more than people trying to make this all sweetness and hope when my life is mostly shit.

ANTHONY. What am I supposed to say to that?

CAROLINE. *Who cares what you say. It's not about you.*

ANTHONY. That's not fair.

CAROLINE. It's not fair *to me*, ok—it is not fair *to me first*.

ANTHONY. Of course it's not fair to you—so don't say stuff like that.

CAROLINE. I'm being honest, I'm calling it out, I don't want it to be so unspeakable.

ANTHONY. *Then don't joke about it.*

CAROLINE. *It's not a joke.*

ANTHONY. *I know it's not*—you don't want to die, you do not want to die, *that is not an option.*

CAROLINE. Why are you yelling at me?

ANTHONY. *Because I'm invested now.*

CAROLINE. *This is just an English project.*

ANTHONY. YOU CAN'T KEEP PLAYING SHIT OFF LIKE YOU DON'T CARE. YOU DO. You care about your art, and your cat, and a ton of shit—so why do you say that and push people away and piss people off, when I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO DIE, YOU DON'T, YOU DO NOT WANT THAT.

CAROLINE. OF COURSE I DON'T—BUT IT'S A FULL-TIME JOB TO BE SCARED OF IT SO I'M NOT.

**ANTHONY.** WHY NOT?

**CAROLINE.** *What?*

**ANTHONY.** WHY aren't you scared?

**CAROLINE.** *Because.*

**ANTHONY.** BECAUSE WHY?

**CAROLINE.** BECAUSE I'VE  
LIVED WITH THAT SON-OF-A-  
BITCH ALL MY LIFE  
AND IT DOESN'T WIN  
UNTIL I LET IT.

*(Pause.)*

**ANTHONY.** Exactly.

You stare that shit down. You don't give up.

*(Does she push him away?)*

You don't.

**CAROLINE.** You don't know anything.

Team Caroline fucking sucks.

**ANTHONY.** Yes it does. But I won't bail if you won't.

*(ANTHONY goes and sits by her,  
touches her shoulder or hand or something.  
She bursts into tears and hugs him. Lets him hug her.  
He is exactly a shoulder to cry on. After a beat or three...)*

**CAROLINE.** I don't wanna be on Team Caroline anymore.

**ANTHONY.** Well. Tag me in. I'll be on Team Caroline. You can be Team Whitman. Team Yawp.

**CAROLINE.** *(Even laughing at this:)* Team Yawp.

**ANTHONY.** Team Yawp for the win.

*(A moment between them—  
Friends, comfort, CAROLINE can take a breath, so can he.)*

**CAROLINE.** Except Team Yawp has a project due in like ten hours.  
We're not even close to done.

**ANTHONY.** Yeah we are.

**CAROLINE.** I messed up your homework.

**ANTHONY.** Are you kidding? We're so good. The poster looks great. I have my speech pretty much ready to go, we can tape you right now, and then we're done. See? No worries.

CAROLINE. We can't tape me right now, I look like a balloon.

ANTHONY. You look great.

CAROLINE. I do not but thank you for lying.

ANTHONY. Uh. No way. I'm actually really bad at presentations. And you make me nervous.

CAROLINE. What? Come on. *I* make you nervous.

ANTHONY. It just feels weird.

CAROLINE. But you know this stuff like better than a professor and you're gonna be awesome and you know you're so...like...so...

*(She approaches him—like she might kiss him—she wants to kiss him—she stops herself—high fives instead, or hits his shoulder, or something not smooth.)*

CAROLINE. Super super great.

Like why didn't I know you until now? That's...stupid.

ANTHONY. Yeah.

CAROLINE. Life is dumb.

Hey, why don't...why don't I do my speech. Or some of it. Or something.

ANTHONY. Yeah, that's great. That's a good idea.

CAROLINE. Ok. But, you know, shocker—it won't be good.

ANTHONY. You'll be way better than me.

CAROLINE. I really won't.

ANTHONY. Whatever. I didn't give you enough time, it's my fault.

CAROLINE. Let the record show that everything is Anthony's fault. Ok. Let's just do this.

*(CAROLINE prepares, shakes it out, primps a little as ANTHONY sets up his phone or Caroline's computer to record her.)*

ANTHONY. Yep. Ready when you are.

CAROLINE. I am so ready. Press record. And try to contain your applause.

*(He does.)*

ANTHONY. Ok.

Go.

*(She takes a preparatory breath  
Then she goes...)*

**CAROLINE.** Hi. This is Caroline. And I'm going to give a brief presentation on Whitman's use of the pronoun "You" in his poem "Song of Myself." Which is from *Leaves of Grass*. Which you know. Ok.

The poem begins:

*"For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you."*

"You" is the reader in this case. Like—us. He's talking to us, which is cool. Ok.

But only a few pages later, "you" changes to mean his own soul. Or the soul of the speaker. It says:

*"I believe in you my soul."*

Then. Just a little further on, the "you" becomes personal again—like he's talking to a friend.

*"This hour I tell things in confidence,  
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you."*

But soon the "you" changes again—this time into the earth itself:

*"Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
Prodigal, you have given me love."*

Whitman's "you" started out as the reader, then became his own soul, then a friend, then the entire planet. Finally. In the last passage he uses "you" to mean all of us:

*"I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles."*

Whitman ends his poem exactly where he started it. By speaking directly to the "you" of the entire world, a "you" that even death can't stop. The last line reads:

*"Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you."*

Because somewhere, even unseen, unnamed we wait for each other. Because together we are, to quote page 30, "deathless."  
Because *you* is very much...*we*.

*(Pause. She's done. Pause.  
He heard exactly what he wanted to hear.  
He's close to her. She wants him to kiss her so bad...)*

**ANTHONY.** That was... You just like made that up right now. That was amazing. You really get this, like, *really*.

*(Then she commits and kisses his cheek.)*

ANTHONY. Oh.

Uh.

Ok.

No.

CAROLINE. No? Sorry.

ANTHONY. No that's not—that's not what I—I mean.

CAROLINE. My bad.

ANTHONY. No.

CAROLINE. No again? Double awesome.

ANTHONY. No I mean—I'm sorry— You kissed me.

CAROLINE. Just a little.

ANTHONY. Ok.

CAROLINE. Ok.

ANTHONY. You kissed me.

CAROLINE. Or I fell on your face. Doesn't have to be a big deal.

*(Pause.*

*He really kisses her.)*

CAROLINE. And then you fell on *my* face.

ANTHONY. Sorry.

CAROLINE. Don't be.

ANTHONY. Ok.

CAROLINE. Whoa.

ANTHONY. Whoa.

CAROLINE. Remember when I was gonna pummel you?  
This is way better.

*(He smiles/laughs at her. She smiles/laughs at him.*

*They sit. Maybe hold hands or something cute?*

*Maybe they just sit close to each other.)*

ANTHONY. So. It's late and I should. Probably go soon. It might be time.

CAROLINE. Oh right. Sure.

ANTHONY. But...

OkWait. I wanna say...

Actually I don't know what I wanna say. Uhm. Ok.

*(The idea.)*

Whitman wrote a prologue. And it's mostly this rambling letter to—I guess—America, but there's one part that's...that's really important and...I think you'd get it and...could you maybe listen for a sec?

**CAROLINE.** Ok.

Ooh, wait.

*(CAROLINE turns on the turtle—turns off the lights—  
Stars projected on the ceiling.  
He kinda laughs—but thinks it's cool.)*

**CAROLINE.** Right?

*(He reads...)*

**ANTHONY.**

"This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem."

*(Pause.  
He touches the top of her hand, then takes her hand.)*

*(CAROLINE doesn't flinch, doesn't fidget,  
looks at him with confidence.)*

**CAROLINE.** That's beautiful.

**ANTHONY.** And true.

**CAROLINE.** And true. And makes me want to...not hate everything.

*(He looks away—she looks at him.)*

**CAROLINE.** And.

I don't know. Thank you?

For today.

For being so...nice.

*(He looks at her. Pause.)*

And. You know. Come back and tell me how it goes.

Like tomorrow.

I'm saying come here tomorrow.

*(He just stands there looking...sad?)*

Or. It's ok if you can't.

You're not saying anything so this is getting weird.

*(Pause.)*

*"Here we stand."*

**ANTHONY.** *(A little brisk. Changed, not mean, just direct:)* Stop.

**CAROLINE.** What?

**ANTHONY.** Just. We can stop this now.

**CAROLINE.** Stop what? What's wrong?

**ANTHONY.** It's not real.

*(He turns on the lights—the turtle stars vanish.)*

**CAROLINE.** Well it's a light-up turtle.

*(A BEEP from the alarm.)*

I thought you fixed that.

**ANTHONY.** Caroline, I'm sorry.

**CAROLINE.** Don't be sorry.

**ANTHONY.** I just didn't know how to say it—and then you get it—and then—I don't know, I don't know how to do this, ok—

**CAROLINE.** What are you talking about.

**ANTHONY.** I have to go.

**CAROLINE.** Ok, I'll call you tomorrow.

**ANTHONY.** You won't.

**CAROLINE.** What? *(Calling:)* MOM.

**ANTHONY.** She's not going to come.

**CAROLINE.** Shut up. Mom, for real commere.

**ANTHONY.** Caroline, I'm trying to tell you what's real.

**CAROLINE.** What's wrong with you.

*(ANOTHER BEEP—she goes to rip the damn thing off the wall.)*

*I will murder that stupid thing.*

**ANTHONY.** Because this was all for you.

**CAROLINE.** *I don't get it—*

**ANTHONY.** Because now you are on your own.

**CAROLINE.** Why are you saying this?

**ANTHONY.** Because I'm not really here.

*(Silence. ANOTHER BEEP.)*

**ANTHONY.** *(The truth:)* I stopped being here.

This afternoon.

On a basketball court.

And to answer your question I was thinking "keep playing, walk it off"...and the very last dizzying thing I thought was this stupid thing from Lit class—"I and this mystery."

**CAROLINE.** No.

**ANTHONY.** "Here we stand."

**CAROLINE.** Oh my god.

*(ANOTHER BEEP.)*

**ANTHONY.** We stand here.

Because you were on a list.

**CAROLINE.** Anthony.

**ANTHONY.** And you got a call today, "there's a donor."

**CAROLINE.** No.

**ANTHONY.** Caroline.

**CAROLINE.** You?

**ANTHONY.** Caroline.

**CAROLINE.** Oh my god.

*(ANOTHER BEEP.)*

**ANTHONY.** Your bag was packed,  
you were ready for this,  
your mom drove you to the hospital,  
and I was already there,  
they sped you into surgery,  
and I was already there,  
the surgery went well,  
you're coming out of it right now,  
you're doing fine.

and you'll wake up soon.  
and I'm already there.

**CAROLINE.** WAIT.

Why?

Why did you do all this?

**ANTHONY.** I...wanted to meet you.

And see how we can make this work.

And it will.

And I'm sorry I lied about this, I didn't want to lie but...

Just know that everything else was true.

And this will all be over soon.

**CAROLINE.** I don't want it to be over. I...I...

*(She tries to say "I love you" or "thank you" or "don't go" but it's all too huge to say.)*

**ANTHONY.** I know.

And don't be scared.

But this is not your room.

*(ANOTHER BEEP as*

*ONE WALL of her room vanishes, falls, flies away—infinite blackness instead.)*

This is not your house.

*(ANOTHER BEEP as*

*another WALL of her room vanishes, falls, flies away—infinite blackness instead.)*

There is nothing here.

But you and I.

*(ANOTHER BEEP.)*

**CAROLINE.** You and I.

**ANTHONY.** You and I.

**CAROLINE.** Are *here*.

*(ANOTHER BEEP.)*

**CAROLINE.** You.

*(ANOTHER BEEP.)*

And I.

*(ANOTHER BEEP.)*

Are *here*.

**ANTHONY.** Yes.

*(Those BEEPS get closer together—more and more like their true self which is a **heart monitor**—CAROLINE is terrified.)*

*(During the poem the final WALL, the floor, the world of her room vanishes, falls, flies away—infinite blackness all around.*

*Her breath is echoed, volumized all around her,*

*The sound of her heartbeat all around her—*

*The heart monitor all around her—)*

**(He leaves her side, she barely lets him.)**

*(Does he say the following lines live or are some recorded to amplify or alter as he transitions?)*

**ANTHONY.**

*"I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.*

*("A Love Supreme" lifts and lalts all around them...)*

*I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.*

*("Great Balls of Fire" trips and twists all around them...)*

*You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.*

*(Then back to Coltrane—the soul's journey.)*

*Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you."*

**(He is about to leave forever—  
She runs to him full speed—  
wraps him in a hard desperate hug—  
This is the culmination of everything.**

***In an instant he is gone and she is alone—silence.  
Then a huge column of white light from directly above  
or behind her locks her in.  
She stops. Looks up.***

*Then from somewhere far off or very close or out of a dream...)*

**MOM'S VOICE.** Caroline? Honey, it's Mom. I'm right here. You're ok.

*(Blackout.)*

**End of Play**

## After The End: A Few Truths

*I And You* is a play that, I hope, tells a few stories at once. I intended to wrap our characters' truths around other truths, revealing their complementarity gradually like a musical canon. Some of these will not (and need not) be garnered from watching the play once, but I wanted to offer them up for post-show discussion. Thank you for coming on the journey.

### **The simplest story is the most true.**

The simplest version of this *story* is that these two characters need each other. As classmates thrust together for a class project on Whitman, they need each other. As young adults articulating themselves anew, they need each other. As confidants revealing their desires and dreams, they need each other. As curious hearts open to a new kind of young love, they need each other.

And then finally and most profoundly, as two bodies now becoming one, they need each other to live fully, to live in gratitude for each day, to stand with this mystery that is human connection, they need each other.

### **The entire play takes place while Caroline is under anesthesia during her transplant operation.**

In the realest reality of Caroline's life, the events of *I And You* are a kind of dream that she experiences while in surgery. I like to think of it as a dream that she and Anthony are sharing.

This does not mean that the play is a lie, that Anthony isn't really present, or that their encounter is not real. It is very real and he is very real. It is the most real thing she has ever experienced, and Anthony has changed her life forever.

### **Caroline's room is a metaphor for her body.**

After several drafts I realized that the room which cradles our story is a metaphor for the body that, in the play's final reveal, Anthony and Caroline are fated to share. If that is true, then Anthony's first entrance is the biological "entrance" of his flesh to hers in the operating room. When she distrusts and rejects him in the first scene, it is a metaphor for her body initially rejecting his organ. When he starts to give up on her and wants to leave her room later in the play, it is his liver resisting her body's biology. When they hold hands, kiss, and embrace at the end of the play and the walls are taken away from them, the metaphor would encourage us to

see it as the anatomical harmony of a successful transplant. And as Anthony, quoting Whitman, says in his last words to her: "I shall be good health to you nevertheless, and filter and fibre your blood," which is exactly what a liver does.

### **The Future.**

I imagine Caroline growing up healthy, and hungry for life, always feeling like she knows someone very important but not remembering whom. She misses someone she doesn't remember, like a grandparent she never got to meet. Throughout her life she will experience a kind of déjà vu when she hears Coltrane or reads Whitman. She will have a strange urge to visit New York City's Blue Note Jazz Club, she will linger over her turtle, she will laugh at Pop-Tarts. Perhaps there is even a photo on her cell phone that she doesn't remember taking of a boy she can't quite place.

Lauren Martin Gunderson  
September 2013

*Also available at Playscripts, Inc.*



## **Exit, Pursued by a Bear**

by Lauren Gunderson

Revenge Comedy  
75–80 minutes  
2 females, 2 males

Nan has decided to teach her abusive husband Kyle a lesson. With the help of her friend Simon (acting as her emotional—and actual—cheerleader) and a stripper named Sweetheart, she tapes Kyle to a chair and forces him to watch as they reenacts scenes from their painful past. In the *piece de resistance*, they plan to cover the room in meat and honey so Kyle will be mauled by a bear. Through this night of emotional trials and ridiculous theatrics, Nan and Kyle are both freed from their past in this smart, dark revenge comedy.

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## **Pride@Prejudice**

by Daniel Elihu Kramer

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120–140 minutes  
3 females, 2 males

Watch Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy fall in love all over again—this time filtered through the world of the internet. Modern voices interject and build on this classic love story in the form of blog posts, chat room discussions, quotes from film adaptations, and even letters from Ms. Austen herself to create a delightfully postmodern view of 19th century England. Written for five actors to play every role, *Pride@Prejudice* is a hilarious and moving homage to Jane Austen's most beloved novel, as well our love affair with reading.



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