

THE CAROL VARIATIONS

by eka savajol

characters:

Carol 1 – identical to the other Carols
 Carol 2 – identical to the other Carols
 Carol 3 – identical to the other Carols; played by a man
 Carol 4 – identical to the other Carols; waitress

notes:

The setting is a café.
 Each Carol sits at her own separate table.
 When they read, they all read the same book.
 The phones in their bags are landlines (with cords.)
 Carol 4 announces the Variations.

 VARIATION 1

CAROL 1 and CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 all take a sip of their coffees simultaneously. They all react simultaneously, thinking "wow this is way too hot!"

They all put down their coffees simultaneously.

They all simultaneously scratch their shoulders.

They all reach for their books in their bags.

CAROLS 1, 2, and 3 start to read. It is an interesting book, but the CAROLS are mostly reading because they are in public and want to look smart.

CAROLS 1, 2, and 3 receive a call.)

CAROL 1 and CAROL 2 and CAROL 3

Rats.

(They pick up.)

CAROL 1 and CAROL 2 and CAROL 3

Hello? This is Carol. [...] Yes. [...] I'll be right there. [...] Okay. [...] See you there.

(They all scramble to put some money on the table. They all look very flustered. They put their books away. They painfully down what the can of their coffees.

They all look up and realize they're all identical. A brief moment of pure and utter shock comes over them.

They snap back to what they were doing: the Carols get on with their business like it was nothing.)

VARIATION 2

CAROL 1 and CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 all take a sip of their coffees simultaneously. They all react simultaneously, thinking "wow this is way too hot!"

They all put down their coffees simultaneously.

They all simultaneously scratch their shoulders.

They all reach for their books in their bags.

Out of nowhere, CAROL 2 pulls an umbrella out of her bag and points it viciously at CAROLS 1 and 3.)

CAROL 2

Nice try, delinquents!

CAROL 3

What's going on?

CAROL 2

Come on! Like you don't know!

CAROL 3

I don't.

(to Carol 1)

Do you?

CAROL 1

I think I may know what this is.

CAROL 3

What is it?

CAROL 1

I said I thought my friend was a good painter but she really wasn't and then she got hit by a truck that day so I never got to tell her how/ I really felt--

CAROL 3

Wow, really?

CAROL 2

No! It's not for that!

CAROL 3

Then what is it?

CAROL 2

Don't play fools! Those outfits? Did you even go to the spy academy?

CAROL 1

I got waitlisted, actually.

CAROL 3

(to Carol 2)

I guess... I'm just sort of confused as to why you're so pressed.

CAROL 2

You of all people should know!

CAROL 3

You're right! I can't keep up this charade, Carol!

CAROL 1

Wait me?

CAROL 2

No *me!!*

(The waitress comes out. This is CAROL 4.)

CAROL 4

No *me!!!!!!!*

CAROL 2

Don't you remember that night in Aruba...

(Tropical music plays. CAROLS 1 and 4 lay on the floor together, posing as CAROL 2 and CAROL 3. It is clear they are in love.)

CAROL 3

Of course! How could I forget?
We were drinking rum on the beach in between bouts of love-making.

(Sounds of waves. CAROLS 1 and 4 drink rum.)

CAROL 1 turns on a fan that blows the breeze onto her and CAROL 4.)

CAROL 2

And I turned to you and said:

CAROL 1

(as Carol 2)

Baby I love you so much. I love you more than the cyanide capsule in my teeth to use in case I get held hostage.

CAROL 3

And then I said:

CAROL 4

(as Carol 3)

I love you too.
I feel closer to you than to anyone I've ever met.
I feel like we're alternate versions of each other.

CAROL 1

(as Carol 2)

Like we're the same, right?

CAROL 4

(as Carol 3)

Yeah, baby, like we're exactly the same.

CAROL 1

(as Carol 2)

I hope this lasts forever.

CAROL 2

And we basked in the beautiful Aruba sunset. Until you got a call.

(A landline rings. CAROL 4 picks up.)

CAROL 4

(as Carol 3)

Hello? This is Carol. [...] Yes. [...] I'll be right there. [...]
Okay. [...] See you there.

(to Carol 1.)

I have to go. I got a mission.
I'm going to Russia.

CAROL 2

And then you abandoned me! You didn't even call to say hi!

CAROL 3

My line was tapped! I couldn't call you!

CAROL 2

I thought you loved me!

CAROL 3

I do!
Look! We still have time!
Let's pick up where we left off!

CAROL 2

Really?

CAROL 3

Really.

*(CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 make out or do something of that same
overly-affectionate-to-the-point-that-it-is-slightly-gross
nature.)*

VARIATION 3

*CAROL 1 and CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 all take a sip of their
coffees simultaneously. They all react simultaneously,
thinking "wow this is way too hot!"*

They all put down their coffees simultaneously.

They all simultaneously scratch their shoulders.

They all reach for their books in their bags.

CAROL 1 stops, surprised because she notices Carol 2 "copying" her. CAROLS 2 and 3 continue.

CAROL 1 stares at CAROL 2.)

CAROL 1
What are you doing?

CAROL 2
What do you mean?

CAROL 1
You're...

CAROL 2
What?

CAROL 1
You're copying me!

CAROL 2
Copying you?

CAROL 1
Yeah!

CAROL 2
I'm so sorry-- but why would I be copying you?

CAROL 1
Stop!
That's what I'm trying to understand.

CAROL 3
I thought she was doing a better job.

CAROL 1
There's another one of--?

CAROL 2
Really?

CAROL 3
Yes. I thought you made a much better version of this woman.

CAROL 1

I'm the woman! I'm the best version!

CAROL 3

You are... both the woman-- and well she (gesturing to Carol 2) is doing a much better job.

CAROL 1

What do you mean?

CAROL 3

Who cares what I meant, look, what matters it that she
(gesturing to Carol 2)
is a much better job of being this woman.

CAROL 1

How was she... better?

CAROL 3

It felt like you were... trying too hard to be authentic... you know?

CAROL 2

So I was good?

CAROL 3

Oh my gosh, yes!
Absolutely marvelous!
I haven't seen a performance like this in such a long time!
(to Carol 1)
Your performance was okay. It just wasn't as/ good as hers--

CAROL 1

I wasn't... performing.

CAROL 3

Of course you were.

CAROL 1

I was just-- having a coffee--

CAROL 3

You're always performing.
And that performance is always lacking a little.

CAROL 1

What can I do-- to--

CAROL 3

To make your performance better?

(to Carol 2)

What do you think?

CAROL 2

I think what you were saying about her being... too authentic was interesting.

She should maybe try turning it down a little.

She should try being something more appealing--

CAROL 1

I'm confused--

Do you guys *not* want me to be me?

CAROL 3

I am not saying you shouldn't be you.

I am saying that your performance wasn't really enjoyable to anyone.

I am saying, you exist only when observed and no one really likes observing you.

It's simple quantum mechanics.

CAROL 1

What... are you talking about...?

CAROL 3

You are no one without other people.

You will never be anything if you keep pretending that identity is personal.

CAROL 1

I'm sorry but you're just being so so annoying! You're being so frustrating with your quasi-philosophical bull! You talk as if you wore a man-bun! You talk like you spread your legs on the train! I am in fact a real person! I'm not just your thought experiment!

(Carol 3's landline rings.)

Carol 3 picks up and says nothing. She points the receiver at Carol 1.

Carol 1 drops dead to the floor.

Carol 4 enters, sees dead Carol 1, and leaves.)

VARIATION 4

(CAROL 1's table is gone. In its place is a flower, and a gravestone, or something marking Carol 1's death.

CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 take a sip of their coffees simultaneously. They react simultaneously, thinking "wow this is way too hot!"

They put down their coffees simultaneously.

CAROL 4 enters. She waters the flower of CAROL 1. She taps her feet.

The other CAROLS tap their feet to the same rhythm as CAROL 4.

CAROL 4 starts dancing a sweet, almost corny little dance.

CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 dance in sync with CAROL 4.

CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 and CAROL 4 dance around where CAROL 1 once used to be.

A phone rings. CAROL 4 picks up causing CAROL 1 to appear and dance with them.

They all continue to dance in sync and with each other happily, in an almost campy way.

Slowly CAROL 2 and CAROL 3 make their way to their tables. CAROL 1 and CAROL 4 dance together in the center.)

END OF PLAY