

Unnatural: I Have Loved You the Way They Said

A Poem Inspired by *The Children's Hour*

“I have loved you the way they said” (page 30)

“I love you that way” (page 30)

“I’ve got to tell you how guilty I am” (page 30)

“Is that alright?” (page 8)

“You must have had a gay childhood” (page 8), you said

“Oh, I did, I did indeed.” (page 8)

“There’s always been something wrong. Always- as long as I can remember” (page 30)

“But I never knew it until all this happened” (page 30)

“I never loved a man” (page 31)

“I never felt that way about anybody but you” (page 31)

“What’s happened to us? What’s really happened to us?” (page 30)

“I had been looking forward to some place by the lake” (page 8)

“A place like ours” (page 21)

“- just you and me- the way we used to at college” (page 8)

“Remember how much we used to eat at college?” (page 25)

“We’ve been very close to each other” (page 30)

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“We’re human beings” (page 21)

“Pushed around, we’re being pushed around by crazy people” (page 21)

“I’ve ruined your life. I’ve ruined my own” (page 31)

“Your friends’ got a nice shoulder to weep on” (page 11), I said

“You haven’t talked of marriage for a long time “(page 8)

“There mustn’t be anything wrong between you and Joe. Never.” (page 26)

“Oh God, I wanted that for you so much” (page 30)

“Because I love you” (page 30)

“It’s going to be hard going on alone afterward” (page 8)

“It will. You know it will. It can’t help it” (page 8)

“I can’t stay with you anymore darling.” (page 31)

“Stop kidding yourself” (page 26)

“What’s the matter?” (page 30)

“You’re afraid of hearing it; I’m more afraid than you.” (page 30)

“Listen to me” (page 30)

“It’s better for all of us if I don’t” (page 28) but

“I do love you” (page 31)

Justifications

Poem

The purpose of writing this poem was to go back throughout the whole script in order to find any lines that Martha said that may have been going through Karen's head after Martha's suicide. We wanted to show Karen reflecting back on the events and statements that had previously occurred in order to emphasize her reaction to Martha's death. By exploring the script, we were able to craft how Karen would respond to the death, how Martha truly felt about Karen, and any little hints that showed Martha's feelings throughout the play.

With the exceptions of **two attributions, a conjunction, and two lines (highlighted in green in the following poem)**, every line of this poem comes directly from Martha's mouth in a scene or situation in which Karen would have been able to hear them said. One of these two lines that we considered as an exception includes a line that Karen actually says. The first line of the second stanza, "You must have had a gay childhood" (page 8), was so important to keep in the poem since this is Karen verbatim calling Martha out on being gay, without understanding the full truth to this statement. Karen meant "gay" to mean "happy" or "odd" in this line. However, little did she know, Martha is actually a homosexual as well. The irony behind this line was too important to leave it out of the poem, even if Martha did not say it herself. It is very plausible that Karen would have been reflecting on not only Martha's lines, but also a few of her own. The second line of the poem that is an exception to the "Martha's lines rule" is the second line in the fourth stanza, which states "Unnatural" (page 10). This is a line that Mrs. Mortar states to Martha when referring to Martha's feelings towards Karen. While Karen would not have been able to hear this line since she was not in this scene, it is very probable that this word was used several times during the trial. The word "unnatural" has too much meaning within the context of the play to leave it out of the poem. It sums up most of the community's feelings towards homosexuals. Finally, the attributions and conjunction were added simply to enhance the flow of the poem. Besides these exceptions, we felt it was necessary to only include Martha's lines throughout the play since they all gave small, subtle hints about her hidden sexuality and attractions to Karen. We wanted to use Karen's pondering about Martha's death as a way to go back and explore all the subtleties and hints that alluded to Martha being gay. Below is a copy of the poem, and an explanation that explains exactly why each line was chosen to be included in the poem.

Unnatural: I Have Loved You the Way They Said

“I have loved you the way they said” (page 30): Official confession: This line is the first time that Martha **officially** and confidently **confesses** her love for Karen. Before this line, she does say that she loves her; however, the extent of this love is never made clear until this line. This line is italicized in the script in order to emphasize just how hefty the meaning behind it is. Therefore, we decided to make it the very first line of the poem due to its importance.

“I love you that way” (page 30): This line is stated by Martha when trying to find the words to state exactly how she feels about Karen. She follows this line by saying she does not know what she means by it. However, it is one of the lines leading up to her **official confession** that she loves Karen the way people have said.

“I’ve got to tell you how guilty I am” (page 30): This line is said after Martha’s **official confession**. She is attempting to tell Karen exactly how she really feels in order to clear her conscience about the mess she has created. She has been hiding this sense of guilt ever since the accusations began, since she really does have feelings toward Karen. This one line was included here in this poem since it sets up the rest of the poem, allowing Martha the ability to confess to Karen.

“Is that alright?” (page 8): This line is stated in the beginning of the play when Karen and Martha are discussing the need to kick Mrs. Mortar out of the house. Martha says this line in order to make sure that Karen is okay with the fact it may take a little bit of time to gather the money needed to send Mrs. Mortar away. The fact that Martha asks Karen if this is alright shows her concern to make sure that she is doing the right thing in the eyes of Karen. She has Karen’s feelings in mind during this scene and throughout the whole show. Therefore, it would make sense that in this poem Martha would want to make sure it was alright to tell Karen the rest of the details.

“You must have had a gay childhood” (page 8), you said: Karen says this line in order to suppose how interesting Martha’s childhood was. However, little does she know, there is a lot more truth behind this statement, since Martha actually is a homosexual. We used this line in order to set up this stanza’s theme about Martha’s sexuality throughout her childhood and past.

“Oh, I did, I did indeed.” (page 8): Martha states this in response to Karen’s accusation that she had a gay childhood. Again, there is a lot of truth behind this response that Karen, and even Martha to an extent, is unaware of.

“There’s always been something wrong. Always- as long as I can remember” (page 30): This is said after Martha’s **official confession**. It was included during this part of the poem since we were able to find a connection between the previous two lines that were found on page 8 and this line that was found on page 30. On page 8, she was associated with having a gay childhood.

Then, this line dives into this “gay childhood” idea more by saying that she cannot remember ever being normal since there has always been something wrong. This clear connection was too important to not receive attention.

“But I never knew it until all this happened” (page 30): This line follows up the previous one, in which Martha admits that she has never fully known what was wrong with her until the Karen situation. Now she knows why she had such a “gay childhood.” It is because she is gay, and always has been. She just needed Karen to help it come out.

“I never loved a man” (page 31): Again, this line just continues to show how Martha has always been different, ever since childhood.

“I never felt that way about anybody but you” (page 31): Martha is still acknowledging how she has always had something wrong with her and did not know fully what until she met Karen and realized that her sexuality was what was different.

“What’s happened to us? What’s really happened to us?” (page 30): Martha asks Karen this when discussing if Joe really believed that they did not have sexual relations. It invites Karen to think about the past and how their relationship was before these moments. Therefore, it is used in this poem in order to set up a theme for another stanza focused on Karen and Martha’s relationship in the past.

“I had been looking forward to some place by the lake” (page 8): Martha says this when she finds out that Joe will be joining Karen and her on their lake vacation. She gets upset about this information and lets Karen know that she was really looking forward to it being just the two of them, not Joe. This starts to show some of Martha’s feelings toward Karen; however, Karen does not realize that these feelings are more than friendly ones during this portion of the script.

“A place like ours” (page 21): This line is stated by Martha when she, Karen, and Joe are all confronting Mrs. Tilford about why all of the girls left the house. When reading the script, it is interesting how this line sounds so similar to the previous line in the poem. The parents of the children did not like their kids being in “a place like ours.” Therefore, they took them out of the school. Ironically, this action of the girls being taken out of the school, in a way, gave Martha what she had always wanted, a place just for her and Karen.

“- just you and me- the way we used to at college” (page 8): This line also occurs in the script when Martha and Karen are discussing Joe joining them at the lake. However, Martha starts to reveal her sexual feelings to an ignorant Karen when she says she wants it to just be the two of them, like in college and how it used to be.

“Remember how much we used to eat at college?” (page 25): This line was included in the poem due to its direct connection to the previous line in the poem, which refers to how they used to act at college. Yet again, Martha is inviting Karen to reflect on their previous time together in order to remind her of the love they had for each other in college.

“We’ve been very close to each other” (page 30): In the script, this line is said a few lines before the **official confession** in which Martha is trying to put into words exactly how she feels about Karen. She is referring to how close they have been throughout the years, including how close they were in college and before.

“What happened? What happened Karen?” (page 30): This line is said when Martha is asking Karen what happened between her and Joe. However, it can also serve to represent how Martha is just wondering what has happened to the both of them in general.

“What the judged called ‘sinful sexual knowledge of one another’” (page 27): Martha says this line when explaining to Mrs. Mortar what she had missed while she was gone. Karen was in the room when this line was said and would have been able to think back upon it when reflecting on Martha’s death. This line, in a way, answers the question that is proposed by the last line of the previous stanza. What happened to change everything were the accusations against them. The harshness of this statement defines how the world views the two women now and helps to show the hatred they face. We used this statement as a way to begin a new stanza about the naturalness or unnaturalness of homosexuality.

“Unnatural” (page 10): This word is stated during Mrs. Mortar and Martha’s exchange about whether or not Martha has feelings for Karen or not. While Karen would not have been able to hear this word stated during this exchange since she was not in the scene, it is definitely a word that would have been included during the trial. It’s hefty meaning in the context of the play made it necessary to be included within the poem.

“It’s perfectly natural that I should be fond of you” (page 30): This line from Martha to Karen is a direct rebuttal to the accusations that have been made against her that her feelings toward Karen are unnatural. It is stated when Martha is starting to tell Karen how she really feels.

“We’re human beings” (page 21): This line is stated by Martha during the scene in which Joe, Martha, and Karen are talking to Mrs. Tilford about what she has done. This line begs the question about what it means to be human being, and what is natural for a human being to feel and not feel. In this case, it is apparently natural to be human being, but not gay.

“Pushed around, we’re being pushed around by crazy people” (page 21): This line is said in the same context as the previous one. However, Martha seems to imply that other people are the unnatural ones, pushing them around for something that is completely natural.

“I’ve ruined your life. I’ve ruined my own” (page 31): This is one of Martha’s last lines. We put it as the first line of this stanza in order to create a whole stanza about how Martha believes she has ruined Karen’s life.

“Your friends’ got a nice shoulder to weep on” (page 11), I said: This is said by Martha to Karen after Joe confronts Martha about her disliking toward him. It is strange that Martha calls Joe Karen’s friend when clearly, he is her lover. However, this line shows that Martha is a little jealous of Joe, since she can’t find it in herself to call him more than Karen’s friend.

“You haven’t talked of marriage for a long time” (page 8): Martha says this when discussing Joe and Karen’s engagement. She is very jealous of Joe and does not understand how they could be engaged, especially since she wants Karen more.

“There mustn’t be anything wrong between you and Joe. Never.” (page 26): Martha states this in the very beginning of Act 3, showing how much she loves Karen. She loves Karen so much that she would rather sit back and suffer in order for her to be happy with Joe.

“Oh God, I wanted that for you so much” (page 30): In this line, Martha is realizing that she has ruined what Joe and Karen had. This is one of the main ways that she has ruined Karen’s life.

“Because I love you” (page 30): This line is said right before the **official confession**. However, we included it in this part of the poem in order to highlight the fact that Martha was willing to suffer in order to allow Joe and Karen get married due to her love for Karen.

“It’s going to be hard going on alone afterward” (page 8): Martha says this line when referring to the fact that Joe and Karen’s marriage is going to cause her to run the school alone. However, it also can be connected to the fact that it is going to be hard for Karen to go on alone after Martha has killed herself. This is another way Martha could ruin Karen’s life.

“It will. You know it will. It can’t help it” (page 8): This is used in the same context as the previous line. Again, it will be hard for Karen to go on alone afterward.

“I can’t stay with you anymore darling.” (page 31): This is Martha’s solution to how she has ruined Karen’s life. She believes that she needs to leave not only Karen’s life, but all life. She decides to kill herself. However, Karen misses the message. This is also the first time that Martha calls Karen “darling.” She decides she must stop ruining her darling’s life.

“Stop kidding yourself” (page 26): Martha says this line in response to Karen’s notions of going out and getting some fresh air. However, it can also be used when thinking about how Karen first denied that Martha had feelings for her. Martha is trying to tell the truth, but Karen will not listen. So, Martha has to call her out for trying to kid herself. This line is used as the beginning of the last stanza in order to set the final confession of love into motion.

“What’s the matter?” (page 30): Martha asks Karen this when wondering where Joe went at the end of the play. In this poem, we use it in order to represent Martha’s questioning of how Karen is truly processing everything that is being revealed to her, including Martha’s love for her.

“You’re afraid of hearing it; I’m more afraid than you.” (page 30): Martha says this line to Karen after Karen says she does not want to hear that Martha loves her, but Martha persists.

“Listen to me” (page 30): Karen will not listen to Martha’s confession, so Martha has to call her out for it and beg her to listen.

“It’s better for all of us if I don’t” (page 28) but: Martha is trying to tell Joe and Karen that it is better for everyone if she does not join them in Vienna. However, in this poem we use it when talking about how it is better if Martha does not love Karen, yet she does.

“I do love you” (page 31): This is the final line of the poem. Since the poem starts out with Martha saying that she has loved Karen the way that people have said, we decided to end the poem with the present tense form of this statement in order to show that she still does love her. This present tense form of the statement makes everything more real for Karen.

In conclusion, this poem represents Karen thinking back on all of the things that Martha has said to her leading up to Martha’s suicide. This poem allowed us to explore all the things that Martha says throughout the script that may allude to her love toward Karen. It also allowed us to explore each character’s feelings towards each other more.

Set

We chose a very simple set for the reading of the poem. We wanted Karen to be sitting in a chair placed center stage so that the audience could focus in on seeing how Karen is reacting to everything Martha is saying. Then, we put some lights on the floor in order to create a somber mood and illuminate Karen and Martha. Finally, we decided to just let Martha walk around throughout the scene in order to symbolize the racing thoughts going through Karen's head.

Sound

One of the main focuses for sound was the background music that we wanted to accompany the reading of the poem. When choosing a background song, multiple ideas came to mind. We wanted to choose a somber genre of music to make the audience feel a somber mood when listening to the music. This sad music would combine with the sadness of *The Children's Hour* and the unfortunate events that occur in the play in order to create a serious mood. After searching several YouTube Videos, as a group, we decided on one song for the beginning which has a silent pause for the line that states "I have loved you the way they said" followed by an increase in the intensity of the music. The reason why we wanted this silent pause is because the line that is being said is the first line and the most important line as it is what starts the poem and is Martha's **official confession**. After choosing this song, we chose a different song to use for the rest of the poem. However, we decided that this different song was not appropriate for the mood as it was too slow and did not keep up with the serious pace of the poem. Ultimately, we chose the beginning, original song on repeat to keep the same simple, somber mood so that the audience could focus more on what is being said and so that the music more appropriately matched the poem.

Another interesting idea that we chose was to have the background music be conducted with a full orchestra versus just a soft piano or violin. The reason why we wanted to choose an orchestrated song is that we wanted to match the orchestra to the emotions that are running through Martha and Karen. The emotions Martha and Karen are feeling are not simple; rather, they are a whole complex mix of emotions, such as defeat, love, acceptance, and confusion. This is very similar to an orchestra with a mix of different instruments.

Another idea was to have the sound of two gunshots (one at the beginning and one at the end). The purpose of the first gunshot is to represent Martha's suicide and the subsequent processing of it that occurs in Karen's mind. The second gunshot represents Karen realizing that she was a contributing factor to the reason of Martha's death. Her realization of this fact is like her killing Martha all over again.

Besides the music, the sound was important when deciding how we wanted the poem to be heard from the audience. When we first began the process of blocking, we decided to have Martha hidden while she is reading the poem. However, the conflict came up that the audience would not be able to hear Martha, or it would sound very muffled. To fix this problem, we decided to have Martha onstage, which then led the overall blocking component. Overall, we chose to have Martha being seen so that the poem could be heard.

Costumes

For costumes, we wanted to choose simple costumes in order to keep the focus on the poem yet still convey the attributes of Martha and Karen. For Martha, we chose to dress her in all white due to the angelic connotation of the color white. White stands for purity and innocence, which is what Martha stands for. In the play, Martha is blamed for being the "inappropriate one," but, in fact, her feelings for Karen are incredibly natural, pure, innocent, and human. Another reason she is dressed in white is because Martha has just died, which creates the angelic state.

Karen was chosen to wear black mainly because she is in a state of mourning over Martha's life. We do not want to correlate her with evil. Rather, she is just a friend in mourning.

Martha's Performance

The purpose of the performance of the monologue was to explore the idea of Karen rethinking all of the things that Martha has said to her in the past that may have hinted at her love for her. We wanted to give the audience a moment to experience Karen's grief over her best friend's suicide. Martha is shown on stage as a manifestation of Karen's grief. In our portrayal of this moment, Martha is standing beside a distraught Karen sitting center stage. Martha confesses all of her feelings to Karen in the form of this monologue.

Candle

The Candle represents Martha's life source and mortality. When our scene starts, and the gunshot sounds, the candle lights up. Martha starts the monologue with the line "I have loved you the way they said", and she places the lit candle directly into Karen's hands. This represents Martha literally putting her life into Karen's hands. At the end of the scene, there is a second gunshot when Karen blows out the light to Martha's candle, symbolizing her hand in Martha ending her own life. She finally recognizes the role that she has played in Martha's suicide. She never knew that she was Martha's love interest. Then, when Martha reveals this information to her, she does not believe it. She has caused horrible pain for Martha.

Karen's Performance

Throughout the entirety of the poem's performance, it is Martha speaking to Karen in the sense that Karen is pondering all the events that have taken place between the two. Given the closeness of Karen and Martha's relationship, and the fact the Martha has just committed suicide, Karen is feeling an immense amount of distress, anger, and confusion, among a multitude of other emotions. With each line of the poem, we went back to the script and picked one emotion that Karen would be feeling in reaction to hearing Martha tell her these things in coherence with Martha's death. Additionally, Karen sits alone in one single chair to portray her isolation and disconnectedness.

Surrounding Lighting

The purpose of the only light sources being the candle and the string of lights surrounding Martha and Karen in a midst of darkness is to represent the intimacy and depth of the poem and their relationship, as well as the darkness and loneliness that Karen feels in these moments.

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