

A Warning From The Future

Welcome to the lost, alone and searching.

Welcome to climbers of trees, the stealers of bikes, the girl in the corner, the forgotten friends, the little black holes.

Welcome to the rejected, the unwanted, the despairing. The smell you smell is a blossom tree. The chill you feel is a cold breeze as you walk the streets alone at night. The emotion you feel is longing.

The voice you hear is Carly Rae Jepsen.

You might be reading this as a joke. Out of vague curiosity. You might've thought the person who claimed to have discovered a massive secret pattern in a popstar's music was doing it ironically, or maybe just lost on a long hike up their own ass.

Welcome to you, too, the cynics and the disinvested. Come in, and find out, but first, a warning: "*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate.*"

This latin phrase from Dante's Inferno translates to:

"Abandon All Hope, Ye Who Enter Here."

What you're looking at, what you're about to read, is a living document. I wrote it as I researched, and it is not without growing pains. You are experiencing a living document; you will be discovering the phenomenon alongside me. As you proceed through the manuscript, you'll see my formatting and song analysis evolve.

If you go through completely with this, you're definitely going to see connections between songs that I missed. The Jepsen Pattern, once you understand its rubric, is about as subtle as a brick to the face. When I started my analysis of EMOTION in the fall of 2016, I had no idea that themes, ideas, and even specific lyrics would echo back over a full decade to Jepsen's, unreleased, first EP. I was still just starting to engage with the scope of what was going on in Jepsen's music.

So I want to apologize in advance. This is a big and clumsy YET SINCERE gesture, and there's definitely some things I missed here and there. Sub-themes showed up before I had created a category for them. Individual lyrics and images popped back up later, when I had forgotten to take note of them, not realizing they'd be back. In retrospect, how could I know? I had no idea the scale of what I had found.

I want you to engage with this behemoth to whatever degree suits you. Just read the essays. Just read the song analysis annexes. Skip to the end and just read the epilogue.

Certainly be sure to read the intro to Part 2. Or, fuck it., read the whole thing; because I promise you something:

If you give this your time, if you're one of the brave souls who starts at page one and finishes at page *done*, you will be floored. Or, at the very least, you will understand why this was all worth it.

Abandon All Hope, Ye Who Enter Here.

- Max Landis, Thursday, June 29th, 2017.

PREFACE

I want you to picture something for me, in your head.

Imagine a world where The Beatles only sang about being a Paperback Writer. Imagine a world where the Rolling Stones only sang about having Sympathy For The Devil. Imagine a world where Beyonce only sang about being a Single Lady.

Imagine a world where pop artists each only chose to sing about one thing, or one story, and were somehow condemned to repeat that story endlessly again and again and again, in not only general theme, but in painful specifics, possibly recounting one incident from their own life, endlessly dramatizing each of its three acts, ad infinitum.

Now what if I told you I could prove that world existed, at least for one artist.

What if I told you, in the most sane, calm voice, making the most sane, calm face I could manifest onto the front of my head, that that artist was Canadian pop-star Carly Rae Jepsen.

Because that is what I'm telling you. I am telling you that.

And I can prove it.

I hope you'll notice I didn't say "argue." I said "prove." I can *prove* that Jepsen's songs are connected. We're going all the way here. This is not a half-measure.

We'll be going to her unreleased first album. Her collaborations. Songs she's chosen to cover. We're doing pretty much *everything*.

Because only then will you understand the depth of the phenomenon I have uncovered. You cannot understand the scope of the ocean by standing on the beach. And you will, as the idiom goes, shit bricks. And shit more bricks. And by the end, we will together build a house in Canada, with those bricks, and live in it forever.

So.

Where to begin.

The tradition of the "torch song" goes back to the 1920s, to the first "pop" music ever to exist. Torch Songs are less of a full genre of music than a content specific niche: a singer, usually female, bemoans a lost or unrequited love, and proclaims their dedication in spite of the absence of their lover.

You know these songs; usually catchy but downbeat ballads, they're the sort of song that evokes strong emotions of loss, sadness, and desperation. Songs like "And I Am Telling You," "I Will Always Love You," and "Cry Me A River" stand out as classics, while recent examples of torch songs include the occasional Taylor Swift track, and of course Adele: who has made an entire career out of singing about painful past break-ups that she's still clinging onto, sometimes implicit decades later.

Of course, Adele sings about other stuff too. Almost all singers do. No one sings about the *same thing* on every song. That would be ridiculous.

This is what makes Carly Rae Jepsen's work so idiosyncratic, and utterly unique: though not one of her five released records is a "concept album," the songs on them follow a pattern that, once observed, cannot be denied or disregarded.

It's not just the lyrics, it's a **specific and undeniable guideline within the subject matter**, and the **way in which topics are addressed**. The story itself is not linear, but once made aware of the pattern, it takes very little effort to draw lines between songs and find a kind of loose, repeated three act chronology, the repetition of which spans **fifteen years** of Jepsen's career.

Before we go any further, I should say that I love Carly Rae Jepsen's music. I've now listened to literally all of it; every single song she's put out, as well as all of her covers and many of her unreleased tracks. You're talking to Post-InJeption Max right now, the guy who just finished a 150 page dissection of her music, and I've got to say: Carly Rae Jepsen is an actual genius.

In interviews, Jepsen comes off as charming, intelligent and likable. And I hope you understand that where I'm taking you does not come from a place of disdain. If anything, I feel more reverence for her than ever.

Jepsen appears to repeat one of three acts of a tonally rigid narrative, again and again and again, *in nearly every one of her songs*.

And that narrative, though it's told in bright pop colors, is deeply sad, a maybe a little creepy, and ultimately *dark as fuck*.

With a cursory glance through her lyrics, one becomes aware that Jepsen is either consciously portraying a character, exorcising a **very specific and identifiable** personal demon, or, although I don't see how this would be possible, **subconsciously addressing and readdressing a very specific and identifiable incident, and then unintentionally and painstakingly documenting each stage of this incident in her art**.

The set of themes seems to imply a specific story runs through all of her albums, through tracks co-written by dozens of producers. It becomes more and more evident the longer you look, like one of those Magic Eye pictures.

Okay. I'm aware how this sounds so far.

You're probably having the same initial reaction I did; this is the same sort of conspiracy-theory apophenia that once led to stoners insisting on a real and salient connection between Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and *The Wizard of Oz*, or in modern days, the kind of wishful thinking clickbait of "hidden easter eggs" that connect the Pixar films.

It's not. This is real. It's so real that after we get into this **it's going to be SO self evident as to become brutally repetitive**, and even then, I'm going to keep going, because I've never seen a phenomenon like this in anything before, and I want to just absolutely bury you with it. And we're going down together.

There's going to come a point, if you keep reading, where you are set up, by the premise of what I'm proposing, to play the cynic, and say "Well you're just reading into it" or "All pop songs are like that" or something to that effect.

I would suggest not taking this stance until you finish. If you finish at all. As I said, once the Jepsen Pattern becomes evident, the song-by-song is going to be the cartoon equivalent of a character repeatedly smashing themselves in the head with a hammer.

We are taught Occam's razor, that being the theory that the simplest explanation is usually the truth. And in this case, Occam's razor is in my hand, slashing open my brain to reveal a thunderous tidal wave of Carly Rae Jepsen lyrics hidden within.

For me, the revelation started in Canada, coincidentally Carly's homeland. It started as a joke, and then bloomed into an archaeological deep dive you'll see in the coming pages. So grab your maple syrup and hockey stick, and I'll show you how deep this rabbit hole goes.

Because Carly Rae doesn't just sing about love, or sex, in general.

She sings in startling, crystal clear *specificity*.

And what she sings about isn't fun, fulfilling, or stable.

Carly Rae Jepsen is in Hell.

PART 1 - **BLOCKED NUMBER**

I first encountered Carly Rae Jepsen, along with nearly everybody else in America, in 2012, when her break-out hit “Call Me Maybe” exploded into international acclaim, with eighteen million buys putting it down in the history books as one of the best selling singles of all time. “Call Me Maybe’s” catchy hook, charming vocals, A+ pop production and goofy, self-deprecating lyrics made it a hit, but there was something there in the generic-ness of the pop that felt...odd.

Something about “Call Me Maybe” separates it from the usual Songs Of The Summer; it gives the impression of almost being from another era, or a song created for some fictional popstar from a movie; tonally, it has more in common with the titular song from “That Thing You Do” than it does with “Baby One More Time.”

The cutesiness feels intentionally grating, and somehow self conscious, as though written for a character, or failing that, one specific voice. The song, while sounding like the ultimate in generic pop, still somehow seems like it’s winking at you.

Indeed, upon investigating the lyrics a little further, its seemingly innocuous story of a “chance flirtatious encounter ending in a phone number exchange” starts to show some peculiar deviations from flirty pop cliché.

“”

*Hey I just met you
And this is crazy
But here's my number
So call me maybe
It's hard to look right at you baby
But here's my number
So call me maybe*

“”

The chorus is the first little piece of our mosaic. Just a tiny piece, innocent enough on its own, but worth taking a moment to examine, because we’re going to look back at it as the Jepsen Pattern becomes more visible.

Unlike most pop songs, especially those by female popstars, Call Me Maybe shyly presents potential rejection of romance as a real, and even probable option. Carly repeatedly states hesitance and fear throughout the song, not even feeling safe enough to ask this man to call her, instead quickly pulling back into a “maybe” to avoid outright rejection.

“You’re overanalyzing this!” I can already feel you thinking. “This is so extra, is the whole thing going to be like this?”

Cool cool cool. Reasonable response. Take a look here, at the second verse.

“”

*You took your time with the call
I took no time with the fall
You gave me nothing at all
But still you're in my way*

“”

What? No, seriously, **what?** The verses of the song tell a linear story: she wasn't intending to fall in love, she became attracted to a boy in ripped jeans at first sight, she gave him her number, and then... This.

He gave her nothing at all.

The lyric sneaks by amidst all the cheery pop music, and is easy to dismiss, without context, as pop nonsense. But when paired with “you took your time with the call,” it very subtly paints a different picture than you'd have at first glance. Instead of being about a hopeful blossoming romance, Call Me Maybe is about an awkward girl that gets rejected after getting caught up and coming on too strong to a boy who wasn't even that interested in her.

But still, he's in her way. This boy rejected her, but she's still thinking about him.

I'm guessing, if you had only listened to the song on a surface level, this take seems sort of odd. The song sounds so happy, but...is it?

Even the video seems to back up this read of the song; it shows Jepsen as a bashful girl next door making a fool out of herself as she gawks and leers over a sexy neighbor. But by the time the video wraps up, it's revealed her love will forever be unrequited: the neighbor is gay, and ignores Carly in favor of one of her male bandmates, leaving her befuddled, bummed out, and alone.

“Befuddled, bummed out, and alone” are not emotional states that naturally occur when you hear the song “Call Me Maybe;” you think “flirtatious fun.” But the rush of meeting someone gives way to inevitable disappointment and rejection. Seems an odd theme for a pop song. Let's take one more look at the end of the chorus.

“”

*And all the other boys
Try to chase me*

“”

That's less uncommon of a theme; disinterest in the boys actually interested in you, chasing the unattainable. But it's worth noting now. Because it will be back.

But hey, it's just a pop song. It's not like it means anything.

Like everyone else, for me initially the song went in one ear and out the other. I, along with the rest of the world, assumed Carly Rae was a one hit wonder. All this subtextual stuff in Call Me Maybe was probably just a one time thing, no more meaningful or significant than the bullshit faux-punk screed of Avril Lavigne's Sk8r Boi.

Of course, bopping in my car in Los Angeles, I had no idea how wrong I was. I had no understanding of what “Call Me Maybe” would eventually represent to me.

A tiny grey spot moving fast on the water.

The tip of of the fin of a massive, larger shark, swimming below the surface.

The faintest trace of a behemoth, moving silently through a catchy tune.

PART 2 - **RED FLAGS**

By the time EMOTION was released in 2015, Carly Rae had been all but dismissed as a flash in the pan. And indeed, Emotion's first single, "I Really Like You," featuring a twee video with Tom Hanks, felt like a bit of a retread of "Call Me Maybe," covering much of the same topical ground of flirtatious hesitance and a repetitive, catchy hook.

Despite critical success and high spots on many music critics' year end lists, the album underperformed globally, and subsequent singles didn't make much of a dent in the charts.

I didn't know this.

I don't give a fuck about music criticism.

I listen to pop on the radio, and occasionally find a niche band on YouTube I get obsessed with. I don't read music reviews or go to music websites or even actively seek out new bands. I am your basic bitch KIIS FM guy.

I watched the YouTube video, laughed twice, and quickly forgot the song, and even the idea that the "Call Me Maybe" girl had a second album. But that's when the groundswell started. Friend after friend entreated me to listen to the album. "It's the best pop album of the year!" "It's better than 1989!" "Max, you love pop YOU WILL LOVE THIS YAAAASSSS!"

The girls and the gays had spoken. I had to at least try. I bought EMOTION on iTunes.

And oh god did I love it. I loved it SO MUCH. Every song on the entire album felt like a single to me. I couldn't figure out why it wasn't a breakaway success. I, like my gay friends before me, became near goddamn Evangelical about Carly Rae Jepsen, constantly tweeting praise towards the album and recommending it to anyone who talked to me for more than two minutes in the Fall of 2015.

Right around the time I was shown the light, I was in heavy development on the first season of my television show, Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency. The job was extremely stressful, and I found myself listening to Emotion every day on the way to and from the writer's room, loving the upbeat vibes. I'd sing along, and it wasn't long 'til I knew the entire album by heart.

It was still in heavy rotation on my work playlist by the time I got to Vancouver, British Columbia, to begin production on the show. And it was there that I first noticed something...off, I guess...

Yes. "Off" is the right word for my initial awareness of the pattern. Like, when you hear a creak from somewhere in the house when you know you're the only one home. You know it's nothing. But is it? Then why the fuck it creaking like that?

A couple of specific words or images repeated on a few tracks. And even though the songs all sounded cheery, sultry, or sexy, some of them were actually kind of sad. Or like... *really* sad. Like even the ones that sounded happy sounded weirdly...cautious about being happy, lyrically, even as the pop production blasted out behind them, and Carly's voice added silly fun.

That was...weird. Like a hair raising on the back of my neck. I started to listen to the album more closely.

At first, playing endlessly on loop in my car, what I'd come to recognize as something much larger appeared as a pattern of things **Carly Rae DIDN'T sing about on Emotion**. I thought it was funny that I noticed that every song was sung in second person, communicating ideas and emotions to a single audience, a "you."

This isn't uncommon for pop, but just for kicks, once I got back to my office one night, I decided to make a list of things pop-stars usually address in their songs, that Carly Rae didn't touch on the album EMOTION:

Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about just wanting to dance and have fun.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about the club/partying unless it's to escape something.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about looking great or feeling confident.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about openly treacherous boys or being betrayed.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about memorable good experiences.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about wanting to be successful, beautiful or powerful.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about reciprocated dedication in a relationship.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about feminism or empowerment.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about sex or seduction for the thrill of it.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about successfully getting over a break up.
Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing songs of vengeful condemnation nor open rejection.

I looked at the list, bemused, and then quickly added:

With only one exception, Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about abstract concepts.
With only one exception, Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about other women.

In my office in Vancouver, I ran through the album on my head, and realized one final addition. That, perhaps most startlingly for a pop star:

Carly Rae Jepsen does not sing about being in reciprocated love.

I felt less bemused. Something actually felt weird, now. Feeling confident, sexy, going out and dancing, these are bones of what pop music is. Singing about good times, being powerful and successful, wanting to have fun, thrilling hook ups

It got me thinking: what **does** Carly Rae sing about on the album Emotion?

This list was easy to make. I wrote down quickly:

**TEMPTATION (SEXUAL)
OBSESSION
LIMERENCE
SECRETS
ESCAPE
REJECTION
MISERY/LONGING**

I took a beat, and connected some dots in my head.

Many of the songs contained combinations of these tones and themes, some of them encapsulating all seven. The multiple combinations and recombinations seemed to imply crossover of a single narrative; multiple songs about different parts of the same story; the emotions expressed, the scenarios described, did they add up to something?

It appeared, in fact, that they did.

So, if Emotion was a story, what was the story about?

I took a moment, thought about the lyrics, then typed down in my Notepad file:

“A BRIEF DOOMED UP/DOWN (?) SECRET (?) SEXUAL/ROMANCE WITH PLATONIC MALE
FRIEND ULTIMATELY ENDING IN HIS REJECTION OF HER (???)”

That felt weird. It was **so** specific. Was I imagining things? Lyrics started popping up in my head. That song? Wait, that song too? In context, that next song, and the next, and...

...Now, in fact, the whole record kind of felt weird. These songs all sounded so happy. But when lifted into the light, each of them, even the most upbeat, contained some level of hesitation, possible failure, uneasiness about emotional risk or flat out rejection.

The idea that the “love” she was singing about was somehow dangerous...and almost always, doomed. Again and again and again. Looking at those lists felt, for lack of a better term, eerie. I couldn't believe that the list of 7 simple themes contained every song, and all seemed to tie into each other. What did that mean?

The album suddenly seemed kind of..for lack of a better word, haunted. The word “Friend” kept showing up. The theme of already having been left behind, of love as an initially thrilling, but ultimately foolish, disappointing and even painful mistake.

It was just a pop album. There was no ghost. Just a creaky floorboard.

But my eyes kept going back to the lists. Her focus felt so specific. So articulate. So utterly disappointed.

I couldn't help but get a chill. Was there actually something here? I think it could be equated to the feeling some people get from the Mandela Effect, or using a Ouija Board. The difference was, if I sat down and went through the lyrics, I could get something rarely offered to conspiracy theorists: concrete proof.

I opened up Spotify. It had started to rain outside. I thought, I'll listen to each song, and see how they fit my theory. I mean the two lists I made, the huge amount of things she

DOESN'T sing about set against the relatively small amount of things she DOES couldn't apply to every song on the album, could it?

I sat back in my chair as the opening of Run Away With Me played, eager to prove myself wrong, having no idea of the journey I was beginning. The air conditioning blew in my office. The rain spattered against the window.

I'd opened up Notepad on my laptop, my two lists in front of me.

Of course, at the time, **I had no idea that my dumb little lists *would apply to nearly every song Carly Rae Jepsen has ever released.***

PART 2 ANNEX -

EMOTION (2015) - A TRACK BY TRACK EXPLORATION

The first sound you hear on the album of EMOTION is some kind of wailing, low cry; a kind of synth bagpipe. This melodic explosion is catchy and instantly iconic; it brings to mind the opening of Rod Stewart's "Rhythm of My Heart," a song I only know because it was used in the end credits of a 1996 Ted Danson movie about the Loch Ness Monster.

As I said, I am not a music critic.

Yet even these bagpipes are important, because they, like so much on this album, don't feel "straight up happy." There's a feeling of longing to them; of unfulfilled desire.

Seriously, go listen to it. It feels like you're missing someone, or something. Longing for something you can't have. And that's confirmed within the lyrics of the album.

Keep in mind as we get into this, any song analyzed individually will sound like me being super silly and OCD about a pop confection.

But warning, dear reader: as they stack up, I will sound progressively less silly.

1 - RUN AWAY WITH ME

We open with the introduction of three of our themes: **LIMERENCE**, **SECRETS** and **ESCAPE**.

“”

*You're stuck in my head, stuck on my heart, stuck on my body, body
I wanna go, get out of here, I'm sick of the party, party
I'd run away
I'd run away with you*

“”

The **ESCAPE** theme should be obvious, but there's more to unpack even here in the first lyrics. As you'll come to see, Carly almost always contextualizes her romantic desire as "stuck" or "blocking" her in some way; it is always a suspicious, troubling obstacle. An easy example that might jump to your mind before we get too deep into this is the repetition of "you're in my way" on "Call Me Maybe."

Appearing alongside this is the emergent subtheme of being “in someone’s head.” The idea of love, or romantic feelings, as trapping someone psychologically, or wanting your love to be trapped in someone else’s head, often specifically with variations of those words: “stuck in my head.” So let’s call this subtheme that: **Stuck In My Head.**

That’s gonna show up a lot.

Alongside this is the idea that Carly isn’t interested in being around other people, specifically other people in a social setting like a party and would rather be alone with Her Love. This idea, of separating to be alone, we’ll call **Alone With Someone**, and the subtheme of not being interested in groups or revelry unless there’s some kind of ulterior motive, we’ll call **Partying With An Ulterior Motive.**

Let’s name these sub-themes, and catalogue them, to make identifying them easier as we go. Every subtheme we encounter, I’ll identify and point out, so you can recognize it when it reappears. So right now we have **Stuck In My Head, Alone With Someone** and **Partying With An Ulterior Motive.**

These themes might, like everything I point out, at first seem innocent, or like common pop tropes. But, as we go, I cannot overstate how many times these specific ideas are going to reappear, so it’s worth naming them now.

We also have our first sighting of wanting to **ESCAPE**, and have someone to yourself. This is contextualized further in the next lyric.

“

*This is the part, you've got to say all that you're feeling, feeling
Packing a bag, we're leaving tonight when everyone's sleeping, sleeping*

“

Two more themes introduced here that we’re going to see endlessly, again and again, so they’re important to point out. The first is subtle, and that’s that the man *has not agreed to run away with her*, nor has he *expressed the things she believes/wants him to feel.*

She is entreating him: “Say what you’re feeling.” This Run Away plan is hers and hers alone; a fantasy. Notice in the first lyric “I’d run away with you” not “I *will* run away with you.” Again I’m going to have to ask you to go on trust here that this is going to be important. Let’s call this subtheme **Not Saying Something.**

The second theme is less subtle: the idea of a **SECRET** escape. That no one can know that they’re going away together, and that they must do it at night, “when everyone’s sleeping.”

“”

*Oh baby, take me to the feeling
I'll be your sinner, in secret
When the lights go out
Run away with me
Run away with me*

“”

Ah, see, there we go: our **SECRET** is confirmed. It's also the first time on the album Jepsen talks about the "lights going out," and doing a secret escape under the cover of darkness. But it's not the first in her career, and it won't be the last. Not by a long shot.

It's worth bringing up the word "sinner" here. It'd be easy to dismiss this as a cutesy sexual reference; they'll hook up with no lights on. But the song is meant to be romantic; again, the love Carly is describing must be kept "secret," because it is a "sin." This is a secret or **Bad/Forbidden Love** somehow.

Why?

It's weird typing this out right now. It's like telling people "Tyler Durden and the Narrator are the same person" when they've never even seen a trailer for FIGHT CLUB.

“”

*Up in the clouds, high as a kite, over the city, city
We never sleep, we never tried, when you are with me, with me*

“”

Here's Carly referring to love as being a "high." You'll come to see that "getting high" and "being turned on" are shorthand for the type of love Carly is chasing. So that's **Getting High**.

We also see that she has never had a sleepover with the man she's entreating to run away with her. This idea, of **Spending The Night Together** is impactful later, but **Staying Up All Night** is just as important. Sleeping, not sleeping, and dreaming figure hugely into Carly's work.

This is our first real evidence of **LIMERENCE**, the first stages of love, where it feels like a manic, lovely high. But it also shows us that this guy is probably not her boyfriend, and certainly not in any kind of stable or long term relationship.

Everything we suspected about this "getaway" being a proposal rather than a reality is confirmed on the song's bridge.

“

*Hold on to me
I'll never want to let you go
(Run away with me, run away with me)
Over the weekend
We can turn the world to gold, oh oh
(Run away with me, run away with me)*

“

Again, she's not describing something that's actually happened, and here, it almost sounds like it's not going to happen. She's nearly begging him; "I'll never want to let you go." **Begging For Affection/Love**, much more blatant than this, will be found later.

One more couplet we should examine:

“”

*I'll be your hero, I'm willing
When the lights go out*

“”

This is an idea that will recur in various ways across all of Carly’s “escape” songs; the idea that by running away with her, she will save Her Lover from a bad situation, be his hero, and in some way, doing this will sacrifice some element of herself; she’s “willing.”

The duality of Carly painting herself both as a “sinner” villain, and a romantic “hero” is worth remembering.

2 - EMOTION

The themes on this one are **OBSESSION, REJECTION, MISERY** and **ESCAPE**. And we jump straight into it off the top.

“”

*Be tormented by me babe
Wonder, wonder how I do
How's the weather? Am I better?
Better now that there's no you?
Drink tequila for me babe
Let it hit you cool and hot
Let your feelings be revealing
That you can't forget me*

“”

Another new subtheme: **Separation By Physical Distance** shows up here, but something more worth discussing is the nature of “love” in Carly Rae Jepsen’s music.

Carly here again characterizes love as a bad thing, that causes pain, and torment; a memory that won’t fade and tortures someone long after a relationship ends. Here, she’s using it to empower herself...or so it seems.

Because she’s not saying love actually torments Her Former Lover. She’s saying SHE HOPES it does. Carly is actively worried about **Being Forgotten**. It takes a second to understand, but then the next lyrics come help us out.

“”

*Not a flower on the wall
I am growing ten feet, ten feet tall
In your head and I won't stop
Until you forget me, get me not*

“”

When she was with this guy, she was **Shy**, a wallflower. This is going to come back up a billion more times; in the time since the relationship with Her Former Lover has ended, Carly has blossomed. And now...

...”In your head and I won’t stop.” Rings a bell, right? That’s because like 4 minutes ago on Runaway With Me she starts the album talking about something being **Stuck In Her Head** as the opening line.

Carly is expressing something here that's huge, and deeply emotionally broken: she wants Her Love to feel what she feels for him, and for it to torture him the way it tortures her.

But it doesn't.

“”

*In your fantasy, dream about me
And all that we could do with this emotion
Fantasy, dream about me
And all that we could do with this emotion
This emotion, I feel it
This emotion, you feel it
All that we could do with this emotion*

“”

The chorus seals the deal: despite the sassy attitude of the opening lyrics, *this isn't a break-up song*. She is still madly in love with him, and wants him to dream of a world where he feels the same way about her that she does about him.

But he doesn't.

Dreams and fantasies are a massive, entrenched subtheme in Carly's work. She is almost always escaping into them, and within her dreams and fantasies, she is loved by the person she's singing to.

Compare this, for example, to one of Carly's contemporary popstars, Katy Perry: let's take for example Perry's use of "dreams" on Teenage Dream. This song is also about proposing a fun, sexy getaway, but it's mutual; "You make me feel like I'm living a teenage dream."

The difference is linguistically subtle but philosophically huge; Katy is so loved, she feels like she's living a dream, whereas Carly Rae escapes to dreams *in order to feel loved*.

I'll stop saying this so often, but: ***This is going to come back.***

“”

*Paint a picture for me, boy
Where the sky's forever blue
Tell me there is nothing
I can't have and nothing you won't do
Toss and turn without me, boy
Let it hit you cold and hot
All my kisses, say you'll miss it
And you can forget me not*

“”

Our second verse here is just more asking for him to love her; specifically, asking him to imagine a fantasy world they can escape to, where he will love her, and remember her, the way she loves and remembers him.

3 - I REALLY LIKE YOU

This was the single, and functions in many ways as a kind of “sequel” to Call Me Maybe, aiming for the same catchy repetitive hook and bright shiny fun that made that song a hit. Primary themes touched on here are **TEMPTATION** and **LIMERENCE**, but, as always, sigils of other narrative threads rear their heads very quickly.

“”

*I really wanna stop
But I just got the taste for it*

“”

Already we have the song starting with the words “I really wanna stop.” The theme of temptation, as always, made literal: the idea that the thing that she desires is somehow **Bad/Forbidden Love**.

“”

*I feel like I could fly with the boy on the moon
So honey hold my hand, you like making me wait for it
I feel like I could die walking up to the room, oh yeah*

“”

So here’s the idea of love **Getting High** with the flying to the moon thing, but also more themes of temptation, of a “friend” who’s teasing her, and forcing her to make the first move. Let’s also talk about the wording of that second lyric: I feel like I could die walking up to the room.

“Walking up to the room.”

“Up to the room.” It’s an interesting way to say that. Not “your room,” not “my room,” but “the room.” It seems innocuous, but the idea of this potentially being a “hotel,” or something tempting happening in a hotel room, will return later in her discography.

“

*Late night, watching television
But how’d we get in this position?
It’s way too soon, I know this isn’t love
But I need to tell you something*

“”

Late night watching television, but not on a date. This person is a platonic friend, and the “position” they’re in seems to more be a reference to a *sexual position* rather than a “difficult philosophical quandary.” Things may have become physical.

And the connection is strong enough that Carly, despite warning herself that it’s too soon, needs to make a declaration.

“”

*I really really really really really really like you
And I want you. Do you want me? Do you want me too?*

“”

As usual, a declaration of affection or desire is presented as a risk, and asks for any kind of validation of her feelings as soon as the next lyric:

“”

*Oh, did I say too much?
I'm so in my head
When we're out of touch*

“”

There's a couple of sub-themes at play: the idea that Carly **Has Said Something She Regrets**, the idea that she's **Trapped In Her Head**, and **Physical Separation** from Her Would Be Lover shows up here, as well.

Let's remember **Saying Something You Regret**. The idea that Carly said something she greatly regrets, implied to be an over-declaration of love, is consistent all the way back to her unreleased first album that she wrote when she was 16 years old.

“”

*It's like everything you say is a sweet revelation
All I wanna do is get into your head
Yeah we could stay alone, you and me, in this temptation*

“”

The **Into Your Head** theme shows up here; she wants him to think about her like she thinks about his “sweet revelations,” and, like always, even having to state this implies that he doesn't. We've got her again desiring to have him **Alone**, and the idea of temptation and infatuation; a relationship that hasn't started yet, that even identifying out loud might be “saying too much.”

4 - GIMMIE LOVE

Gimmie Love is a fascinating and archetypal case study in the Jepsen style of Fake Out Love Songs. Listened to casually, Gimmie Love sounds like a typical romantic bopper; happy and sexy, affectionate and sultry. But the second you actually clue into the lyrics, a more sinister picture is painted, and we see the real themes present here: **MISERY** and **OBSESSION**.

“”

*Worlds fly by
Drove by your place and stopped again tonight
I know I said that I'm too scared to try
But I still think about you, think about you
And I can't lie
I like the feeling, how you make me shy
I share my secrets and I will not hide
I know that one could be two, one could be two*

“”

So already we have her parked outside his place, repeatedly, obsessively **Saying Something She Regrets**, and someone being **Stuck In Her Head/Trapped By Emotions, Being Made**

Shy. Worth saying, **Cars and Driving** are a leitmotif as well. I mean, that's like a Carly Rae Jepsen BINGO at this point, and we're only four songs in.

“”

*Gimme love
Gimme love, gimmie love, gimmie love, gimmie love
Gimme touch
Cause I want what I want, do you think that I want too much?*

“”

Right up until the last lyric, this could've been a normal pop chorus. “*Do you think I want too much?*” Again, she is entreating him, begging him even, and aware that her desire could very probably be rejected.

This is where the fascinating interplay of the relationship Carly always describes comes into focus. And I should say: it does always appear to be one relationship, or at least, one very specific type of relationship.

It sounds like she wants to get a guy who SHE broke up with, via saying something, and yet in the details of the language, it becomes clear that it's him who left her, and the thing she was maybe “too scared to try” was actually just interacting with him AFTER the break up.

Here, take a look:

“”

*Eyes so bright
You got a hold of me the whole damn night
I toss and turn but still I can't sleep right
I should've asked you to stay, begged you to stay*

“”

She doesn't literally mean he's holding her. The hold is mental; he's “stuck in her head,” unable to **SLEEP** (dreaming and sleeping of course already a subtheme), and she is tortured by regret, deciding she should've *begged* him to stay with her.

Someone not **Spending The Night Together** and **Staying Up All Night** are common Carly Themes, and will be back very often; this lyric specifically evokes an image from “Cry,” on Emotion Side B.

“”

*It's the way we are together
Wanna feel like this forever
It's the way we are together
And I never thought I'd ever
Say forever*

“”

In the bridge, we get more imagery relevant to our subtheme of Carly's hesitation: She never thought she'd say forever, but now she has...And she's begging for him to come back and let the way she felt with him be a reality.

5 - ALL THAT

“All That” is interesting because it’s very simply a love song...But of course, as I’ve said, Carly doesn’t really do straight up love songs. Her love songs fall into three definable categories: expressing hesitant shock and being overwhelmed that she’s found a **LIMERENCE** connection with someone, pitching an escape where she and her love interest would leave all the burdens of their lives and be alone together, or, like this song, begging for the attention of someone who doesn’t want her, and who very probably has someone else.

Under this headline, this song like many others falls into the realm of **OBSESSION, ESCAPE,** and **MISERY/LONGING.**

“”

*I wanna play this for you all the time
I wanna play this for you when you're feeling used and tired
I wanna make the best of you and more
Just let me in your arms
Just let me in your arms*

“”

So clearly she is NOT his girlfriend, or even possibly his lover. She wants to be “in his arms,” and is not separated by any concrete obstacle beyond that he won’t “let” her. We touch here that this guy is stressed, or unhappy, as well, and Carly feels he needs her. Being **In Someone’s Arms** comes up a lot. Like, a lot a lot, so let’s mark the subtheme now.

“”

*Show me if you want me
If I'm all that
I will be that
I will be your friend*

“”

On the chorus, which sounds sultry and romantic, Carly is actually just asking this guy to give her any validation, to **SHOW** her he wants her. It’s “Do you want me? Do you want me too?” from “I Really Like You” again. This guy is *not* a regular or reliable lover.

The choice of the word “friend” here is weighty, too. Carly doesn’t even ask **THAT** much. She just wants to be his “friend,” the person closest to him. The one he relies on. That’s brought back in the second verse:

“”

*When you need me
I will never let you come apart
When you need me
I will be your candle in the dark
When you need someone
Oh, let me be the one
The only one
And the only one*

And the only one

“”

Again it's implied that this guy is in an unstable or unhappy situation, in need of her. The guy is **In A Bad or Dark Place**. But she has competition for being his only person. He is not reciprocating in the way she wants; to be not just his “one,” but specifically, “the only one.” “And the only one. And the only one.”

6 - BOY PROBLEMS

Out of all of Carly Rae's songs, this is the only one in which she mentions another adult woman who **isn't someone else's girlfriend or in some way an adversary or competition**. And by “all,” I don't mean just this album.

I mean literally all of her songs. Process that for a moment. This is her only song in which she mentions another adult female human being. I've listened to all of her songs. This is the only one in which Carly mentions having an adult female friend.

And that is strange, comparatively. Female pop-stars mention other women, or friends, or even enemies, or even just women as a gender, relatively often. Taylor Swift's “Fifteen,” Destiny Child's “Independent Woman, Pt. 1” Beyonce's “Single Ladies,” Katy Perry's “California Gurls;” female pop-stars generally have, somewhere, at least one song about women, or friendship.

But Carly is, almost without exception, singing directly to a man, or about a way a man made her feel, framing things to a “you” with other people rarely involved. Generally the characters that come up in Carly's song are implied romantic competitors for her love, whom she isn't interested in, and are the source of the **All The Other Boys/Everybody Else Is Second Best** trope.

But on “Boy Problems,” another woman enters the scene as an ally, for the first, and only time. Context here is key. The way in which she talks about her friend, and the social and emotional situation they've found themselves in, is very important. It's worth saying, not only is “Boy Problems” a fucking BANGER and one of the best songs on the album, it was my realization about that song fitting into a larger pattern that first opened my eyes to the pervasiveness of the pattern on Emotion, and eventually...

Everything. *Everything*.

MISERY/LONGING and of course **OBSESSION** show their colors in a new way, here, at last commented on by an outside perspective.

“”

*If you're gonna go then go
She said to me on the phone
So tired of hearin' all your boy problems
If you're gonna stay then stay
He's not gonna change anyway
So tired of hearin' all your boy problems*

“”

So here we have Carly talking to a Female Friend on the phone, playing both roles. The Female Friend, though, has given up on friendly advice and started giving tough love. These aren't "Boy Problems" in general, despite the title.

This is a "Boy Problem," referring to one man, who Carly is locked in a back and forth relationship with that's gone on long enough that her friend is sick of hearing about it.

“”

*And I know that she's right
And I should not be offended
That I know what it looks like
From the outside*

“”

Carly can't deny that, from an outside perspective, her choices with this man look openly bad or unhealthy. He could just be flighty and unreliable.

Or. Or. The relationship could be some sort of **SECRET**. But that, for now, will remain conjecture.

“”

*Finally gotta let it go
She said to me on the phone
So tired of hearin' all your boy problems
It could be the perfect day
You'll just make it rain anyway
So tired of hearin' all your boy problems*

“”

The "Finally" that starts this lyric is key. It confirms that it's not many general problems with boys, but one longstanding issue with one man, who makes Carly so unhappy that she "makes it rain" on "perfect days."

This ongoing relationship does not fulfill Carly, in fact it makes her unhappy.

“”

*What's worse?
Losin' a lover or losin' your best friend
What's worse is when you discover
You're not good for each other
She's been giving, you've been taking, taking, taking*

“”

This is Carly pondering: if she stays involved with this guy, she stands to lose her relationship with her best friend. And when she thinks about it, Carly realizes that her poor friend has been dealing with her complaining for a long time, and has been offering support, only for Carly to continuously repeat her mistakes in this complicated relationship.

That part really sticks with me, writing this now, four albums of analysis later. "Finally gotta let it go."

“Finally gotta let it go.”

“Finally.”

7 - MAKING THE MOST OF THE NIGHT

In tradition with every song on this album so far, the themes aren't going to be subtle, here. Making The Most Of The Night fits evenly into the **ESCAPE** category, existing synonymously with Run Away With Me, and eventually with the third in the **ESCAPE** trilogy on EMOTION, Let's Get Lost.

But we're not there yet. So let's get into this: **ESCAPE, SECRETS, TEMPTATION, OBSESSION**, with sub-themes of **Driving, Getting High, Not Sleeping** and **A Lover In A Dark Place**.

Let's do this.

“”

*You and me, we've been hanging around for the longest time
I know when you're down, know what you need to get you high
Top down, like the wind through your hair on a summer's night
Outside, all of your fears, leave them behind*

“”

They've been “hanging around for the longest time.” They're friends, not lovers, and he's often “down,” but she can make him “high.” She describes an escape where the fears, or perhaps hesitations, he struggles with, can be left behind.

She's hopeful for **Friends Upgrading To Lovers**.

As usual with Carly, this escape is in a car. Cars and driving play a big role in Jepsen's music, and this song is totemic of their role as both literal forms of transportation and also metaphorical vehicles of emotion.

“”

*Baby I'm speeding and red lights are run
What I got you need it, and I'll run to your side
When your heart is bleeding, I'm coming to get you*

“”

Carly is speeding and behaving dangerously; the red lights are metaphorical. Carly is doing things she shouldn't in order to be with this guy, at his side, to comfort him. She is “coming to get him” and breaking rules to do so.

The idea that their connection is a mistake or forbidden is all but confirmed in the chorus.

“

*I know you've had a rough time
Here I've come to hijack you (hijack you), I love you while*

Making the most of the night

“

This guy is miserable, but don't worry, Carly's on her way to **HIJACK** him. Not just “run away” with him, which she already said would have to be a secret escape no one could know about. Here, she boldly admits what she really wants:

hi-jack
'hī_jak/

VERB - illegally seize (an aircraft, ship, or vehicle) in transit and force it to go to a different destination or use it for one's own purposes.

This guy, Her Love, *is not hers to take*. She wants to steal him away, but even if she hijacks him, they'll only really have a night together. His time is limited, for her, even in a hijacking. The song is just about an **ESCAPE** from his real life, temporary and limited.

And again, it is a **TEMPORARY ESCAPE** that **HE HAS NOT AGREED TO AND MIGHT NOT EVEN BE INTERESTED IN**. In fact, in the following verse, she directly confirms that he's not an enthusiastic participant in the hijacking.

““

*Baby take my hand now, don't you cry
I won't let you sleep, I won't let you hide
No more tears, don't waste another day
Go on and fight, don't lay down to die
Come on get up, you'll make it through okay
Come on get up, don't waste another day*

““

So let me address the elephant in the room: These lyrics are actually kind of...well, they sound kind of, and I mean this in the nicest way possible: “creepy.” Again, no sleeping allowed, and also...He can't hide from her...It's weird.

Going with her would be a “fight” against whatever else is happening in his life, and she compares him not accepting her to “laying down to die” and “wasting days.” Going with her, in her mind, is the only thing that can “save” him, (“I'll be your hero I'm willing” from Run Away With Me) and yet...

That's just how she sees it. The guy clearly has doubts about the “hijacking,” and somewhere inside, Carly herself knows that it's wrong; otherwise why code in the expected resistance so heavily?

And some good reasons for that show up almost immediately on the next track.

8 - YOUR TYPE

Well, shit.

Here we have some themes laid totally bare, with very little pop sparkle around them to hide the brutally sad and frustrated content of the lyrics. This is what I would come, eventually, in my big stupid Carly adventure, as a **KEYSTONE SONG**.

Ladies and gentlemen: **SECRETS, OBSESSION, REJECTION, MISERY**, with some **ESCAPE** for good measure. And of course, we've also got **In Your Head, Being Forgotten, Separation by Physical Distance, Apologies, and Regretting Something Said**.

“”

*I used to be in love with you
You used to be the first thing on my mind
I know I'm just a friend to you
That I will never get to call you mine*

“”

Lovers Downgrading To Friends. The word “friend” does seem to be coming up a lot already, doesn't it?

So like a lot of Carly's first verses, there's a bit of self-protection via deception; she's lying to the audience of one. Carly claims immediately to be over this guy, and it's rapidly clarified that the choice wasn't hers. He has stepped back their relationship from lovers (?) to friends, and Carly's love is unwanted.

Yikes, good thing she's over it, right? And here's the chorus, and surprise, she isn't over it literally at all, even slightly:

“”

*But I still love you
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I love you
I didn't mean to say what I said
I miss you, I mean it, I tried not to feel it
But I can't get you out of my head*

“”

She's still madly in love with him, and frantically apologizes **for what she said**, but of course, she misses him, couldn't erase her powerful feelings, and **can't get him out of her head**.

“

*And I want you to miss me
When I'm not around you
I know that you're in town
Why won't you come around
To the spot that we met*

“”

Again, the clutching, clawing desire that tears her apart: that he would miss her the way she misses him, **want her the way she wants him**. And of course, the idea of them being in the same **physical location or city**.

Also, just as an aside: “I know that you're in town” fits neatly into the “intense text message” category of Jepsen lyrics. It also functions as a subtheme of its own; the idea of “knowing

someone's physical location" as a measure of emotional closeness is a near constant in her catalogue.

“”

*I'm not the type of girl for you
And I'm not going to pretend
That I'm the type of girl you call more than a friend
And I break all the rules for you
Break my heart and start again
I'm not the type of girl you call more than a friend*

“”

Well, there we go. She's accepted it. He's not interested in her. But then, no, she hasn't at all, actually. She wants to "break all the rules," and is WILLING TO HAVE HER HEART BROKEN AND KEEP TRYING, to be with him.

"Breaking all the rules." The idea of "running red lights" or being someone's **"sinner in secret"** return endlessly, **Bad or Forbidden Love**...And in this next lyric, we finally find out why:

“”

*I bet she acts so perfectly
You probably eat up every word she says
And if you ever think of me
I bet I'm just a flicker in your head*

“”

This guy has a girlfriend.

I know your first instinct is to perhaps think this girl, the one she's talking about, is actually a "new" girl, but she clearly isn't, even within the song. Trying to be with him was "breaking rules," and he pushed her away and **actively chose someone else over her, very possibly or probably someone he was already with.**

This is the first glimmer of this character, **Her Lover's Girlfriend**, on the album, but I'd hope we agree that she has been hinted at repeatedly by context clues of the kind of "secret" or "red light" "sinful" love described.

This character will steadily come into clearer and clearer focus as we move backwards through Jepsen's discography. By the time we get to the song "I Know You Have A Girlfriend," I think the theme will be readily apparent.

9 - LET'S GET LOST

This is the third and final entry in the **ESCAPE** trilogy on EMOTION, and conclusively seals the idea that this scenario, where she runs away with this unavailable guy, is a product solely of her wishes and dreams, rather than an actual planned outing with a lover who wants to go.

It's interesting how each song approaches the idea, turning it a little each time. Run Away With Me is her fantasizing about the escape as a mutual endeavor, painting him a picture and asking him to sign on to a sexy weekend of fun with her. Making The Most Of The Night focuses

instead on the emotional side, painting it as a fantasy where she saves him from everything unhappy (*and possibly his girlfriend*), impulsively “hijacking” him for just one night. But here on Let’s Get Lost, we have a more honest look at the situation. Again in the sub-themes, **Cars And Driving** and **Being Shy**. On the macro themes we’re into **OBSESSION**, **TEMPTATION**, **ESCAPE** and **SECRETS**.

“”

*I was never one to want to
Put my trust in someone else completely
And I was always one to want to
Up and run when someone said they needed me*

“”

She’s always hesitant, but what’s “new” here is that she had trouble being intimate previously. That’ll be important later. Worth also to say that this idea of Carly as a hard to please romantically cynical entity will be repeatedly show up as well; on “Higher” off Emotion Side B, Carly sings “I was so cynical before.”

The idea of Carly being disinterested in everyone else to the point that she makes a fuss about it is deeply pervasive in the Carlyverse, so let’s tip a hat to Jepsen’s break out single and call this subtheme **All The Other Boys**.

“

*But you
You could be the one
You could be the one*

“”

Notice: he ISN’T the one but he COULD BE. Again, she’s asking him, not telling him. Think of the pop cliché, the romantic trope: “You are the one.” She doesn’t even say that. Too dangerous. It’s a proposal, a proposition. “This could be how it is.”

“”

*Baby let’s go get lost
I like the way you’re drivin’ slow
Keeping my fingers crossed
That maybe you’ll take the long way home
Let’s get lost*

“”

Again, the driving metaphor...But this time, the escape isn’t even a real escape. She’s just sitting there silently hoping this guy takes her somewhere and...What? Loves her forever? No, probably not, considering a destination is in sight. So... Probably hooks up with her? The “long way home” and “lost” here are revealed as coy misdirections.

She doesn’t want to “get lost.” She has her fingers crossed he’ll soon allow her to be alone with him. Possibly in a literal car. Doing alone stuff. If you know what I’m saying. And I think you do.

But if you don’t, don’t worry, if you’re confused we’ll hit pretty hard what “alone stuff” entails a few tracks from now on “Warm Blood.”

“”

*I was always shy and careful
I was sure that you would never look at me
Never wanted to discourage
Everything your eyes encouraged silently*

“”

This is huge, because it shows us that a large part of this relationship started with what might've just been projecting; “everything your eyes encouraged silently” is a very interesting line. This guy never stated he was interested romantically (though she **feels** he did); but up until that point, she had felt shy and **careful**, trepidatious. He made her feel special.

And now all she's wanted for three whole songs is to take the long way home, because she's too shy ultimately to enact her fantasy of hijacking him to be his sinner in secret.

You could even argue this getaway is the one discussed on EMOTION (“*In your fantasy, dream about me, and all that we could do with this emotion*”). **The escape is ALWAYS a fantasy, a wish, a dream, a proposal. Never a reality.**

Every song so far in some way involves the theme of wanting someone who is potentially unavailable to her or has already made made clear that they're not interested.

Are you seeing what I'm saying here? You don't need to force the pieces together. They fit effortlessly. These songs are connected. Every song on this album is clearly and very specifically thematically linked together.

Every song on every album is connected- Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself.

10 - LA HALLUCINATIONS

At first blush, LA Hallucinations doesn't seem to fit into any of the 7 narrative touchstones we're pursuing. It appears to be about fame changing Carly herself, about the city of Los Angeles seducing her and turning her towards indulgence.

Except, as is often the case, the illusion of a Pattern-Breaking song is limited to the chorus.

As we'll see again and again, in the verses themselves, this song is about **abandonment by a male friend, lover, or both, and desire to be back in his arms**. This person is presented as a professional peer, so a musician, and a **figure from Carly's youth and early days as an artist, who fame has corrupted**.

This is the first time we've had ANYTHING like a specific picture painted of the “you” Carly sings to. We haven't got hair color, eye color, or even mentions of hair or face or skin or items of clothing or places they've been together or anything he's said or even anything he's done beyond pushing her away *in every song*.

Instead, behind the cliché indictment of California Materialism, we find a story about **TEMPTATION, OBSESSION, REJECTION and SECRETS**.

“”

*I remember being naked
We were young freaks just fresh to L.A
Never cared about the fake kids
We would write and sing and wear whatever
But money makes your whole world spin
Til everything is dizzy and suddenly*
“”

In a welcome variation from theme, Carly remembers being “naked,” although contextually it’s unclear if she means literally naked with a guy getting freaky, or metaphorically “naked,” feeling like an outsider “freak” (in a fun way), new to Los Angeles.

This second, less literal interpretation is reinforced by the second lyrics. She (and a companion), didn’t care what other people thought of them. Instead, they acted how they wanted, feeling free.

The notion here that they would “**write and sing**” is important. It’s the first time this other person is contextualized, they’re a writer, probably of songs, which they then sing with our narrator.

And even more groundbreaking on this album, and worth pointing your attention to, is that **this is the first time our narrator is potentially contextualized as Carly Rae Jepsen herself. This song is a memory of her past; she’s (ostensibly) telling us a story about emotions from her real life.**

Think now of the many times you’ve heard pop songs where “generalness” and vagaries are KEY to the lyrics. Some pop-stars almost never mention themselves as singers at all, and still others assume multiple characters and viewpoints across different songs to sing about different things.

This is not a generalized song about Los Angeles. Which, if at this point there was any doubt, really challenges the idea that all the previous songs on the album have been general; they all felt specific, and Carly establishing a voice here, especially with what she touches on next, is important.

“”

*Planes I'm hopping
Cards I'm dropping
No shop can fill me up
There's a little black hole in my golden cup so
You pour and I'll say stop*
“”

So again, this chorus, in any other song, would just be generalized woe-is-me’ing about how Los Angeles, or more generally “success,” breaks people down into their unpleasant, indulgent forms. The reference to a “little black hole in her golden cup” could just be the emptiness of material things.

Except, of course, it isn’t, and she’s kind enough to clarify that with the next line.

“

*Take me into your arms again
And shake me from L.A. hallucinations*

“

Someone can save Carly; **take me into your arms again** echoes “just let me in your arms” from All That. She needs to be shaken and woken up from the funk that has taken her; the LA hallucinations. So there’s **Being In Someone’s Arms**, for those keeping score.

“

*Haven't seen the boy in ages
Used to stay up all night he and I
Filling up each other's pages
But the teeth come out when the camera flashes*

“

This is where the “into your arms again” becomes apparent; she’s been separated from emotionally and also **Separated by Physical Distance** from this guy for some time, and he’s been unavailable to her. Staying up all night spending time, platonic or otherwise, shows up again here. **Staying Up All Night** is a constant trend.

“The Teeth Come Out When The Camera Flashes” seems to imply exposure, or fear of exposure, somehow corrupted her former Lover. And this is confirmed by the next line:

“

*We said we'd always be the same
But we lost each other in the game*

“

That’s a wrap up on the relevant lyrics, but I thought I’d include this last bit as part of the building of a meta narrative:

“”

*Buzzfeed buzzards and TMZ crows
What can I say that you don't already know?
Buzzfeed buzzards and TMZ crows
If I just lie here then will you let me go?*

“”

Jepsen implies here, in no uncertain terms, that BuzzFeed and TMZ would be interested in her affairs, most specifically her relationship to the fellow singer/songwriter referred to on this song. This implies that the guy in question is **famous** or at least **relevant**.

This will come back a few times; very notably on the song “Picture” from the **Curiosity EP**, the idea of a secret relationship with a famous person, as well as on “Black Heart,” and a few other places in less specific terms. But let’s leave it alone for now.

11 - WARM BLOOD

Heyyyy people let's get sensual, let's get steamy, let's get...bummed out?

Warm Blood is easily one of the straight up sexiest songs on the album, and appears at first to be some kind of banging hook up track; it's an absolutely wonderful make-out song, trust trust. I mean this is a hot sorta thang going on up in here.

So...When this song is about **TEMPTATION, SECRETS, and OBSESSION**, and heavily involves **being out of control, hesitation, dangerous or forbidden love, and saying things you regret...**

Look, are you even going to be surprised at this point?

“

*I've got a cavern of secrets
None of them are for you
Even if you wanted to keep them
Where would you find the room?*

“

Carly mentions keeping secrets in a dark or secluded place several other times in her discography, but what's interesting here is that she's already coming on to a guy who isn't interested in keeping her secrets...

...Because he has no “room.” Implying he can't keep her secrets...**Because he has too many of his own.**

“

*Let down my guard tonight
I just don't care anymore
I've told a hundred lies
But I don't wanna tell you any at all*

“

Carly has been hiding things, but now will finally be vulnerable and open; she's been lying, but is finally going to be honest about something she's been hiding to Her Love.

“

*And I cannot control it
The way you're making me feel
And you have got me going
Spinning in circles 'round your warm blood*

“

Again we have a situation where Carly is describing a visceral, sexual, euphoric excitement from an encounter without using any language that implies the other person is actually participating in a real way. Still, she's trapped, and “spinning in circles.”

“

*Warm blood feels good, I can't control it anymore
Sweet one, you should stop me there but I keep on talking*

*I would throw in the towel for you, boy
Cause you lift me up and catch me when I'm falling for you*
“

So obviously right off the top, talking repeatedly about blood without actually talking about any degree of actual touching or intimacy is a little...I mean let's just use the word “odd,” but we get a better picture of the situation here in the chorus.

It also sounds like she's **Saying Something She Regrets**.

This is not, as it first appeared, a description of a sexual encounter. This is someone saying something to someone else; Carly telling Her Love something that prompts her to say “you should stop me,” not a terrifically romantic idea, and one that implies that what she's saying is for some reason **inappropriate, secret or rule-breaking in some way. Bad/Forbidden Love**.

She is ready to be with him completely; Carly's “total emotional availability in comparison to her previous experiences” is a recurring theme, but the “lift me up and catch me when I'm falling for you” is the only mention of physical touch in a song built around a physical sensation, and even there, it seems like a metaphor.

Also, he “lifts her up,” **Getting her High**.

“

*I saw myself tonight
Saw my reflection in the mirror
My hands and heart were tied
But I was scared of almost nothing at all*
“

This verse is fascinating to me. The idea of seeing yourself in the mirror, or someone interacting with your reflection, will come back much later in our exploration, but much earlier in her career.

Carly sees herself clearly for the first time; though her hands and heart are “tied,” presumably by the rules of the situation, but she's no longer scared of potential repercussions. “Warm blood feels good.” Even though she has no guarantee it will be reciprocated.

12 - WHEN I NEEDED YOU

“When I Needed You” sounds like a break up song. Indeed, your brain processes it as a break-up song when you first hear it, even though *nothing in the song* makes it that other than one sentence in the chorus. “When I Needed You” sounds big and fun and silly; Carly sings it like it's some wild grandchild of Cyndi Lauper, all sparkly energy.

Even the chorus, with the “You-oo-oo,” sounds exuberant and happy. What's remarkable about this, why I am remarking about it and trying to build some level of suspense, is that this song is the polar opposite of a break-up song. It is a **BROKEN** song.

Whatever the opposite of Beyonce's "Irreplaceable is," this is it. Focusing on themes of **OBSESSION**, **SECRETS** and **REJECTION**, the lyrics of When I Needed You read less like a pop ballad and more like a letter written in blood, tied to a brick and hurled through a window.

“”

*What if we could go back?
We could take the words back
You could take my love back
And brush my hair behind my ear*

“”

We open with Carly fantasizing about rewinding time, to before she **Said Something She Regrets**. Because of course.

She wishes he could take back the love he rejected, but intriguingly, the physical demonstration of love Carly asks for, the hair behind the ear, can really only loosely considered truly intimate.

“”

*I don't know what you wanted
I tried to be so perfect
I thought that it was worth it
To let myself just disappear*

“

This lyric is as out and out of a bummer as we've had on this album, even rivaling the loneliness and desolation of "Your Type." Carly had no idea how to be with this guy, and was frantic for him to want her, and thought it was worth abandoning all of her ideas about her own identity to be considered "perfect" for him.

Again we're at one of those weird junctures where I don't have to add literally any degree of analysis to see what the line means. She was down to sacrifice her ego and ideas of self in a frantic desire to be considered perfect by a man who didn't want her. That's...I mean that's right there.

Carly (and her songwriters) are often wonderfully talented at fitting a huge amount of raw meaning into a short burst of lyrics with literally zero fluff.

“”

*You come to me in dreams at night
I wake up and I see the light*

“”

More **Dream** stuff, here. She used to fantasize about this guy, but now she's straight up haunted by him, and her decisions. Again, Carly's powerlessness in the relationship is key, and comes to a head in the chorus.

Brace yourself. Shit is about to get real.

“

*Sometimes I wish that I could change
But not for me, for you*

*So we could be together, forever
But I know, I know that I won't change for you
Cause where were you for me
When I needed someone?
When I needed someone?
When I needed you?*

I mean fuck that's a lot to unpack. That's a LOT to unpack.

Carly, long ago rejected and abandoned by Her Love, still fantasizes about being able to abandon her identity, but not for her, for him, so he'd finally love her, but she knows that won't happen, because he doesn't love her, and never ever will.

That's the chorus of a pop song. I mean holy shit. She sings that in a happy voice. Those lyrics look like something an angry ghost would scratch into a wall.

*Once upon a time I
Thought you were the hero
I waited for you all night
I closed my eyes and slept for years*

Back in the day, Carly idolized this guy. She was hoping he'd come over and see her; she stayed up all night (checking that **Staying Up All Night** box), closed her eyes and for the first time on the album appears to actually sleep...

...But that might just be a metaphor.

*You kissed me like a sunrise
I feel it through my forehead
I felt it like a goodbye
I'm not myself*

So he kissed her! FINALLY! HE KISSED HER, HE- oh wait, it was ON THE FOREHEAD. The oddly platonic vibe of brushing her hair behind her ear from the opening verse seems clear, here; she waited for this guy all night (literally or metaphorically), and all she got was a (literal or metaphorical) kiss on the forehead that felt like a goodbye.

And somehow, she's still wishing she could "change" for him.

That last line, "I'm not myself," is not clipped off, either. That's honest to goodness the last real lyric of the song. Just a rhymeless, little bleat of sadness.

"I'm not myself."

It's heartbreaking.

13 - BLACK HEART

Black Heart is, again, Carly singing about herself as a dangerous outsider to a man she desperately wants; a relationship between them forbidden by circumstance. This time, she appeals to his worst nature, trying to get him to admit, in his darkest moments, it's her she wants.

Again we focus on **TEMPTATION, SECRETS, OBSESSION** and **REJECTION**, and again crying, or specifically crying, and **Dreams** feature prominently. What's interesting here is a subtler clue; this song could be about anyone, but a single lyric thrown in near the end suddenly makes it appealingly specific.

“
*I don't care about your good intentions
I care more about your bad dreams
I want a love on a new dimension*
“

We start with what at this point should be a familiar request; Carly wants this guy to break the rules for her, tossing aside his “good intentions,” and instead wants him to act on his darkest impulses, and fantasies, to give her love on a new dimension.

“
*In your black heart, is where you'll find me
Cutting through the cracks of the concrete
In your black heart, is where you'll find me
Waiting, oh*
“

As always, we run into the implication that this is a man Carly **DOESN'T HAVE ACCESS TO**, outside of his “bad dreams;” she's waiting in his “Black Heart,” waiting for him to make an immoral or rule breaking choice, and she will be “waiting.

She wants him to give in to her, again presenting being with her as a somehow dark or evil choice. But this next line seals it.

“
*You think love is a destination
Like a show on your TV
You'll cry to your generation
But don't you cry to me*
“

There it is. This hits a major clue towards the meta-narrative. So first of all, this refusal to Cry will come back on the song “Cry” off Emotion Side B, and Black Heart has an actual full on sequel song, “Roses,” also on Emotion.

“You'll cry to your generation, but you don't cry to me.” The notion of a man who won't cry or be vulnerable with her makes an appearance here, and will resurface in no uncertain terms, again and again, but did you catch the overall image? Because let's not let it slip by.

This man has a **public voice**, he has a **platform to speak to his generation**, but won't open up to Carly. So he's someone important, or famous.

It's subtle, but an easy and obvious connection could be drawn to the same singer/songwriter who became emotionally unavailable to her once he became successful that she described on **LA HALLUCINATIONS**.

The same friend-turned-lover haunted by BuzzFeed Buzzards and TMZ Crows. Needless to say, this is not the last we'll be hearing of this guy.

14 - DIDN'T JUST COME HERE TO DANCE

This catchy dance track, ripe for remixing, also represents a crystallization of themes; in many ways, you'd expect a song with "dance" in the title to be about dancing, in some way, but no, Carly is on a very specific mission, and it's...

Kind of a stalker mission.

Namely that there's a forbidden relationship with a man that Carly initially resisted, but has now given in to, and rejects other men for, and has pursued to the club. Impressively, we hit **TEMPTATION, OBSESSION, REJECTION**, as well as sub-themes like **Partying With An Ulterior Motive** and **All The Other Boys**.

“

*I didn't just come here to dance
If you know what I mean
Do you know what I mean
If you just give me a chance
You'd see what I see
Do you see what I see
It's your fault, baby boy cause you're the one that sparked this
Shine a light, with your eyes into me in the darkness*

“

Carly has gone to a nightclub, or perhaps a party. Maybe even the same party she was sick of on "Run Away With Me," because her modus operandi is exactly the same.

She's not there to have fun; she's on a specific mission, which is to meet a specific man, who has both tempted her and resisted her. He's the one that "sparked this," but now she is taking initiative. There's something blocking an easy road to romance, but she wants a "chance." She's taking a risk on this. Sound familiar yet?

Also look at the usage of the word "fault." It's his "fault" for making her attracted to him, so right off the top her pursuit him is being contextualized as dangerous.

“

*Hey Joe's calling me over
Tino's calling me over*

*I only came here for you
It's you boy, you in the corner
Something is taking me over
I only came here for you*
“

The return of the **All The Other Boys** that try to chase me subtheme from Call Me Maybe. She rejects men romantically interested in her, who here are given names, in favor of pursuing a man who, though tempting, is for some reason off limits, hesitant, or forbidden. She came to “get” him.

Interestingly, a person being in the corner at a party where you were waiting to meet someone comes back on “Curiosity,” off the KISS album.

15 - FAVOURITE COLOR

Easily the most romantic and sentimental track on EMOTION, Favourite Colour, on a casual listen, is a straightforward romantic ballad. It's beautiful, and emotional. I cry sometimes when I listen to it while thinking about an ex. It's powerful emotional imagery, the idea of blending into a single color is powerfully evocative and sensual.

So it's a straight up love song, right?

Nope. Right up until you start looking for the themes, whereupon they smack you in the face. **TEMPTATION** and **LIMERENCE** form our backbone themes, with subtheme name-drops of “**out of control,**” **Hesitation,** and **Vaguely Sexual Acts Given Huge Emotional Importance.**

Let's take a look.

“

*Hold on now
This is gettin' kinda serious
This is gettin' kinda out of control
Out of control
Slow down now
Breathin' heavy when it's just a kiss
This is gettin' kinda out of my hands
Out of my hands*
“

Things take a distinctly sexual flavor in the opening lyrics; she's breathing heavy just from making out, as she details later in the song. As is inevitable tradition, Carly characterizes this sexual/romantic choice as out of “control,” and out of her hands, and as always, romance is played as a risky, potentially chaotic and dangerous choice.

And though they're feeling the rush, the guy isn't sure about this:

“

Please don't go
“

Dude is thinking about leaving. And a few lyrics later, Carly is having her own second thoughts:

“

*Should I stay?
Making love until the morning light
Making out like it's the end of the world
And I really wanna get it right*

“

And again here, this sexual act is equated to an act of risk or insanity, that is potentially, like on **I Really Like You**, possibly not actual love, but something more like infatuation. It should also be clear, the “Should I stay?” contextualizes the **Staying Up All Night** sex-session as a POSSIBILITY, rather than an event that’s actually happening.

The making out like it’s the end of the world lyric is amazing, but again, just a possibility of what COULD happen, as contextualized by the “But” at the beginning of the next lyric:

“

*But it's gettin' hard to slow down
Got me feelin' like it's real for sure
This is gettin' kinda out of my head
I'm out of my head*

“

This focus on the risk of the situation, the thrill of limerence in finding someone you sexually connect to even though it’s maybe not a good idea, is the entire backbone of the song. “**Please Don’t Go**” is repeated twice as a bridge into the chorus; his emotions for her, his love for her, don’t really play into the song at all.

As always, the guy is not as into it as she is.

It’s a flashback to the sexual feelings described in Warm Blood. She can’t control it. “*Stop me but I keep on talking.*” “*Should I stay?*” And of course the frantic desire for him to stay until “the morning light.” Which becomes relevant in exactly one track because next up is...

16 - NEVER GET TO HOLD YOU

This is as blatant a repetition of the theme we’re going to get, outside of **Your Type**. We’re one song away from finishing this album, and if I haven’t proven my point by now, I feel like this song is built to deliberately beat you over the head with the themes.

Here’s your hot entree of **OBSESSION, TEMPTATION, REJECTION** and **MISERY**, with a side of **Saying Something You Regret, Romantic Hesitation, Staying Up All Night, Being Miserable/Lost Or Depressed**, and how could I forget, **Being In Someone’s Arms And That Solving The Fact That You’re Miserable That They Don’t Want You**.

And we get right into it, too.

“

*Oh baby don't you go
You know I didn't mean it darling
Sweet like the morning light
Gone late into the evening
All I want is to hold you
Make you rock away this feeling for me
Oh baby don't you go
You know I didn't mean it*

“

Carly has again here said something she regrets saying, and the bulk of the song is essentially begging him to stay, expressing that he's the only person who can heal the wound inside her.

Of course, the wound inside her appears to be solely created by **her own love for him**. So she's asking him essentially to “stop not loving me, get over here and give me a cuddle.”

Which is a pretty wild request.

“

*Until I saw you in my thunderstorm
I didn't see
I wanna be the one that's in your arms*

“

Carly again positions this man as an answer to her emotional problems, the idea that she was **In A Bad Or Dark Place** before she met him, and he is now, in her mind, positioned as the answer to the bad and hopeless emotional situation she'd been in prior, described here as a “thunderstorm.”

“

*I never get to hold you
As long I want to
Remember I told you
You're all that I need
You're all that I need
I never get to hold you
As long I want to
Remember I told you
You're all that I need
You're all that I need*

“

The chorus says it all. She wants to be in his arms but he is unavailable. He's the answer to the emotional problems in her life, but, either because of something she said or an outside factor, he is never going to be hers completely.

17 - LOVE AGAIN

For the umpteenth time, here we focus on the emotions of a doomed relationship. Themes of “black,” darkness and night return. This time, Carly sings to herself, trying to cheer herself up, as well as to her former lover; the “you” serves two purposes.

The title of this song itself is a trick; it seems like she’s trying to get over someone and love someone else, but really she’s primarily talking about...Well, I’ll let the song explain. This one is all **REJECTION, MISERY** and **OBSESSION**.

“

*Open up your heart to the ceiling
Don't you know it hurts for a reason
Time will take you back to believing
You'll learn to love again
You'll learn to love again*

“

Love is tied in to physical pain; the loss of love after a doomed romance has left her hopeless. She reassures herself: she will learn to love again.

“

*Life, is enough to cry
It's a lot to give and it's driving me crazy*

“

Unlike Britney Spears’ “crazy,” on her song Crazy, which was fun and sexy, but “feels alright,” Carly Rae’s “crazy” is almost always associated with a regretful decision and a state of “out of control” behavior that very possibly, or definitely, will end in tragedy.

“”

*Moon, where's the man in you
Show the way to us
The sky is turning black now
Moon, what you trying to do
It's too late for us and there's no turning back now*

“”

She’s looking to the stars; there must be a way back to love for Carly and this forbidden figure. But alas, it’s looking bad; like her **heart**, the sky is turning black. **Roses** will also turn black, on the song “Roses” off Emotion Side B, but we got a long way before we get there.

“

*I never meant to fight with you
I wanted us to stay together
And even now my love is true
I know that we can't be together*

“

This “fight” could very well be the instance she keeps insisting she regrets saying, but what’s more telling is the rhyme; “together” with “together,” but contextualized two different ways. She wanted them to “stay together” but she knows that they can’t “be together.” Meaning she

wanted them to “stay physically together/around each other,” like as friends, but knows that even though she loves him, they can’t “be together” in that way.

She needs to get over it, and “learn to love again.”

Because though she wanted them to “stay together,” she knows they can’t “BE together.” Something keeps this man from her.

The idea of going “through the ceiling” will return again on her songs “In My Bedroom,” where the moon also plays a prominent role, and “Cut To The Feeling,” where again, they go up into the sky to be together.

And that’s the last song on the album.

PART 2 - EPILOGUE

INJECTION

So there it was.

Every single song on the album seemed connected, blatantly. Often the same words were used to describe the same emotions of regret, escape, secrets, longing and sadness.

The need for instant gratification, the idea of forbidden love, escapism that might potentially lead to disappointment, again and again. The pattern of infatuation and rejection becomes undeniable, thematically.

The album has very few metaphors and very little symbolism; the lyrics speak frankly, and when you read them, even quickly, their meaning is obvious.

Under a cursory level of analysis, EMOTION goes from sparkly, fun pop album about the thrill of a crush, to a frantic, desperate search for fleeting emotional validation from a man who wants you enough to hook up, but doesn't want you enough to stick around.

Its pop synths shift from dance-y to ethereal, and suddenly the strange, ghostly opening sounds of I Really Like You and Making The Most Of The Night take a somewhat sinister tone. The wolf's howl at the end of Let's Get Lost stands out as a particularly bizarre and haunting moment viewed from this new vantage point.

Despite the bright and shiny music, EMOTION is not what it seems.

Manic up and downs. Things repeatedly being stated as out of control or openly dark or bad decisions. Romantic obsession that acknowledges and disregards the disdain of its focus. Begging for affection and love. Vindictive anger at rejection coupled with pleas for reconciliation and anxiety at being forgotten.

All of the songs were PROVABLY, inarguably connected by themes, both macro and micro. Even the superficially goofy LA Hallucinations and Boy Problems still centered around romantic loss and rejection in one way or another.

But wasn't there something else there?

Alongside the major themes, all those little micro themes do seem to form a narrative.

Lyrically, it seems to tell the story of a young hesitant, shy girl who was going through a rough emotional situation, until she fell in love with an overworked/unhappy/emotionally unavailable platonic male friend, possibly a professional peer.

He flirted with her first, and she hesitated, but finally gave in and things got out of control, becoming sexual. This is characterized as "wrong" or a morally "dark" choice, needing to be kept a secret. They have a brief romantic, or at least sexual relationship; it's escapist fun, but she becomes obsessed, says things she regrets.

He ultimately rejects her, trying to step back the relationship to “just friends,” she is devastated and endlessly pleads for him to give her a second chance, frantically switching between open begging and attempts at manipulation, appealing to his black heart or worst nature.

There’s some manifestation of this in every song on the album; hesitation, pleas for escapist exclusivity, followed by regret and sadness. These are not “common pop themes.”

We aren’t watching the bloom of a love affair. We’re witnessing a very catchy car wreck. I rationalized with myself, and googled “Carly Rae Jepsen Friend Zone,” and found only one result: Jepsen has, in interviews, confessed that “Your Type” was written about a man she wanted that didn’t want her back.

Maybe this album could simply, subconsciously be processing a phenomenon that happened to her often, just a bad dating habit. Maybe it was just her co-writers. Or maybe it was processing a single incident? Or forming many different incidents into one thing. I wasn’t sure, and I didn’t care.

What I knew was: EMOTION was apparently a concept album. That would be a funny think-piece for Medium or something. And, hey, crazy, I was the first person to notice it, or at least the first person to write it down.

“Why does Carly Rae keep getting friend-zoned?” Haha, that’s a click.

That’s a click. I could write a thing that could maybe get some clicks.

So why did I feel like I was missing something?

Why did it feel so much like they were all about **ONE guy. ONE regret. ONE incident.**

Why did the rubric of themes dominate every song, so reliably? Was this normal? Were all pop albums like this? It felt so razor sharp; *I was so attracted to you but I knew it was a bad idea, please escape with me, oh no you told me we’re just friends and now I’m alone.*

All of the songs on the album were one of those three stories, which of course could be combined to form one story, if you felt imaginative. But shit, my spider-sense was going crazy... There was something. There was still something there I was missing.

I looked back at my list.

- **TEMPTATION (SEXUAL)**
- **LIMERENCE**
- **OBSESSION**
- **SECRETS**
- **ESCAPE**
- **REJECTION**
- **MISERY/LONGING**

I sat in my office. It had gotten dark outside. Rain spattered against the window.

I looked at the subtheme list:

**Stuck In My Head/Trapped By Emotions
Saying Something You Regret**

**Friends Upgrading To Lovers
Lovers Downgrading To Friends
Bad/Forbidden Love
Alone With Someone
Didn't Come Here To Dance
In Your Arms
Spending The Night Together
Staying Up All Night
Not Saying Something
Saying Something Without Actually Speaking
Separation by Physical Distance/Geography
All The Other Boys
Being Forgotten
Lover In A Bad Or Dark/Place She Could Save Him From
Dreams/Sleep/Beds
Cars and Driving
In A Bad Or Dark Place Before She Met Her Lover**

My mind wandered back to “Call Me Maybe.” The lyric “I wasn’t looking for this, but now you’re in my way” slithered into my head. The idea of the man she wants to call her as an unintended romance. “You’re in my way.”

“In my way.” That isn’t romantic. It is, when you think about it, kind of a weird thing to say. Especially paired with the later “I took my time with the fall, you gave me nothing at all, but still *you’re in my way.*”

That actually kind of fit neatly with subtheme I’d discovered of being “stuck” in someone’s head. Or, hm, maybe I was reaching.

“You took your time with the call.” “You gave me nothing at all.” Wait, was I reaching? Or...Why the fuck was there a “this dude didn’t end up wanting me” section on a song about flirtatiously giving a guy your number? Wasn’t this ultimately a **LIMERENCE/REJECTION** song?

No that was stupid. Or was it?

Hm.

I opened Spotify again on a whim, and summoned up Jepsen’s sophomore album, **KISS**, from 2012, home to “Call Me Maybe” and exactly zero other songs I’d heard, other than the utterly weightless “Good Time” collaboration with Owl City, on which Carly only had one verse.

As I understood it, **KISS** was, like **EMOTION**, a heavily produced pop album. I reckoned it probably contained a bunch of overproduced songs about fun in the summer, dancing, best friends, maybe one about candy or fireworks or being a cool girl, stuff like that.

I clicked play on the first song, “Tiny Little Bows.”

My eyes widened.

I sat quietly listening until the song finished, leaving only the sound of the rain. I was slouched in my seat, staring at my laptop's black screen, having gone into sleep mode during the song.

My mind was racing.

I clicked play on the second song, "This Kiss." After the first five lyrics, I fumblingly clicked pause, sitting straight up in my seat.

"Holy fucking shit." I muttered. "Wait. No way."

I was alone in the office, but I said it again, just to hear the words.

"Holy. Fucking. Shit."

PART 3 - **PITCH BLACK POP**

“Pop songs aren’t deep.”

That’s one of those aphorisms that’s thrown around again and again and again; people disdain pop, they disregard it, and why shouldn’t they? If anything, pop music has homogenized as time goes on.

It’s been a game of repetition and imitation, with the same cliches about love, dancing, success and desire playing on loop since the 1950s.

Pop was always rock’n’roll’s weird, softer, friendlier little brother; there was a time in the early days of the art form where “pop” and “rock” were used interchangeably, until, gradually, they became opposites, and eventually, enemies. As pop evolved, the forms it took got weirder and wilder, and the acts behind it took all sorts of strange and startling shapes to fit the growing demands of music radio.

It’s fairly common knowledge that The Monkees, the band behind classics like “Daydream Believer” and “Last Train To Clarksville,” was created by TV producers as a parody of The Beatles. People talk less about the fact that The Archies, the band behind the immensely popular “Sugar Sugar,” were a cartoon.

I’m not joking or speaking metaphorically. The Archies were literally the characters from the Archie cartoon. That song, you know, “honey, oh sugar sugar, you are my candy girl-“ that’s a fucking song from a cartoon show sung by cartoons and it was a number one hit for four weeks, and it’s lasted for over 50 years as a Golden Oldie.

So one would be inclined to think pop follows the onomatopoeia of its namesake, bubble-like and empty. That, notwithstanding, the most successful pop-stars seem always to be the ones who vary the subject matter of their songs. Indeed, a wide variance of subjects and thematic reinvention seems in many ways to be a prerequisite for success.

Michael Jackson famously sang a song denying he was the father of someone’s baby. He also sang songs about a criminal murdering a girl after breaking into her house, showing someone you’re good at dancing, racial tolerance, the environment, and literally being a spooky ghost.

But Jackson’s wild variance stems from his private life, for the majority of his success anyway, being a bit of an enigma. But this isn’t consistent across pop; for instance, Taylor Swift’s love life is a matter of speculative public record. It’s a known fact amongst fans, like me, that the album 1989, Taylor’s career defining pop masterpiece, contains several songs written about Harry Styles.

But 1989, given the same sort of examination we’ve been giving Jepsen, shows how actually fundamentally different the songs all are, in concept, tone, content and even superficial presentation.

Let's take a brief look at 1989, released the same year as Emotion, with quick breakdowns for the song's subject matter:

1. "Welcome to New York" - **EXCITEMENT**. Having moved to New York, a naive girl must face the new paradigms of city living.
2. "Blank Space" - **DANGER**. Proud, sexy boasting about a long series of damaged relationships, offering that a new boy could be next but he'd just be another victim.
3. "Style" - **LOVE**. Having found an intimate connection, a girl rejoices in her new boyfriend and their mutual love.
4. "Out of The Woods" - **COMMITMENT**. In the midst of a long committed relationship, a girl undergoes a rough patch with her boyfriend, remembering a hospital visit, and wonders if it will end happily.
5. "All You Had To Do Was Stay" - **MOVING ON**. After a hard break up, a girl chastises her ex for not committing now that he wants her back, saying she'll never get back with him.
6. "Shake It Off" - **RESILIENCE**. Accepting that life and love aren't easy, and she's got some haters and a lotta boyfriends and a lotta people gossiping about her, a girl just wants to dance away the negative emotions thrown at her by others.
7. "Wish You Would" - **DESIRE/LONGING**. A song of regret about choices made in a relationship, and desire to get back with her ex. Essentially the total inverse of "All You Had To Do Was Stay."
8. "Bad Blood" - **ANGER**. The lamenting of the angry end of a friendship, possibly with another woman, that becomes so aggressive that it functions as a declaration of war.
9. "Wildest Dreams" - **SADNESS/REGRET**. After a relationship has ended, a girl hopes a man still remembers her in her white dress.
10. "How You Get The Girl" - **STORYTELLING**. Step by step instructions for the male hero of a Nicholas Sparks novel; almost prose in music, telling a romantic, cliché story about a rainy night. This song doesn't involve the narrator as a character at all, and is told in second person.
11. "This Love" - **LOVE**. Functionally a sequel to Wildest Dreams, it is revealed that after the end of the relationship, this guy came back to her after all.
12. "I Know Places" - **ESCAPE**. Focuses on being famous, and watched, and wanting to go escape with a fellow famous person; specifically, it focuses on the fun of running from paparazzi.
13. "Clean" - **RECOVERY**. Very long after an unhealthy relationship has ended, a girl finally feels she is over it.

These songs are *different from one another*. Though several of them cover familiar ground in pop, they each contain different emotions presented in different contexts, and some, like Shake It Off, How You Get The Girl and Welcome To New York take the idea of "expression"

and put it in the backseat to abstract concepts like Dancing, Romance and Literally Just Moving To A New Fucking City And Being Startled You See Gay People There.

It is this variance that defines most musicians.

Nobody could make a career singing about just one thing. Even Alanis Morissette's famously pointed and furious "Jagged Little Pill" had a random song about the abstract concept of Irony.

So understandably, as I dove head first into Carly Rae Jepsen's "KISS," the emotions I felt in order were "shock," "disbelief" and something like religious reverence.

Throughout Emotion, Carly constantly reiterates the idea of the type of love she's talking about as a risky, dangerous endeavor that must at all costs be kept secret, even occasionally specifying it as a "black" or "dark" problem that she is "crazy" for wanting.

On Emotion, it's kept mostly vague as to why, exactly, Carly's infatuation is such a dangerous endeavor. But an album prior, on KISS, we learn exactly, and without niceties, a possible obstacle is to Carly's emotional fulfillment.

The story, it appeared, didn't end at Emotion. The rubric of themes continued, with no variance. And then came the sub-themes. And more and more new details.

This was just the tip of the iceberg.

And at its heart, long frozen, there appeared to be some very nasty secrets.

PART 3 ANNEX:

KISS - A TRACK BY TRACK EXPLORATION

1 - TINY LITTLE BOWS

This first track uses a lyric sample from Sam Cooke's "Cupid," a song entirely about being ignored by the person you love, and attempting to put a hit out on them via Cupid. Carly re-contextualizes, but only a little. Surprise surprise, it's no longer someone who doesn't know she exists.

Instead, it's about someone who knew she existed, and she fell into **LIMERENCE** with but has **REJECTED** her, and now she's **MISERABLE**.

Right off the top of the album, my theory seemed in relatively good condition. We had name-drops of sub-themes as she listed **City Names and the idea of being Separated By Geographical Location, Being Forgotten and Getting High.**

"

*Ask me for the truth about it
We just met
And I wish we could be holding hands
I wish we could be holding hands
How do you think it goes
With those tiny little bows?*

"

We start off with what's rapidly revealed to me to be a memory of the first time her and Her Love met. She instantly wanted him, and felt like she was hit by cupid's arrow.

"

*You're the one that I want
You're the one that I know
And everywhere you are
Is a place I wanna go
Dancing really high
Dancing really slow*

“

Again Carly leans on the pressure, here: *You're the one that I want*. The idea of a lover being special or “the one” is anything but rare in pop music, or just poetry in general, but Carly’s use of the cliché is always ideologically different.

Carly habitually uses the idea of someone as “the one” as almost an accusation; it’s always to someone she doesn’t have, or can’t have, or didn’t want her, and usually some combination of all three.

The U2 song “One” talks about how the “one” is someone who carries you when times are hard. “You’re The One That I Want” from *Grease* is about how exciting it is to find the “one” who stirs you up and makes you feel great. On “Still The One” by Orleans, it’s a reflection on how well love has helped a long term relationship stay together.

Let’s hear how Carly Rae Jepsen’s “Chosen One” is doing...

“

*Do you ever think about us
Watching TV in your bed
Hey London
Call me if you think about it
Don't forget*

“

Yeah. Dude is in bed in another city, possibly on tour (lots of cities name-dropped in this song), watching TV, not thinking about her to the point that Carly believes she’s been forgotten completely.

It is not romantic. For an upbeat song, it sure is heartbreaking.

2 - THIS KISS

So right here, “This Kiss” is a big moment for me, and this dumb journey I’ve found myself on. “This Kiss” is what I’ve come to think of as a “**KEYSTONE**” song; a song that contains detailed information relating to the themes, as well as containing an overflow of crossover meta and micro displays of thematic and lyrical story.

The Keystone songs connect most directly to the themes that dominate the album “Emotion.” They draw the line in crystal clarity, and need very little or even no explanation to fit neatly into the overarching idea.

This was the first Keystone song I encountered, so this is where it got intense. I felt like I’d taken a red pill in the matrix, or hit some kind of runner’s high. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I fell into a tailspin of cynicism, and became convinced this would be the only song on the album to match the themes and the format so overtly.

But something in the opening lyrics really spun me out; for the first time besides the first mention of a woman that I encountered on “Your Type,” Carly brings up one more adult woman: the girlfriend of her Intended Lover.

I didn’t know it yet, but this was huge, this was MASSIVE. This was the final piece of the puzzle I didn’t even realize I had been putting together;

You will detect, overtly, themes of **LIMERENCE, TEMPTATION, REJECTION, ESCAPE, OBSESSION, SECRETS, and MISERY/LONGING**, making this a flawless 7 for 7 on Carly’s main themes, as well as a number of sub-themes and micro-narrative hints weaved through the entire piece.

“

*I went out last night
I'm going out tonight again
Anything to capture your attention (your attention)*

“

As usual, the idea of “going out,” partying or dancing is not for fun, or for Carly’s own private purposes. She wants her Intended Lover’s attention. This theme of going out in a passive way, strictly on a mission to ensnare one specific person, comes up *every time Carly talks about going out in any way*. She is **Partying With An Ulterior Motive**.

“

*And she's a real sweet girl
And you know I got a boy
Details we both forgot to mention (forgot to mention)*

“

Well, shit. Look at that. “I bet she acts so perfectly,” Carly sang of a proposed competing girl on Your Type, but here she is in no-longer theoretical terms. This is an actual person we’re talking about. The guy actually has a girlfriend, and Carly has a boyfriend, too. Ditching one guy for another is the subject of “Store” on Emotion Side B.

Let’s see where this goes.

“

*I always know where you are
And you always know where I am
We're taking it way too far
But I don't want it to end*

“

There’s the classic mention of **Physical Location and Knowing Where Someone Is Geographically** sub-theme, but I’d like to take a diversion here for a moment, to set up some signposts for where we are going.

Now, forgive me for drawing some lines here in my spooky Carly Rae Jepsen basement, but this, contextually, is huge. They’re taking it way too far, but she doesn’t want it to end. That’s all her songs in a nutshell.

This is what makes “This Kiss” so startling, when placed into the puzzle.

It ties all 7 of the themes into one narrative; **Obsession, Temptation, Limerence, rejection, Secrets, Escape, Longing**, they are all given an actual “story” form around the simple notion that:

“all of Carly Rae Jepsen’s songs are about excitedly pursuing someone who has a girlfriend and getting shut down by them and told it’s a bad idea but then fantasizing about it anyway.”

She gets shut down in this one too, we’ll get there, just give me a second.

Now, I don’t want to put this out there as an actual “theory” so to speak. But there’s an aspect of what’s going on in The Jepsen Pattern that is going to come lurching out of the fog. I call it the Narrative Aspect. You might have already noticed it.

There can be no argument that Carly Rae only sings about inter-mixings of the 7 themes. But could all of Carly’s music based around one story, or one TYPE of story?

That’s a huge question, and one that will become a sticking point.

Certainly, the entirety of the Infatuation/Rejection/Misery theme of Emotion could be easily explained as the emotional backdrop of “guy with a girlfriend cheats on girlfriend but then calls it off.”

And that contextualization of Carly’s music is stated out loud repeatedly as we get deeper. I don’t want to put the Narrative Aspect out there as a concrete offering, or speculation about Carly’s personal life.

But its presence in her music is unquestionable, and will only be getting louder, and less subtle, as we move further.

So. Back to “This Kiss,” just in time for the chorus.

“”

*This kiss is something I can't resist
Your lips are undeniable
This kiss is something I can't risk
Your heart is unreliable
Something so sentimental
You make so detrimental*

“”

Says it all, doesn’t it? She “can’t resist” his kiss, but also “can’t risk” his kiss. At first it sounds like Carly is the one in the driver’s seat, but that’s quickly revealed as a misdirect: “Your heart is unreliable” isn’t her being worried about him as an unreliable lover, it’s more nuanced than that.

The next line reveals “something so sentimental, you make so detrimental.” If I’m reading that honestly, with context, it sounds like Carly is trying to kiss him and he’s saying “no that would be bad.” Which...You know, good for him, but her heart is breaking.

“”

*And I wish it didn't feel like this
'Cause I don't wanna miss this kiss
I don't wanna miss this kiss*

“”

It's wild to see those final lines.

“I wish I didn't feel like this” is an emotion that recurs like a pollen allergy in Jepsen's discography. The idea of being trapped emotionally and mentally by love you didn't ask for is a constant reappearing concept; the idea that love is painful, and it would be easier to escape it than to indulge it.

Often, there's no context clue for why Carly religiously presents a pop hallmark, “being in love,” as a bad, risky, unreliable or dangerous thing. But now we can see it more clearly.

Love *can* seem real dangerous when you're trying to *steal someone's boyfriend*.

3 - CURIOSITY

I was still reeling from the nakedly thematic anthem of “This Kiss,” that “Curiosity” coming RIGHT after it on the album felt, in a real way, disorienting. This was the first time for me that I honestly **believed** in what was then just a joke theory. It was a spiritual awakening, because, as should now be expected, the lyrics make **zero implications** about the content of the song.

“*Why make implications when you can just be pretty much totally explicit and say exactly what you mean*” is again the mandate. Surprise surprise, here's **REJECTION, MISERY/LONGING, OBSESSION, and SECRETS**.

Interestingly, it's also a bonanza of sub-themes and leitmotifs: **Staying Up All Night, Begging For Love, Showing Up At Someone's House Without Permission, Knowing Where Someone Is Geographically, Someone Sending A Message Without Speaking, Phone Calls, Love Making You Sick Or Crazy** all make notable, typically blatant appearances.

So, let's get hurt.

“”

*Break a bone
Got me on my knees
You break my heart
Just to watch it bleed*

“”

Already we're off to a dark-as-fuck start, sung classic Carly fashion in an upbeat, happy voice. Jepsen is going darker and more straightforward than usual here; she feels tortured by his love, but then we realize, it's not him that's doing the torturing:

“”

I'm sick with love

*Sick like a disease
Don't call me up
Just so I can please you*
“”

Again, love is framed like a problem, or an ailment; “calling her up” to please him doesn’t appear to be sexual, in context, as she doesn’t appear to be getting that level of validation from this guy.

“”
*Look at me
Left here in the corner
Stupid girl, I really tried to warn her
Walked the streets all night, until you came around
Knew that you would come, before you ever even made a sound*
“”

Carly talks to herself in third person, calling herself stupid, saying she should have known better. However, after some late night walking, the dude does indeed show up in her life.

Although it’s worth saying, he’s not at her place. He didn’t show up to her house. She showed up *where he was*, a subtheme in Carly’s music: **seeking someone out in public, usually on some kind of mission to seduce them whether they like it or not.** You might remember it from songs like “Kiss” and “Didn’t Just Come Here To Dance” and “Making The Most Of The Night.”

And sure enough, in the next lyric, we see that Carly’s romantic intentions are anything but straightforward.

“”
*So don't break me tonight
This is crazy love and you know I'm gonna follow you home
Through the rain
'Cause I need your love, and you know I'm gonna follow you home*
“”

Do me a favor and read those lyrics in the creepiest voice you can. ...Yep.

She does NOT get the guy. He “came around,” but could still “break her” with rejection...Which is going to be hard, because she is going to LITERALLY FOLLOW HIM HOME because she NEEDS his love. Whether he asked for it or not.

This also readdresses the leitmotif of **Knowing Where Someone Lives**, occasionally phrased as **Knowing Someone’s Geographical Location**. Carly always is quick to remind Her Love that she knows where he is physically, even if he doesn’t want her, and is also just as quick to assert she might just show up out of nowhere.

Let’s take one last gander at the chorus:

“”
*I know, I know, I know you got the key
You know, you know, you know that it's for me
Well I think that we should try it out and see yeah*

Curiosity

“”

At best, this is a platonic friend, asking for a chance at a bigger relationship. It fits all the themes. But now, contextualized by the songs preceding it, if we wanted to, we could make a harsher judgment.

It sounds an awful lot like she's asking him to cheat.

4 - MORE THAN A MEMORY

This is another **KEYSTONE SONG**, this one falling into the “after it's over” category, with our girl endlessly pining and agonizing and torturing herself with the memory of a relationship. Since you've been on this journey with me, I think you'll see, once we get into this, why I didn't pick this one apart.

I didn't have to.

“”

*Speak to me, you're walking too close and it's hard to breathe
I should be running, but the hurt's naive
And I'll expect too much
You were good to me
I left a scar that no one else can see
And now you're back here and reminding me that I lost way too much
And you know that night I almost said I love you
And you almost said it back
Are we gonna be more than a memory
No matter how lame our apology
I let go of you, you let go of me
Are we gonna be more than a memory
Are you gonna just stand in front of me
Pretending I'm not your destiny
I'm not over you, are you over me
Are we gonna be more than a memory*

“”

OBSESSION, SECRETS, REJECTION, MISERY/LONGING are all obviously present, as well as sub-themes of **Someone Making You Shy**, **Apologies**, **Saying Something You Regret**, **Being Forgotten**, and a rare but reliable appearance of **Anger Over Someone Denying They Are Her Destiny**.

Yeah. “Pretending I'm not your destiny.” It's all right there. “A scar that no one else can see.” Lovely turn of phrase, I think. Beautiful lyric.

A scar no one else can see. Does she just mean internally? Because it seems more like she hasn't told anyone, so...Is it secret? Why would it be secret?

“I'm not over you.” Yes. Correct. That is definitely correct. The elements in play on this song tie directly into the elements at play on EMOTION. We're four songs in and all of them tie heavily into the Jepsen Pattern.

5 - TURN ME UP

This is another one that tries to position itself as a “empowering break-up song” with its chorus, but even the slightest look at its first lyrics reveals the truth.

What we’re looking at here is **REJECTION, MISERY** and **LIMERENCE**, with classic sub-themes of **Lovers Downgrading To Friends, Separation by Physical Distance/Geography, Lost And Alone** and **Partying With An Ulterior Motive** with a side helping of Carly’s favorite emotion: Regret.

“”

*All alone, here I am
I don't know what I'm after
Now that you're just a friend
I can call you and ask you
From the very first time I saw your face
I knew I was satisfied
You were talking so sweet I had to taste
I wish I never tried*

“”

So we start off IMMEDIATELY with the **Lovers Downgrading To Friends/Sad Before I Met You** double punch, moving directly into limerence and regret with an implied helping of forbidden or dangerous love. She is on a train here, direct-lining major themes without establishing any kind of other situation or premise.

This also references, with crystal clarity, the song “Sweet Talker,” from her first album, Tug Of War, which contains the lyric:

— *You talk so sweet and it's dribbling like honey, It's just one taste* —

That is a very specific connection/reference, putting forward the idea she is separating from the idealized guy on the song from way back when. She tasted the honey, and she got stung. It’s worth saying this is one of a dozen or so songs where The Pattern nakedly overrides any pretense.

I’m also going to SPOILER you a little bit and say that this isn’t the first time Jepsen lyrics blatantly repeat and or paraphrase themselves.

“”

*I'm breaking up with you
You're breaking up on me
You kissed me on the phone
And I don't think it reaches
What am I to do
And how's it gonna be
'Cause breaking us in two
Is breaking me in pieces*

“”

So again, we're faced with a conundrum within the premise presented to us.

It initially sounds like Carly is the one in charge; she's breaking up with him. But that very rapidly is revealed to a position she's been forced into, both by physical distance, and worse, his indifference. Separating from him isn't an empowering move; it's out of pain and desperation.

It's her last option; she's giving up on pursuing this person out of frustration, not empowerment. Don't wanna take my word for it? Take Carly's:

“

*I'm giving up and going out tonight
Turn me up (turn me up), turn me on (why don't you turn me on)
Turn me up (why don't you turn me on), turn me on (and on, and on, and on)
Turn me up (why don't you turn me on), turn me on (turn me on, turn me on)
Turn me up (turn me up), turn me on*
”

Off she goes, Parting with an ulterior motive. The song literally ends with her begging him to come back. The threat of her “break up” means nothing because he's already checked out.

6 - HURT SO GOOD

Wikipedia describes the phenomenon of the “friend zone” thusly:

“In popular culture, the friend zone is a situation in which one member of a friendship wishes to enter into a romantic or sexual relationship, while the other does not. It is generally considered to be an undesirable or dreaded situation by the rejected person.”

It's worth namedropping this outright, as it comes up often in Jepsen's music; the idea of either being trapped as someone's platonic friend, or being demoted to that position, is a constant specter across all of her albums.

The idea of fantasizing you were with someone who's unavailable and leaving you longing, feeling anxious or self conscious about how much you're enjoying hanging out with someone, or feeling loss and rejection after being told you're “just a friend.”

These emotions are the ones most sharply depicted; the loss of someone you never really had. And surprise surprise, they show up here in the form of **REJECTION, OBSESSION** and **MISERY**.

“

*I don't ever wanna let you go
We could take it fast or make it slow
I'm the friend that you misunderstood
Everyday is just a wish I could
Why you gotta make it hurt so good?*
”

The “friend that you misunderstood.” And yet, it doesn't sound like he misunderstood her at all; it just sounds like he isn't interested in what she's offering. The song is framed as a romantic

proposition, but we can rapidly ascertain he's already refused her, or at least to some degree made that a likely outcome of her proposing this.

And just in case he didn't get the message:

“”

*Is it too late or too soon?
I'm right outside here wanting you
You don't see me, but you should
Why you gotta make it hurt so good?*

“”

Remember on “Gimmie Love,” on EMOTION, when she drives by his house and stops outside “again tonight?” At this point, I think we should be able to agree this isn't a coincidence.

7 - BEAUTIFUL

You've come this far. You know what's coming. It's a song called “Beautiful.” What could it be about? What could Carly be singing about, here? Do you want to venture a guess?

Could it be about feeling beautiful? About someone you think is beautiful? About someone making you feel beautiful, or a beautiful experience, maybe? Maybe it's about art, or a great day, or just the excitement and beauty of being alive?

Haha, right. No, of course not. It's about being **MISERABLE** because someone **REJECTED YOU** and remembering the time they told you you were **Just Friends**, now that you're **Separated by Physical Distance** but they're still **Stuck In Your Head**.

“”

*Hello, I know it's been a while
I wonder where you are
And if you think of me
Sometimes cause you're always on my mind
You know I had it rough
Tryin' to forget you but
The more that I look around
The more I realize
You're all I'm lookin' for*

“”

As I've said what feels like hundreds of times by now, the unifying themes of Jepsen's music are NEVER subtle. They're never hidden. Let's keep going:

“”

*Just friends
The beginning or the end
How do we make sense
When we're on our own
It's like you're the other half of me*

I feel incomplete

“

Yep. **Lovers Downgraded To Friends** and she misses him and is miserable and appeals to him endlessly to come back.

8 - TONIGHT I'M GETTING OVER YOU

This one, like “Turn Me Up,” tries to masquerade as an empowering break-up anthem. They're practically the same song, “Tracks of My Tears”/“Tears Of A Clown” style, both talking about a friend-turned-lover who's checked out of the relationship, and a desire to “dance” with “somebody new.”

But like Turn Me Up, the masquerade of indifference and facade of "moving on" rapidly falls apart, even more disastrously than before. Themes of **REJECTION** and **MISERY**, with leitmotifs of **Dancing Only To Distract Yourself, Lovers Downgrading To Friends, Dreaming, Staying Up All Night, and Begging.**

First up we have the, at this point inevitable, “just friends - OR ARE WE?” namedrop:

“

*We're not lovers
But more than friends
Put a flame to every single word you ever said
No more crying
To get me through
I'll keep dancing till the morning with somebody new*

“

Right, sound familiar? She's gonna dance! The friend who rejected her isn't gonna matter anymore! How exhilarating! She's free! Get out there and forget him, girl! You can do it this time, let's sing a song about being free! New romances!

Or not. Cause then this happens:

“

*Stuck in a real bad dream
And man it feels so new to me
Should be in your arms but I'm begging at your feet
It's been a real hard night
And I just hold my pillow tight
It won't love me back, no,
It's not you and I*

“

This verse, like **so many final Carly Rae Jepsen verses before it**, functions as a Jepsen Second Verse Twist, re-contextualizing the entire song. The “dancing all night” is a fantasy. She's actually alone, in bed, **begging him to come back**. Again this is not SUBTLE or SUBTEXT, it takes only the SLIGHTEST level of reading comprehension to understand that this

upbeat, empowering pop track is **actually about a person who is totally alone and miserable.**

9 - GUITAR STRING/WEDDING RING

Look at the opening verses of this fucking song:

“”

*You were here and then you left
And now there's nobody, nobody
Now they're all just second best
There's nobody, nobody*

“”

Yep, welcome to a song built around a chorus asking a man to propose when he's **not even interested in you and has already broken up with you.** There's an **All The Other Boys** namedrop too; the term “second best” will also show up on her song “Higher,” but let's push further into this...

“”

*But if you cut a piece of guitar string
I would wear it like it's a wedding ring
Wrapped around my finger
You know what I mean
You make my heart sing
If you cut a piece of guitar string
I would wear it*

“”

So far in the song we're looking at **REJECTION, OBSESSION,** and here's **LIMERENCE:**

“

*When you're near I feel the best
I'm somebody, somebody
It's in my pulse, it's in my chest
My whole body, whole body*

“

Oof, the only person who makes her feel alive isn't interested in her. Hm, okay, delicious, can I get a side of **Being In Someone's Arms** and **Spending The Night Together/Staying Up All Night?**

“”

*Just hold me closer
Oh won't you hold me down tonight*

“”

Cool, and can I please have some **Separated By Physical Space/Geography?**

“”

*You're in the country
I'm in the town*
“”

But it's not over. It's **never over**. Only on one song does Carly ever describe successfully fully leaving someone and being over them, and it's MUCH later in her discography, on Emotion Side B. So even though this sounds like a song about a relationship that's dead and gone...

“”
*So if you want me
I'll be around*
“”

This one is particularly sad and tragic, to me.

The image of him cutting his guitar string, again presenting Her Love as an unavailable musician, is poetic in that it represents him choosing her over his art; but he hasn't done that, and apparently, he won't.

10 - YOUR HEART IS A MUSCLE

One of the most common behavioral patterns of immature romantic love is a more interested person literally arguing with a less interested person, trying to emotionally pressure and “logic” them into returning the more interested person's feelings.

This generally comes in the form of projecting their feelings, and then trying to intellectualize and debate the truth that the other person doesn't feel the same way. This idea, that the other person is “only pretending” not to love Her back, or should simply *try harder to love her*, shows up often across Carly Rae Jepsen's music.

The idea of asking Her Love to “work harder to return her feelings” or “give her a chance” is reiterated dozens of times throughout dozens of Carly's songs, but never so articulately and directly as on “Your Heart Is A Muscle,” which focuses on **REJECTION** and **OBSESSION**.

“”
*You gave my shirt back
I don't really get the meaning
It's like you're giving up before it all goes wrong
I've been told but I don't really like the feeling
I've been away, I've been away too long*
“”

So clearly there's been some sort of...incident, here, and the return of the shirt signifies rejection. It appears they were **Separated By Physical Distance** for a period of time, and now this dude is concerned that problematic elements in their relationship are going to cause everything to fall apart.

At least she's handling it well. So far.

“”

*I, I, I wanna go wherever you are
I, I, I wanna be wherever you are
I, I, I wanna see whatever you are*

There goes that. She goes into further details about her needs of him in the next lyrics.

“”

*You say love's a fragile thing
Made of glass
But I think
Your heart is a muscle
Your heart is a muscle
You gotta work it out
Make it stronger
Try for me just a little longer*

Again, she's literally just asking him to try to love her, because something has caused him to want to give up. Again, it's not clear what went wrong, but our final bit of lyrics shows just how much more invested she is than him...

“

*Wake up moon we spend the night alone together
You're a real good listener, but you don't have much to say
Wake up you, you won't pick up the phone whatever
You're probably sleeping, I hope we're still okay*

“

YIKES. If you've ever been in a fight via text, or maybe locked into an unhealthy round-and-round relationship with text component, these words might seem very familiar. Needy. Frantic. “r u asleep?” “respond to me.” “I hope we're still okay.”

Oh, and also that's **Spending The Night Together** and **Saying Things Without Actually Speaking** in there too. And the moon, again, sharing the image of a couple under the moon from “Cut To The Feeling” and “In My Bedroom,” as well as on the Cursed Song Of Which I Must Not Speak, “Picture.”

11 - DRIVE

Drive functions as a kind of prequel to the escape songs of EMOTION; in many ways, it's an Outlier Song to the overall thesis; a single lyric about the guy actually liking her is hard to miss, but, even with that, it falls squarely into The Pattern.

Addressing **LIMERENCE**, **SECRETS**, **ESCAPE**, with side notes of **Driving**, **Staying Up All Night**, and **Being Made To Do Things**.

“

So drive so fast baby through the night

*Drive so fast, and they'll never gonna find you
Drive so fast, saying no goodbyes
Drive so fast, and we'll leave it all behind you
Boy, I get a kick out of you
You know I'm yours
The things you're making me do
I never thought, you'd hit me to the core
I just wanna drive you to love, love, love, love*
""

Pretty self explanatory here, "let's escape together, I'm so into you." Notice that these "she never thought he'd hit her to the core," cueing us that this is a new relationship, possibly a **Friend Upgraded Lovers**, not a steady boyfriend.

Also check out the three "Drive So Fast" lines; all of them imply that the guy, by leaving with her, is escaping something. "No goodbyes." As always, this romantic getaway is actually a secret, an escape from his situation, similar to the ESCAPE songs on Emotion.

"

*Ooh I don't care about my lipstick
I just wanna drive you to love, love, love, love
Chasing the sun, don't wanna miss it
I just wanna drive you to love, love, love*
""

Again, sneaking in the "don't wanna miss it," like on "This Kiss," here belies the fact that this is not something that's actually happened. Like all of the Carly Escape Songs, this is a proposal of *something she wants to do*, and not something that is *actually happening*.

12 - WRONG FEELS SO RIGHT

More forbidden, **SECRET** love here, with a subtle hidden theme of **REJECTION** and **MISERY**. A super fascinating (to me) theme is the constant reiteration across so many songs of feeling "led on" by the guy, only to be turned away by him when it mattered.

This idea, that Her Love led her and professed interest (often with minimal verbal communication) before friend-zoning her and leaving her confused, is one of the core resentments Carly repeatedly communicates.

Particularly interesting in "Wrong Feels So Right" is how long it takes to reveal what the song is actually about, unfolding slowly almost like a mystery plot. Take a look at how it starts:

"

*Breaking my heart to see you lover
And I don't know why
Things you say are things you've said before
Instead of the truth I swear you'd stick a needle in your eye
Now what can you be looking at me for?*
""

So here we are at the top of the song, and it sounds like it's a break up song. She feels frustrated by growing distant from a lover that she feels is deceiving her.

“”

*I think this could be the one night
I give in to this fight
Boy I just might
'Cause you rule my head
I can't stop the motion
Hold me, be the way you told me
Whisper something so sweet
This could be the night
Wrong feels so right*

“”

Ah, now something weird is starting to happen. It sounds like she's resisting giving into him, because it seems like a bad idea. She's not breaking up with him; rather, loving him is **Forbidden** somehow, and **wrong**. But let's see how it evolves...

“”

*Tell me what was I supposed to do
With that type of attention
I gave all that I had to you
You forgot to mention
When you say that your heart is true
It's just an invention
But not your intention no, no*

“”

Yes, the third act surprise common in second verses for Jepsen; the Jepsen Second Verse Twist lyrics that re-contextualize the fun, long awaited sexual encounter as a disaster, a lie, and a rejection. The guy doesn't want her, he just wanted to hook up, and now that she's given in and fallen for him...we're right back here again.

Remember on "This Kiss," the lyric "your heart is unreliable."

He led her on, and now, when she's ready to "do the wrong thing" by giving in to him...He doesn't even want her.

13 - SWEETIE

This is an uncommonly simple entry, that focuses only on **TEMPTATION**, but again frames it as something that **HASN'T HAPPENED YET** with a **A Guy Coming Out Of A Dark Place**.

“”

*You're not as lonely as you think you are
I'm trying to tell you
Anything you want boy
I can make it happen
We could fall in love*

And I could be your sweetie
“”

So what do you want. What do you need.

Kiss was done. I couldn't believe it.

It was two for two.

Every song fit the pattern.

EVERY SONG ON THE ALBUM. EVERY SINGLE SONG.

PART 3 - EPILOGUE

HEART OF GLASS

There it was, plain as day.

Carly Rae's Seven Themes were the subject matter of not only Emotion, but also Kiss, the album that had made her a star. These themes I'd identified continued to be combined and recombined, with no exceptions or deviations, across two entire records. I mean look at the lyrics. It's not like you need X-Ray vision; the Jepsen pattern is pervasive, and blatant.

You just need to take the time.

Like I have.

No, I cannot look myself in the eyes in the mirror anymore. Sometimes when I wake up my hands shake. Occasionally I accidentally say "Carly Rae Jepsen" when asked my own name, or my mother's name, or what I do for a living, or where I'm from.

Yet I feel this was worth it, somehow.

But what was the larger emotional idea? Why reinvestigate these feelings of romantic failure so often, and why with such startling specificity? If I had to boil it all down, how would I describe it in one word?

I realized, re-listening to the wonderfully catchy hook of Curiosity in my car as I crossed the bridges back into downtown Vancouver, that there was indeed an overall tonality, a pervasive common element, to the themes themselves:

DESPERATION.

Certainly, songs like Gimme Love and Curiosity, among others, were thrillingly naked in their frantic, catchy demands for love and affection. But the theme spread wider, and encompassed...everything. Like literally everything.

Minus the pop production and the zany poetry of the lyrics, it was quite starkly apparent. I mean, is there a more desperate sentiment, truly, than "we just met and I'm so attracted to you I can't even look right at you, but here's my phone number so please call me...or don't if you don't want to, sorry, this is crazy."

But then how was it possible that these songs were framed to feel so good? So exciting? So fun, and catchy, and more than that, how had Carly's music managed to chameleon so well into upbeat pop; was it something about the language being used? Or her voice? They dabbled in misery so often, in loneliness, sleepless solitude and heartbroken exile, why didn't they feel like torch songs from Adele or the more miserable tracks from Lana Del Rey?

It hit me like a lightning bolt: because DESPERATION is EXCITING. Desperation is thrilling! Especially romantic desperation of the themes Carly is describing; it's not a romantic comedy, and it's not a love story: It's a thriller.

Once you plug into the Jepsen Matrix and take the red pill about The Pattern, the Narrative Aspect I mentioned in my summation of EMOTION becomes hard to resist, having gained some new details from Kiss. Let's jack in, upload and process it out:

Together, Kiss and Emotion tell the story of a young, hesitant, shy girl who was going through a rough emotional situation, possibly a bad relationship, when she fell in love with an overworked/unhappy platonic male friend, a professional peer who was a musician, like her.

However, he was already in another relationship.

They began to spend a lot of time together, as friends, but the tension was high. He flirted with her first, and she stopped herself, but finally gave in and things got out of control, becoming sexual. This is characterized as "wrong" or a morally "dark" choice, needing to be kept a secret.

They have a brief romantic/sexual relationship; it's escapist fun, and although he never Spends the Night, she becomes more into it than he is. She is overwhelmed, and says things she regrets, possibly declaring her love for him.

Her level of devotion alienates him, because it turns out he was very probably just using her as an escape from his girlfriend and his real life, and he rejects her, trying to step back the relationship to "just friends." This catastrophically breaks her heart, as she remains convinced he loves her, and that they are meant to be together.

She is devastated and endlessly pleads for him to give her a second chance, frantically switching between open begging and attempts at manipulation, appealing to his black heart or worst nature. However, they are Separated By Physical Distance, in two separate cities, and she wonders privately if he even thinks about her at all.

Across Emotion and Kiss, Jepsen's discography can be very easily arranged to tell one cohesive story. A story of unfulfilling flings, dark secrets, romantic rejection, agonizing loneliness and adrenaline bursts of momentary, glimmering connection.

You simply can't do this with any other modern pop star. Carly sings songs with three sentiments:

1 - "Hey I know it's too soon and maybe we shouldn't be feeling this way, but I want you and you make me feel alive and this is new and different for me"

2 - "Leave your life, I can save you, escape and be with me, we are the only ones destined to save each other from our unhappy lives"

3 - "Something's gone wrong, you rejected me/told me we were just friends and it broke my heart - I will wait for you forever, I still love you, come back."

And she sings no songs with any sentiments other than that. I was only two albums in and I find it mind-blowing. Just those three sentiments.

For comparison, Katy Perry on Teenage Dream has songs about being a hot girl from California, dumping a drug addict, loving Jesus, loving penises, a third person storytelling song about a beaten woman, being inspired and being a firework, getting blackout drunk, having sex with an alien, wanting to start a family, missing a former lover and love making you feel young.

Could you make up a bunch of connections for those songs? Sure, but you'd be connecting TWELVE dots with loose observational conspiracy theory absurd bullshit. With Carly you only need to connect three dots.

And I didn't know it yet, but it's every song. All her music. There's only three dots. And she literally says the guy has a girlfriend like twelve times. She draws the lines for you.

If Carly wrote Katy's songs, it would be like:

“”

*Baby you're a firework
Come on let your colors burst
I haven't seen you in ages
Do you still think of me
You were the only one who made me feel bright*

“”

or

“”

*Last friday night
Yeah we danced on tabletops
And we took too many shots
I needed to be in your arms
I want to be more than friends
Last friday night
Take me driving in your car
They'll never catch us
I will never let you go
She doesn't need to know*

“”

or

“”

*Kiss me
K-k-kiss me
Infect me with your love and fill me with your poison
Take me, t-t-take me
None of the other boys can get me high like you
I miss you ever since you moved to San Diego*

“”

or

“”

California girls they're unforgettable

*Please don't forget me I want to be more than friends
I'd take back everything I said if I could
Sunkist skin so hot it melts your popsicle
But I don't want a popsicle, I want you
I'm still waiting*
""

It's profound. Like, you've been reading these fucking lyrics with me, right? It's a jackhammer. It's just pounding you in the face. And it's all SO CATCHY.

I tried to explain my observations about Emotion and Kiss to a fellow fan, only to find myself stymied. He couldn't even see the self-evident "hesitation while confessing you are interested romantically in someone" connection between Call Me Maybe and I Really Like You.

And that was amateur hour shit. How was I ever going to enroll him into Carly College? This guy was pushing my buttons immediately, and I was considering not allowing him entry into my cult. This was a big deal. I was triggered.

"Her music isn't sad, it's happy!" he said.

"No, dude, it's both! It's both, listen, it's just seven themes again and again- like, have you noticed she never sings about dancing unless it's to get away from something? Like- okay I'm not explaining this right-" I found myself sputtering, but annoyed and cynical, he cut me off.

"Carly Rae doesn't have any sad songs except on her first album." He said.
"What? Her first album?" I responded, in hushed tones. I was shocked. I didn't even know Carly had an album before Kiss. For the sheer amount of listening I'd done, I had done very little googling.

"Yeah. It's like from when she was a singer songwriter, like Lisa Loeb or something. Michelle Branch, like that. It was way more like- guitar-y."

Somehow, I knew what was coming before he even said it out loud, the way dogs and cats can sometimes tell when there's going to be an earthquake.

"Really?" I said, still quiet, asking the question but already knowing the answer. "There are sad songs on her first album?"

"Yeah." He said, not understanding the weight of his words as he casually continued: "They're like- about wanting to be with a guy who doesn't want you back. She has a song like- I regret something- ugh I don't remember the lyrics, but it's like about wanting a guy who doesn't want to be with you."

Picture, in your head, a mushroom cloud.

"Cool." I said, quickly opening Spotify. "Sounds cool."

"Max, don't give up on explaining it." I had already started playing the first song on Tug Of War. "Explain the rest of your Carly thing, I- wait are you already listening to it right now?"

"Uh...uh huh..." I said, already making notes. He seemed frustrated.

"There are no sad songs on Emotion or Kiss" I wasn't listening to him any more. He knew, but my silence had made him curious. "So...What did you think all the songs were about? What was so sad about them?"

I didn't waste time trying to tell him.

PART 4 -

LOVE LIKE A DISEASE

Let's take a brief detour, here. Or maybe not a detour, but certainly a detox. I think you and me are both on a bit of a Carly overload right now, and pretty mad that this guy won't ditch his girlfriend, wake up from his dream to take us away and kiss us in secret.

The linear line-drive backwards through albums has been fun, but before we go down into the deep dark well of Carly Rae's first album, Tug Of War, let's take a little safari off-record to talk about Carly's singles, several of which are collabs.

As we get into the singles, you'll see that we are barraged again and again with the same ideas and emotions and themes and even specific images. It almost feels like the video from the horror classic The Ring; like Jepsen has been cursed to endlessly relive the same feelings, the same painful memories, happiness haunted endlessly by a shadow of rejection and despair.

It brings to mind several different things, to me, and if you can't tell, I've spent a lot of time thinking about this. The one that sticks out most is the idea of Jepsen as some kind of beleaguered pop Sisyphus.

For those of you who don't know, Sisyphus was the king of Corinth in ancient Greece. The Greek Gods thought he was a lying egomaniacal asshole, and when he died, cursed him to forever roll a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down right as it got to the top. And just do that. Forever. Just push the boulder all the way up the hill and then right before it reaches the top, down it goes.

Infuriating. Agonizing. On and on forever.

There is some deviation from the overall Jepsen Topography in one or two of the collabs, but honestly, not much. The covers Jepsen released even fit the bill; "Part Of Your World," from Little Mermaid, a song about being geographically separate from someone you love who doesn't know you exist, and "Last Christmas," a song about being rejected on Christmas.

So, as a refresher, let's hit that one more time, and add a new element, informed by our now overflowing war-chest of research.

The Seven Themes:

**TEMPTATION LIMERENCE OBSESSION ESCAPE
SECRETS REJECTION MISERY**

The Narrative:

A shy girl who's unhappy in her current situation meets and befriends a boy in a relationship, falls in love with him, has an affair with him, fantasizes about running away with him, and then the boy terminates the affair, says they're just friends, leaving the girl pining over him, heartbroken.

The Three Acts. This is the new element, and worth having in your head. So I hope you guys did all the homework, because if you don't have all this memorized there's no way you're going to pass the 500 question SAT-style multiple choice SCANTRON test I have waiting at the end of this.

I'm just kidding of course. I'd never do that to you. I'll fill it out myself. If you've read this far, you've suffered enough. But let's suffer some more, as we notice that *all of Carly Rae Jepsen's songs fall into one of these three acts:*

ACT I - LIMERENCE/TEMPTATION - Many songs fit into this; you've just met someone, and they might just be a friend, but not for long, as feelings are starting to happen and you can't get them out of your head and are so excited...Even though it might be morally wrong or for some reason forbidden or a "mistake" to engage the person in this way.

Usually, within this, there will be some mention of the feeling you're experiencing being "new" and uncertain, different from anything you've experienced before. Often, there's a contextualization of this person waking you up from a cynical, depressed or "lost" state.

ACT II - OBSESSION/ESCAPE/SECRETS - This is the bulk of Jepsen's music; it's almost always on some level slightly frustrated, but still optimistic, as a relationship has formed from a platonic friendship, and even if that relationship must be kept secret, you "can't get them out of your head" and are going "crazy" for them.

This is where a lot of the "pitching" and "fantasizing" happens; explanation and re-explanation of you and your lover being the only ones for each other, and the only ones who can save one another from a dark, upsetting world.

Cause you want them bad and you know this is meant to be. To the degree you might just show up where they are physically out of nowhere and be like "yo."

ACT III - REJECTION/MISERY - *CURSES, FRIEND - ZONED AGAIN!*

Something's gone off the rails and it's ending, or ENDED, the person you loved has stepped away from you, often via geographical distance, and you're left alone, miserable, **wondering if they even remember you and praying that they don't forget you, forever wanting them back and letting them know you're still available. You will never get over it or them.**

Every song Carly Rae Jepsen has released, as well as all the unreleased songs I've heard,, fits into one of these three acts, with only two sort-of-kind-of exceptions ("Worldly Matters" and "Store"). Songs occasionally take place in the transition between 1 and 2 or 2 and 3 but never 1 and 3.

So many different songwriters have worked with Jepsen on so many different songs. But on some level, as an artist, she's choosing to sing about the the same thing, again and again and again.

Don't believe me yet, somehow? Still a doubting Thomas? Have you started skimming this yet? Don't, you'll miss all my neat jokes about how wacky I am for doing this; they seem indulgent, but they're coming from a deep place of personal alarm about the way I'm using my spare time.

"It's only two albums!" You say. "Little Mermaid? Max, come the fuck on." You say, in that tone you always use with me when I'm being ridiculous about Carly Rae Jepsen, which I always am, because I'm like that.

I roll over in bed after a bitter silence, and look deeply into your eyes. And I say:

"Hey. The first single we're going to look at is called **I Know You Have A Girlfriend.**"

Your eyes widen. Your jaw drops. You are moved.

"Holy shit, she actually has a song called that?"

"Yes. And remember how I talk about the subtheme of her saying something she regrets, or almost saying something she regrets?"

"I do," you say, nodding eagerly. "I do remember that."

"Good. Because the second single we're going to look at is called **Almost Said It.**"

Your face says everything. You can't believe it. Your heart is pounding in your chest and you trust me completely. We are together on this journey, you and I, and there is no looking back now. We are headed directly into Carly Rae Jepsen's black heart.

Take my hand.

And follow me into the dark.

PART 4 ANNEX: **THE SINGLES - A TRACK BY TRACK EXPLORATION**

Let's get straight into this and not fuck around. Because our first single is a **KEYSTONE** song.

// ~ I KNOW YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND ~ //

SOUND THE AIRHORNS, people. This is a **KEYSTONE** song, a song that gives us new information, and can be used to contextualize other songs. It's also one of Carly's hardest to pin down songs thematically, because the structure is almost deliberately confusing.

One of the most interesting things about Carly's shaping and presentation of her themes is the sincerity of perspective. Because pretty much all of her songs are sung in 2nd person, a narrator speaking directly to a "you," Carly's lyrics often can seem intentionally misleading as she creates defenses and accusations around her own actions.

It is this repeated narrative choice that allows her songs to have the "twists" I mention so often; an expectation is set up, that is then undermined and subverted by subsequent reveals within the song.

This format allows for the most basic Jepsen Second Verse Twist ("hey why aren't you in love with me I'm so in love with you oh man it's driving me crazy" / "oh it's because you have a girlfriend and just want to be friends and don't like me that much") to happen very naturalistically, with the chorus of most songs forming a catchy backbone to lay the heartbreaking message against.

"I Know You Have A Girlfriend" is such a direct, unfettered and intense riff on this format that it almost becomes disorienting, touching on themes of **TEMPTATION, OBSESSION, SECRETS, REJECTION,** and **MISERY/LONGING.**

Yep. 5 out of 7. Let's get in there and take a look.

“”

Baby I don't need to look far

*Everywhere I turn there, there you are
Somebody should sound the alarm
Cause when you try to get me alone
You talk to me in riddles
You treat me like a crime*
“”

Again, Carly, like on Black Heart, is treated like a bad thing, or a crime. This is presented contextless, so it seems like the guy is kind of being a dick; she perceives him as trying to “get her alone,” but then **Saying Things Without Really Saying Them**, speaking to her in “riddles” and acting like the idea of being alone with her is **Bad/Forbidden**.

It is extremely worthy of attention to point out that *this person is actually not expressing romantic interest in Carly explicitly*. His interest is only in her perception of him, and he has done nothing to confirm that he actually wants her.

Which is good, because look at this fucking chorus:

“”
*I know you have a girlfriend
So don't kiss me on the lips
I know you have a girlfriend
Oh don't you tell me what I did
I know you have a girlfriend
And every time you speak
You're lying through you're t-t-teeth
I know you have a girlfriend
And I hear she's kinda nice
I know you have a girlfriend
So don't give me those eyes
I know you have a girlfriend
Oh won't you let me be
I'm beggin' you, stop beggin' me*
“”

Okay, Jesus Christ.

Even in that chorus, there's a lot of accusations...and yet, no real proof that this guy is coming on to her through anything other than her own projections of intent on his actions and behavior.

She says he's lying, but what is he lying about? She says he's begging, but whether that's real, verbal begging, or just the way she's interpreting “those eyes” is left deliberately vague.

A second glance also reveals a really out of place, but important lyric: “Oh don't you tell me what I did.” It almost seems like a non-sequitur, but is deceptively important in potentially clarifying the skewed narrator-perception of the song. He “talks in riddles” and “treats her like a crime,” but one of the things he's bringing up is something concrete that **she did**, or that he thinks she did, that fits into the infidelity equation.

So of course, some of you are saying “No, she's telling this creep to back off!” Right, and I'd be with you, if this next lyric wasn't in the song:

“

*You're sick with dreams about it
Didn't I, didn't I blush
I think, I think, I think
I want it way too much*

“

There's **Dreams**, for those of you keeping track, but also, there's the important admission: **Even if this guy is flirting with her, she wants it too. This is a song of, at best, reluctant fake-resistance to sleeping with a guy with a girlfriend, or, at most innocent, fake-reluctant resistance to sleeping with a guy with a girlfriend.**

Sound familiar? “This kiss, is something I can't resist.”

// ~ ALMOST SAID IT ~ \\

Friend. Companion. Fellow traveller on this Jepsen Journey we've found ourselves on. We've been here before. This is yet another **KEYSTONE SONG**.

We're again at one of those Carly Rae tracks where the inception of this fanatical deep dive into a popstar's oeuvre, that all of her songs are connected by themes and sub-themes, is validated flatly like someone punching your parking ticket.

The ocean is deep, the earth is round, and all of Carly Rae Jepsen's songs are connected thematically. I mean this is just a fucking beat-down at this point, but I can't stop here.

TEMPTATION, OBSESSION, MISERY/LONGING, and REJECTION.

So you know how we've talked a lot about the subtheme of Carly **Saying Something She Regrets**, implied occasionally to be a declaration of love? The notion is brought up enough that it begins to feel like a single, specific incident, which comes up on “More Than A Memory,” and is then directly referenced again on a later Jepsen track from Emotion Side B, “Fever,” where she defines it as “three little words that meant a lot to me.”

This is a whole song just about that.

”

*I always want more, I'm never gonna get it
You're gonna be the one I never got that got away*

“

This lyrical couplet could basically be used to summarize the romantic message of Carly Rae's entire body of work; the idea of losing someone you never actually had.

“

*And I'll regret it
Just a moment in time
But I can't forget it
Yeah, we almost said it*

“

So here's **Being Unable To Forget/Haunted By Memories**, coupled with an interesting little nuance of a change to the title: "we" almost said it. As I've mentioned before, *projection* is a huge part of Carly's work, and the truth of the singular regret of the title set against the communal nature of this lyric could be a very clear demonstration of this.

"

*If this is love, ooh
I should be dying
But I'm going downtown like I still care
Like I'm still trying
I said I was over you but I'm lying
There, I almost said it*

"

Ah, yes, here's the sub-themes of **Partying To Forget/Distract Yourself**, along with **Partying With An Ulterior Motive**, and also the inevitable idea of **Love As A Bad, Dangerous or Fatal Thing**.

""

*You wrote me a song
I often play it
Depending on where I am with you
I either love it or I hate it
We were just this close but we couldn't say it
We were this close*

""

Here's another confirmation of Her Love as a musician or songwriter; again, the idea of "we were this close," of being close to a relationship, is stated but it seems like it could entirely in her head, on her side of the equation. This is as totemic as a Jepsen Anthem as you could hope for.

// ~ MELT WITH YOU ~ \\\

"I'll stop the world and melt with you" is an iconic lyric you're probably familiar with; it's from the 1982 smash hit "I Melt With You" by Modern English. Its lyrics are a bit hard to parse; there's a bit about being in love, then a section about making a pilgrimage to save the human race...

Notably, this song by Carly Rae Jepsen sounds literally nothing like that, despite the title automatically evoking the 80s alt rock classic. It also shares no thematic crossover. We're in forever familiar territory: **MISERY/LONGING**, **OBSESSION** and **ESCAPE**.

""

*If I could melt with you, I would
And find our way back to good
Tell the world to wait outside, just you and I
If I could hold on to your edge, and fall to your deepest dent
We would come true, if I could melt with you
(if I could melt with you)*

""

Unrequited love, lost opportunities, and a desire to run away and be **Alone With Someone**, as per usual. The line “We would come true, if I could melt with you” is the patented Carly hat tip to the idea that this escape she’s talking about is a PROPOSAL, rather than a REALITY. This is someone she’s not actually with, and she’s fantasizing about how things would be better if only they were together.

But they’re not, and as implied by these lyrics, they maybe never were. Something went wrong that brought them away from “good,” but their starting point wasn’t a romantic relationship. They’ve gone from “not being together” to something worse.

“

*I've been thinking about it, I know something's wrong
Fading out in the distance, we've been lost in the songs
Best turn the clocks to somewhere
we won't ever stop, don't ever leave*

“

This again invokes the period in which Carly and Her Love used to “stay up all night, filling up each other’s pages.” The idea that she was in a golden era of artistic collaboration, that fell apart due to an emotional misfire, is commonplace at this point in Jepsen’s music, and the desire to escape from the emotional situation, and stay forever isolated in Perfect Love with her lover, is a trademark as well.

// ~ GOOD TIME ~ \\\

Carly’s bubbly collaboration with Owl City is one of her relatively few American radio hits.

Frustratingly, if you’re a casual fan, or a true fan...or perhaps some kind of combination Fan/Forensic Anthropologist/Ad Hoc Music Journalist who writes upwards of fifty thousand word essays about her songs all being connected by a tightly focused group of themes, Carly is only featured in one verse on the song.

The song itself is, interestingly, very probably about a friendship, rather than a romantic relationship. A friendship with a man, who, in his lyrics on the song, does nothing to imply the relationship is sexually charged whatsoever; instead, the song is more about just getting drunk and having a wild time with a homie.

But even here, Carly can’t escape her sub-themes.

“

*Freaked out, dropped my phone in the pool again
Checked out of my room, hit the ATM
Let's hang out if you're down to get down tonight
'Cause it's always a good time*

“

Did you see it? It happened quick; it seemed like just a random fun Katy Perry/Ke\$ha-esque lyric about having a wild night. But surprise surprise, here’s Carly sneaking a reference in to **Rooms/Hotels**.

“

*Good morning and good night
I'll wake up at twilight
It's gonna be alright
We don't even have to try
It's always a good time.*

“

There's an implied **Staying Up All Night** here, but let's not get fanatical.

So again, I wanna say that Good Time, other than its funny shoehorned-in sub-theme, is pretty loose with the Carly Branding. But the subtheme is **STILL THERE**. It's songs like “Good Time”, and the song coming up next: “Super Natural,” that sort of paradoxically push me further into feverish belief that this is not a coincidence, or a phenomena, but actually, on some level, an intentional choice by the artist herself.

It's worth saying, this song and the next one are the hardest to qualify within the Jepsen Pattern. But even so: they're not *that* hard.

// ~ **SUPER NATURAL** ~ //

This one is legit very deceptive. When I first heard it, I thought it represented a break in the formula; granted, one break at this point, on a collaboration for a single, didn't seem like a deal-breaker on the Carly Campaign I'd launched. I figured there had to be an exception somewhere, and if this twee, poppy tune was the rule-breaker, then by its contrast, the thematic content in rest of the songs would be even more noticeable.

But then I listened to the lyrics again, a little more closely. I googled them and put on my CSI pop music investigator goggles and shined a blacklight on this shit, I took it seriously, and lo and behold: It's an ACT 1 song.

It's not an exception at all, even a little bit. The sub-themes suddenly popped up like neon signs; they're just a inch or two subtler this time.

Because this song isn't about having a boyfriend. It's about **LIMERENCE**.

“

*You can show me your favorite streets
Late at night
We lay in bed, fall asleep, side by side*

“

Have you been reading my treatise on Carly straight through? Because these lyrics should ring some alarm bells in terms of sub-themes: **Streets/Walking The Streets At Night/Staying Up All Night**, and **Dream/Sleep/Beds**.

“

'Cause when I'm with you anywhere

*Baby, it doesn't matter
I, I just don't care what we do
Baby, it's all us
How I feel, so unreal
“*

Initially, this is the lyric that made me nervous. It sounded like Carly was in a happy, loving relationship, and that was fairly form-breaking for the narrative I was proposing. I wondered about the choice of the word “unreal;” it characterized the relationship described as fundamentally different from what she was used to.

It was this thread that led me into the chorus.

“
*You gotta believe in me
This isn't normal, not at all
It's just like we don't try
We just fit, you and I
We are supernatural
This is easy love
Every day euphoria
It's just like we don't try
We just fit, you and I
We are supernatural
“*

Ahhh, yeah. Okay so you either already see it or you're gonna have to hold my hand through this one: Carly is contextualizing this relationship as **new**. “You gotta believe in me” is a key lyric here; she's talking to the guy, in disbelief that they've found this connection.

It continues with her charmed-alarm of “I love this, but it's not normal,” again contextualizing the You in this song as a new lover, not a long term boyfriend, and it continues into “Every day euphoria,” a weirdly specific lyric that again evokes the initial manic rush associated with **LIMERENCE**.

There's that phrasing again, too, like on “Good Time,” about “trying,” and the idea that liking or loving or connecting with someone usually requires troublesome effort. Looked at literally, the songs express frank, and frankly distrusting and anxious, surprise at finding a connection with someone.

And it's through this lens that we can revisit the lyric “You gotta believe in me.”

Carly isn't making a dedication of love; as always, she's making a pitch. You and I are meant to be together. Please believe me. Please believe in this.

You and I are meant to be together.

Whether you like it or not.

PART 5 - **NAKED AND ANGRY**

What I'm doing with this Carly shit isn't new. It's just the newest (and most rewarding and overwhelming) manifestation of a pattern that I've been repeating my entire life.

Ever since I was little, I've had an obsession with lyrics, and the story behind songs. Because I was raised on Motown and "golden oldies," most of the music I was exposed to was very open in its intent and clear about the story being told. An easy example: a man, after leaving his home in Georgia, ends up frustrated by life and falling into a deep depression, so he sits on the dock of a bay, miserable and defeated.

It took me a while to understand, as a kid, that songs like Otis Redding's, "Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay" by Otis Redding could be about sadness but sound happy. Songs like "Tears of A Clown," "Ain't Too Proud To Beg," or "Lonely Teardrops," all make you want to dance, but were entirely miserable in the stories they told.

It got even weirder for me as I got into 80s music in my adolescence; songs that people would sing along to the choruses of which seemed completely misunderstood. "Sunglasses At Night" was actually about being cheated on. "99 Red Balloons" was actually about a computer error that led to global thermonuclear war. "Your Love" was about pressuring a younger girl into having a one night stand with you while your girlfriend was out of town, and "My Sharona" was about pedophilic attraction.

By 1990, songs on the radio were punching me in the face with subtext and straight up storytelling that seemed to escape my hook-obsessed peers. What was that bit about doing crystal meth in "Semi-Charmed Life?" Wait, was "Possum Kingdom" about a murder, or possibly something much darker? And "Lola"...Was it about falling in love with a beautiful woman, or possibly about...a man dressed as a woman?

"Why would you fall in love with a man dressed as a woman?" eleven year old, not-very-woke-me wondered. What a strange song.

But as the millennium turned, pop music seemingly became more straightforward in its intent. The lyrics were less subversive; songs about dancing were about dancing, songs about love were about love, and songs about being Bootylicious were about...feeling bootylicious.

There'd be the occasional outlier; something weird or hidden within the corridors of melody, but mostly, Lady Gaga's "Just Dance" was pretty straightforwardly about getting drunk in a club, and Usher's "Yeah" was pretty straightforwardly about getting drunk in a club, and "In Da Club" was pretty straightforwardly about getting drunk in the club, but now, from 50 Cent's point of view.

There were also abominations that just didn't make any sense. I'd obsess over them. I remember vividly the rise of Britney Spears and my thirteen year old classmates eagerly telling me that "...Baby One More Time" was about sex, or even anal, or perhaps an abusive relationship. But that didn't make any sense to me; the lyrics just didn't support it.

It bothered teen-Max for years. "...Baby One More Time" just didn't come together lyrically in any kind of cohesive way; stuff about being lonely, possibly a break up, but then what's the bit about "not the way I planned it?" And why "hit me," hit me with what? My spider-sense tingled; something was weird here, but there wasn't any kind of secret meaning.

Years later, I'd find out my confusion was due the song's author, Max Martin, translating the lyrics from Swedish, and thought "hit me" actually meant "call me."

The same was true of an equally incoherent song that featured this mystifying couplet:

“
I never want to hear you say “I want it that way”
Cause I want it that way
“

Max Martin again. "I Want It That Way's" English As A Second Language lyrics were so completely confusing that there was actually an entirely new, separate version of the track produced with more comprehensible lyrics about being in love. But it sucked, and got scrapped in favor of the catchy word salad that took the Backstreet Boys from Pop Fad to Modern Classic.

Songs with a cohesive story, which is what I hunted so feverishly, were no longer being as commonly presented. Songs were becoming very upfront about their subtext, and this only became more true as the 2010s rolled around.

A big part of this had to do with the a growing musical singularity; hip-hop, alternative rock and electronic music had all converged into one unending stream of Top 40. It was not uncommon to see a song produced by a synthed-up club DJ, with vocals by a popstar, and a bridge by a hip hop artist. Nuance was hard to sneak in with that many disparate voices.

This led to a separate but notable phenomenon, wherein a pop or R&B song about one thing would have a rap guest who'd either say things totally unrelated to the main theme of the song, or, better yet, misinterpret the primary idea of the song to the degree that they contradicted everything the main artist was saying.

I've always felt the best and funniest example of this was on Usher's "I Don't Mind," an R&B song about being in a committed relationship with a stripper, the lyrics of which center around the narrator (Usher) and his confidence in his girlfriend's loyalty and independence, saying he doesn't worry about what people say, and "if you dance on a pole, it don't make you a ho."

Then Juicy J wanders in for the bridge and does a prolonged rap wherein he says strippers will fuck anyone for enough money and he will pay them and fuck them because he loves to fuck them and have threesomes and they will do anything for a tip, all strippers without exceptions are whores for the right price and Juicy J loves to fuck all of them.

The instant implication is that Juicy J is paying to fuck Usher's girlfriend and Usher is a total sucker idiot for even singing this song. It's as though Juicy J pulled you aside to laugh at Usher with you like "Can you believe this fucking doofus?" It's cognitive dissonance at a level that reprograms the song thematically, and in that way, accidentally forms a satisfying story. But there's no way it was intentional. It's just some kind of weird blind-spot in the production of the song.

And then there was other stuff that was just weird, and harkened back to my lyrical confusion with "...Baby One More Time" like this next one, one of the strangest non-sequiturs in 2010s pop that you probably haven't noticed:

"

*I came in like a wrecking ball
I never hit so hard in love
All I wanted was to break your walls
All you ever did was wreck me
Yeah, you wreck me*

"

Wait so SHE came in like a wrecking ball and hit hard but then SHE was the one who got wrecked? If she came in like a wrecking ball, did she not achieve breaking his walls? How did she get wrecked if she was the wrecking ball, what is happening here? The full lyrics only made it worse: Miley Cyrus' Wrecking Ball is completely confusing, simultaneously condemning a scorned lover, expressing devotion, describing oneself as a destructive force that was also somehow simultaneously destroyed while also being blameless in the destruction...

It just doesn't make any fucking sense. It's a good song, but it's not a story.

What I'm saying here is: I don't make this shit up, and I give up hunting it if I don't get a sense that it's there. The simple truth is that a lot of pop IS meaningless, and the majority of it operates at best on one textual level, and perhaps always has.

There were of course stand-outs where I got to excitedly exercise my analytical story-seeking in traffic, pop radio blasting. Gotye's "Somebody That I Used To Know" wasn't a sad break up song, it was about a rejected, possessive douchebag whining and being reproached by his ex. "Pumped Up Kicks" was a weirdly celebratory anthem for school shooters.

Drake's "Best I Ever Had" was likely not about true love, or even a romantic song at all, but instead raw and sordid braggadocio about the joys of manipulating and bribing a side-chick. "Get Lucky" was catchy and thin, but also had a funny lyrical hidden story about patiently staying up with a girl who doesn't understand that you're gritting your teeth through the party as the night goes on in the hopes that she'll eventually sleep with you.

But they were few and far between.

That's why the dog-whistle of "actually things are maybe not okay and maybe even probably kind of bad" in Call Me Maybe came through to me so clearly. It was my first encounter with the way Jepsen often twists her lyrics in the second verse "Jepsen Second Verse Twist," as well as her overarching, arguably intentional, romantic tragedy masterpiece, endlessly repeating themes, ideas and subtexts, which all fed a hunger in me that seemed to have been silently growing for years.

We've been mostly working our way backwards through Jepsen's musical offerings, starting with EMOTION, then KISS, then her singles and we're now back to Tug of War, where her mainstream career started.

Jepsen would refine and hone her focus through Kiss and Emotion, and eventually bring things into sharper relief and somehow even more direct wording on Emotion Side B; going into Tug Of War, I sort of expected to be disappointed, convinced that my series of unlikely jackpots in Jepsen's lyrics would finally run dry.

So imagine my very weird smile when I pulled it up on iTunes, and, song by song, realized that this album, in as narratively satisfying of a way as one could hope to imagine,

represents an inception point for many of the ideas that I'd find peppered throughout Carly's later work:

- **Separation by Physical Distance/Geography**
- **Rooms/Hotels**
- **Dreams/Sleep/Beds**
- **Staying Up All Night**
- **Not Saying Something/Saying Something Without Actually Speaking**
- **Saying Something She Regrets**

Also narrative elements of: a lover who was a singer/songwriter who became famous or important and forgot her, a friend she falls in love with, but could never have, a man who hides his emotions from her, leaving her endlessly hanging...and even though she kind of suspects he doesn't love her, she prays for him to realize he does.

The themes and subthemes *began* on Tug Of War. And of course, framing it all:
TEMPTATION, OBSESSION, LIMERENCE, SECRETS, ESCAPE, REJECTION, MISERY/LONGING.

Carly Rae was 23 when she released Tug of War. Fresh off placing 3rd on Canadian Idol. Brian Melo, the winner of that year, would see his career mostly peter out by 2010. But Carly remained. Carly grew. Carly exploded.

What I'm saying is:

Welcome to ground zero.

PART 5 ANNEX:

TUG OF WAR - A TRACK BY TRACK EXPLORATION

This album sounds different than her later work. Carly even sounds different: more soulful, sadder, less cutesy and somehow older, even though she was years younger when she recorded it. It's refreshing and exciting to hear this side of her voice; it's got this kind of Tori Amos, Lisa Loeb, or more accurately, Michelle Branch type of thing going on. She sounds sweet, and small, and hurt.

Compellingly, this is also the only time Carly really talks about...well, Carly. Pretty much every single song we've looked at so far is about Carly's relationship to someone else, almost always a romantic interest.

It could be argued that these songs, where Carly just talks about herself, could be viewed as form-breakers, anomalies within my proposed pattern, and I'd ask you to consider them on a case by case basis, because they do fit, just in a very specific and very rewarding way.

One of Carly's major sub-themes concerns coming out of a period of feeling **Lost And Alone** before meeting Her Love, who gave her purpose and direction. I would ask you to indulge the idea that these scant songs document this period. Carly asks real questions on this album, in a less-flat, less flirtatious or fun style than she'd eventually evolve into.

The "I wonder who you're screwing" on Tug Of War is NOT the voice of the later Carly, who would instead more innocently ask if someone "remembers" her.

Though this is very polished singer-songwriter pop, there's still an edge here. And it's that edge, that more hardened sadness, that makes this album special.

But I think the real crescendo here is that all the stuff I'd been positing, regarding the Narrative Aspect of being involved with a musician who's already in a relationship and you travel with him and have this platonic back and forth thing with him where he ultimately rejects you, is like...*exploding* out of this album.

On Kiss and Emotion, Carly is sad, longing, yearning for this guy to come back, fantasizing about escapes with him and remembering the early days. She's singing poppy, hopeful *sounding* songs with bleak, despairing messages. She's sad, and obsessed, but in a very distant, harmless way. She's a scar.

Not on Tug of War. Tug Of War is an open wound. A new emotion appears in Carly's arsenal, one that won't show up on her later albums.

She's sad, yeah. She misses him, yeah. She wishes they could make it work. Wishes he was available to her. She's always sad: on Kiss, on Emotion, on her singles, on everything except her Limerence songs, she's sad, she's SO sad. Sad isn't new.

But on Tug of War, she's also pretty fucking angry.

1 - BUCKET

Carly Rae Jepsen's first album's first song appears to be about a pleasant day at the beach with friends, watching kids play and generally having a nice time. But after like four lines, surprise, it isn't that.

It's actually really fucking sad and portrays a relationship, or friendship, or romantic friendship, currently in flux. So here we are. First track of first album.

And it's about **MISERY**.

“”

*I don't know how we're gonna build a castle now
Do you want to start again somehow?
I'll stay until the sun comes down, down down
'till the sun comes down*

“”

Something's gone wrong in Carly's relationship with this person; it's ended, but she...drumroll... wants another chance. From a purely literary standpoint, on this first album, Carly uses more metaphors, similes, and emotionally descriptive imagery than on her later work. The simile of the relationship as a sandcastle, beautiful but inherently temporary and impossible to preserve, is a more elaborate metaphor than anything on Kiss or Emotion.

Even the LA Hallucinations were given literal form in the idea of credit cards and jet plane travel. This sandcastle, a beautiful thing gone too soon, is a great starting point tone-setter for everything on the record.

“”

*Look over my shoulder
See your laughter bubble over
Lately you've been working too hard
And I've been waiting to recognize
That sparkle that's in your eye
Those two dimples on your cheeks
The joy that lights the fire*

“”

Here, technically for the first time ever, we encounter a character who Carly will go on to sing about for the rest of her career, that of an unhappy or depressed man who Carly is pursuing, **A Lover In A Bad Or Dark Place That She Can Save Him From**. A guy who used to be happy but who has lost something, and who Carly imagines she could help.

The final lyrics are especially sad:

*“Sun's coming down, I'll stay
(Sun's down, here come the waves, and there goes the carousel)
Sun's coming down, I'll stay
(Sun's down, here come the waves, and there goes the carousel)
Sun's coming down, I'll stay
(Sun's down, here come the waves, and there goes the carousel)*

She's in it for the long haul. Round and round. Tide in and out. She'll stay.

2 - TUG OF WAR

This is a really important song, and we're going to go deep on it, because it is a signpost for so many things, and reveals just how early, and comprehensive, the phenomenon of the thematic and narrative choices in Jepsen's work are.

The first album's second track, and we're already hitting **MISERY, REJECTION, OBSESSION**, and **LIMERENCE**, but much more directly than we will in her later work. As I said, this album feels angry, and lost. It's a portrait of a person who was aimless and in a transitional period in their life, found a connection, lost it, and now bares a scar no one else can see.

We start off with some Classically Vintage Jepsen “I Really Like You”/“Super Natural” type “how is it possible you're this wonderful, it is probably an illusion or something dangerous, I love you but I'm not sure about this” type stuff.

“”

*You seem too good
To good to be true
You're holding me stronger
Stronger than I'm used to*

“”

I'm sure, since this behemoth has now been released into the world, I'll have Jeptics (get it, like skeptics? I'm hilarious!) saying that my read of Super Natural isn't fair, or presupposes a dire or sinister outlook on Carly's flirty, hesitant song about a new relationship. To these naysayers, I point to this song (and many others), as representative of a pattern.

The idea of a new relationship being unfamiliar and overwhelming in a positive but tenuous way is an unspoken overarch of many songs that address Act I of the Carly story. “I can't believe I can feel this way, I haven't felt this way before and I am suspicious of it” is a common Carly thematic variable, plugged into many different configurations of other themes.

This next part is REALLY interesting, because it's so much more direct than Carly is on her later stuff, and is a wonderful signifier of what's to come:

“”

Don't go out with the boys tonight
I won't sleep a wink
Wondering what you're doing
Don't go out with the girls tonight
I will turn to drink
Wondering who you're screwing

“”

Well, there you go. This guy is NOT HER BOYFRIEND. They are not in any kind of committed relationship. In fact, they're so not together that his *schedule* is entirely out of her control, much less who he sleeps with.

So the idea of him as a fuck-buddy who she's fallen in too deep with presents itself pretty naturally; they had a casual thing she wishes she could control, that appears to be the scenario. Well, maybe things will still turn out okay. Maybe this isn't doomed.

“”

Tug of War
Sweet as sin
I let go
I fell in
Feel the pull
Call your name
I'm alone
Once again

“”

Oh, no, sorry, it's doomed. And again, the "sweet as sin" implies that the love is **Bad/Forbidden** somehow, and yes, of course, she ends up alone, endlessly pining after someone who doesn't want her. It actually brings up the question of if she ever expressed wanting to be with him in the first place, or if that was just for us, her confidants.

Tug of War being the title track of this album says so much, I can't even tell you. It's a spotlight on the overarching narrative of the album. The push-pull of wanting someone you'll never have, asking them to be with you, being refused, ending up just getting dragged along, and of course, most of the songs on this album, and ALL of the songs on her later albums, will be about exactly that.

So that's the hardline Carly-science of this song and this album. That's the provable $1+2=3$ of it all.

But if you want to get speculative, if you want to do some Quantum Raechanics, I can give you another interesting, if unprovable path to follow.

Tug Of War can also, if you're so inclined, and want to be imaginative, be used to contextualize the other album titles, and the songs chosen to be the title tracks, in an interesting way. The album "Kiss" surely takes its title from the track "This Kiss;" and keep in mind, "This Kiss" isn't

simply about kissing, it's about a specific, forbidden kiss, possibly one single kiss between two people who probably shouldn't be kissing.

Similarly, "Emotion" takes its title from the song "Emotion," a song all about the specific emotion of romantic longing for someone you can't have. Emotion is another one of those Jepsen tracks, if you recall, that urges/begs a lover who spurned her to think about her, and desire her, even though he "calls her his friend."

All of these songs are **Track 2** on each album.

And here's the kicker, if you haven't figured it out: They chronologically fit each of the three acts I have identified.

- 1 - **Tug of War** - wanting, not having
- 2 - **This Kiss** - having, but knowing it's wrong
- 3 - **Emotion** - loss

I mean...that's just crazy. A crazy coincidence. Except maybe it isn't a coincidence.

3 - THE MONEY AND THE EGO

Okay so I'm really excited, because this one is really special. I've been waiting to get to this track since I first heard the album, even if it doesn't directly fit into the theoRae of Jepsen, because it still kind of does, and gives us a wonderfully articulated perspective on everything.

This is one of only two songs in all of the Carly Rae Jepsen tracks I've listened to that's mainly ABOUT Carly; her relationship to her own life, her career, her anxieties about the future. It's introspective, and even though it's sung in second person and probably still pointed at Her Love, it gives incredible insight into the person actually singing.

She sounds sad. Confused. Lost. And she says all this, in no uncertain terms; it's rare that Jepsen's tendency towards literal lyrics is turned inward this way.

Many times, on many songs, Carly references **Being Lost Or Unhappy Before She Met Her Love**. On a much later track, "Higher," Carly will open the song by saying "I was lost, alone and searching."

What's amazing, and remarkable, and for lack of a better term: *mind-bending* about Jepsen's work, is how certain songs can be seen as direct linear references to other songs. Like I'm sure someone somehow even crazier than I am could actually take all of her songs and list them linearly from the top of **ACT I** to the end of **ACT III**, because so many of them appear to directly reference specific moments and emotions across all albums.

It's ultimately about **MISERY/LONGING**, and you could make an argument it's about **ESCAPE** too, but the truth is, this one's a real outlier. Mostly. Sort of. This, along with a later song, Worldly Matters, are two songs that appear to chronicle the dark period in Carly's life, when the future seemed uncertain.

“”

*Make my house of bricks and I'll stick here
When the world comes crashing down around me
Make your arms a willow tree
And you can bend with me anywhere I'm going*

“”

So we've got much more poetic symbolism than we usually see from Jepsen here, whose lyrics usually very directly, and in no uncertain terms, state what she's doing, what she's feeling, what she wants You to do, why she wants You to do it, how she wishes You felt, and direct communication about why she's feeling that way.

But even within this, we see the leitmotif of **Being In Someone's Arms**.

“”

*Sometimes it's hard to see anything lovely
All the people around me
Going for the money and the money and the ego
How can you ask me why I need to know before I try?
I've got to be sure there's more
Than the money and the money and the ego
Keep your eyes on me
And I'll look to you so I can see what I am here for
Pull the wool over my eyes
Please kiss this day goodbye, only you can get me going*

“”

So there are two ways to view this song; one is as a message to her fans, almost directly addressing the listener. Carly's career is starting to blow up, and she wonders what's next, very literally asking her audience to stay with her and help guide her in her time of doubt.

The other way, the way that's more likely the intent, is that this is to a specific person, perhaps a mentor figure. This read of the song is bolstered by the "make your arms a willow tree" line; the idea that this is a very specific person, who she's asking for help.

And please take the time to note the wording: she's not relying on this person already. She's asking them to be this for her; she's, as usual, proposing a situation in which the person she's singing to will be there for her. She's saying "please be there for me," with no guarantee that the Money And The Ego won't catch up to her.

So this one is unique, in that way, and kind of moving. Which is good. It's good we finally hit one that bends the theory a little.

Because the next track is as blatant and haunting and thunderous a proof of concept as we're going to get.

4 - TELL ME

What's that sound? Is that an approaching ambulance? Is that Godzilla making his way into Tokyo? Is that a tsunami siren? Is that the noise signaling the beginning of The Purge?

No, it's a **KEYSTONE SONG**. And oh boy. Oh boy, imagine me bouncing up and down in my seat while I type it. This one is what we call a "doozy."

This is a song about **TEMPTATION, MISERY, SECRETS**, but mainly and more openly than ever before and ever after in Jepsen's work, this is a song about **REJECTION**.

We encounter sub-themes of **Saying Things Without Actually Speaking, Being In Someone's Arms, Love As A Fatal Or Dangerous Thing, Begging for Affection/Love**, and interestingly, **Rooms/Hotels**.

So there, it fits the theory, with this song, that's easy to prove.

But I want to get deeper into the narrative side of this, because there's a lot to unpack. So, in rare form, I'm just going to leave the entire lyrics here for you to read, and then, you and I will pour a glass of wine and get into their place in the over all JepSaga.

""

*Tell me
Baby is it yes or no
You've got a face that just don't show
What's going on inside*

*Tell me
I swear I'll take it on the chin
Don't sugar-coat where I fit in
Whats going on
Inside you there's a room,
A room with a door*

*I finally come knocking
And I've been here before
Oh I've got this love for you
But what is it for
If you can't hear me then*

*Tell me
Last chance
Hold me in your arms and say
if you want this love to walk away
Tell me and I'll say goodbye*

*Inside you theres a room,
A room with a door
I finally come knocking
And I've been here before
Oh I've got this love for you
But what is it for
If you can hear me then*

*I'll make it easy
I'm counting to 3
Am I something you want or someone you need?
Tell me, darling won't you tell me
I'm begging you to tell me,
Tell me and I'll say goodbye
""*

Throughout Jepsen's work, there are references to her **Saying Something She Regrets**, often with the implication that this had the effect of isolating her from the love she wanted. It shows up as individual verses, like on "Never Get To Hold You" and "When I Needed You," but also functions as the backbone of entire songs, like Almost Said it.

The things Carly seems to have said, from context clues, is some sort of ultimatum, some sort of grand dedication of devotion to her Love that was ultimately rejected. Are you seeing what I'm saying here? Are you reading the writing on the wall?

What's unique about "Tell Me" is that it appears to document exactly such a moment as is hinted at in all the previous work and work to come in her archive. It's a romantic ultimatum, being made to someone who pretty clearly is going to say no; a guy who perhaps loved her enough to hook up with her, but now that she's asking "am I something you want or something you need," is avoiding the question to the point that she's "counting to 3" and also "begging" him to tell her.

It's rare we get as clean and perspicuous a song as this; the lyrics, which read more like a monologue, are her very directly confronting Him. What's most interesting is that, as they go, Carly loses power in the situation. She starts with uncertainty, asking where she fits in, and saying don't sugar coat it, but as the song goes on, she begins to lose hope.

Until finally she's basically just asking him to tell her he doesn't love her so she can "say goodbye." Inside him, there's a room (his heart and innermost desires) where she's come knocking.

The idea of a room as representative of a connection between two people will return several times, but never more notably on "Curiosity," where Carly sings "I know, I know, I know you've got the key," without clarifying what the key is to.

I'd say, juxtaposing these two songs, it becomes clear the the key is the room inside her. It's her heart. He's the person who can unlock her love.

And here she is knocking at his door. But it's not opening.

And by the end of this, it's likely she regrets bringing it up.

Like, really regrets it.

Like three albums and two EPs worth of *real regret*.

5 - HEAVY LIFTING

Here's a song about **LIMERENCE**, and what could be considered Carly Rae Jepsen's most straightforwardly affectionate and romantic song. It's lovely, and intimate, and appears to describe a burgeoning sexual relationship between two people who were formerly friends, because, of course it does.

This song is unique in a couple of ways, but the most notable to me is the nature of the sexual encounter described. Carly generally talks about physical intimacy as something she WANTS to happen, or something that has already happened, is finished and over. On her Limerence songs, she always describes the ongoing relationship as new, and in need of further exploration, but here, it feels like she's describing a specific event, which triggers a specific need.

It's interesting because her describing the nuances of a moment is so alien to her later work. I mean, think of the lyrics you've heard (or read) so far, and then look at these opening verses:

“”

*You undo me
I'm a happy mess
My dress slips to the floor
And I pose, what an amateur
To be like this! "exposed"*

“”

I mean, dang, she's right there nekkid being all goofy and innocent about it. But this project isn't called "A Happy Mess No One Else Can See," and Carly sneaks a hint of some kind of internal conflict or darkness pretty quickly:

“”

*You deny the other side of me
That strips good love away
And you kissed my reflection
When I looked at me today*

“”

So here we are introduced to the idea of "seeing yourself and interacting with, or someone else interacting with your reflection" that will return two albums later on the song "Warm Blood." But that's not the headline here. The eye catcher is:

"The Other Side Of Me That Strips Good Love Away."

What the hell does that mean, exactly? This lyric is worth closer examination.

Carly occasionally positions herself as a dark, out of control, or unstable figure. This direct name drop of an unhappier, romantically insatiable and destructive Carly on her first album, now contextualized within her entire oeuvre, is huge. This self awareness of an emotionally destructive capacity within will return again and again over her next two albums, most notably on "Black Heart."

“”

*Worlds collide
I see a side of you*

*I never saw before
We can work it out, let's talk it out
I want to know you more*
“”

A side she never saw before, I would assume, because they're (*subtheme buzzer*) **Friends Upgrading To Lovers**. But look, there's *already a problem brewing*. "We can work it out, let's talk it out." The thrilling connection with him has made her want more, and it's being implied there's something in the way of that happening.

It also does Carly's always necessary work of establishing this as a thrilling, **new**, limerence type thing, rather than a more emotionally involved relationship.

“”
*Oh, look at me the way you do
Look at me the way you do
Look at me the way you do
Oh, look at me the way you do
Look at me the way you do
Look at me, look at me the way you do*
“”

Seems like a pretty reasonable request, even if it slightly dips into the **Saying Something Without Actually Speaking** subtheme. But he's only going to look at you for so long, before you come knocking at that locked door inside him.

At this point, when I hear the "omigosh i'm in love with my friend!" Carly tracks, the Act I tracks, I get a little depressed. I want to reach through time, to young Carly, like the Ghost of Christmas Future.

I can't help thinking that whatever this was, it started here.

6 - SUNSHINE ON MY SHOULDERS

So this is a John Denver cover, written years before Carly Herself was even born. But, like her other covers, last Christmas and Part of Your World, it still somehow manages to fit the Carlyverse quite cleanly. So the question becomes: How? Why? Why THIS song?

Sunshine On My Shoulders was originally released by Denver in 1971, but didn't become a hit until 1974. Denver has said he wrote the song in a "melancholy state of mind," and indeed, the song's success is somewhat attributed to the bittersweet coincidence of it being released in the midst of the Vietnam War, wishing for better times.

This happy-sadness, so familiar in Carly's work, belies an interesting factoid: this cover was Carly's first single as a solo artist, post-Canadian Idol. This was the tone they chose to set; a cover from the seventies, rather than anything of her own. Something familiar, but something not quite pop.

Oh, and it's an **ESCAPE** song.

“”

*Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy
Sunshine in my eyes can make me cry
Sunshine on the water that is so lovely
Sunshine almost always makes me high*

“”

So I recognize these are someone else's lyrics, and I'm not going to go too deep into them, but let's take a moment to notice the idea of getting High. The equation of “**love**” equating with “highness” is its own mini-theme in Jepsen's work, that comes into full bloom on EMOTION Side B, on easily her “happiest” song, but we'll get to that.

What's fascinating is that the leitmotif appears here, as a cover. I suppose you could wonder if this isn't where she, as a songwriter, caught that bug.

7 - WORLDLY MATTERS

This is an **ABERRANT SONG**. It's also the **ONLY ABERRANT SONG**. Because it features an eighth theme: **UNCERTAINTY**.

Granted, Carly has featured “uncertainty” in various ways on many of her songs, but here, it takes center stage. I've discussed at length Carly's implications that she was lost, sad and confused at a point in her life, searching for meaning, before she met Her Love.

The Money and The Ego seems to chronicle the end of that period, when she found her feet in her career, but Worldly Matters would be, chronologically, the first song of **Act I**, with a young Jepsen documenting an introspective day when she walks home, wondering about the world.

This is a beautiful little song, and very notable in this project for specifically the following lyric, which is as aberrant as the song's theme. Check this out, and tell me if you recognize what I'm referring to.

“”

*My best friend she lives up the road
Haven't talked to her in weeks*

“”

Did you see that??? LOOK! READ IT AGAIN DO, YOU SEE IT? This is, other than on Boy Problems (where she's talking to a girl *about* a guy), **THE ONLY CARLY RAE JEPSEN SONG WHEREIN SHE REFERENCES ANOTHER WOMAN AS A FRIEND, or even as ANY KIND OF OTHER CHARACTER, RATHER THAN SOMEONE ELSE'S GIRLFRIEND OR LOVE INTEREST.**

In my exhaustive interfacing with Jepsen's work, this line, about Carly having any kind of friend, indeed, any kind of other female character, stands completely alone. Compare this casually to the work of Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga or Beyonce, and you'll see how idiosyncratic Carly's work truly is.

In all of her released work, this is one of only two references to a female friend. The other is of course “Boy Problems,” which centers around frustration and the end of female friendship, via a relationship with a boy. But here, there’s a friend, a BEST friend, who lives up the road.

But.

She “hasn’t talked to her in weeks.”

You gotta give it to her: The consistency is startling.

“”

*I keep on walking I stop
Ditching all my plans
I want to climb that cedar tree and leave me in good hands
What happened to me on the way to something higher
What will be left when I have all that I desire?*

“”

Getting High again. The desire to escape, appearing early here, this time alone, and worse, a somewhat dire pondering that having what she wants isn’t actually good for her, and will leave her empty and lost.

8 - SWEET TALKER

This is a song Carly wrote completely herself; in fact, it was the song she sang in her audition for season 5 of Canadian Idol, that she only gets about a quarter of the way through before the judges, blown away by her obvious talent, unanimously welcome her to the show. One of the judges comments that she looks 14. Another urges her to reject the offer of Canadian idol, and sign with him and start her career immediately.

It’s a lovely little YouTube video.

Carly, then 21, in her introduction, says “I’m a free spirit.” Then, after a moment, adds: “Maybe too much of a free spirit.” What she means by this is left completely vague.

At first, this song appears to be about a pleasant, sexy seduction, Carly pitching a desired romantic scenario as she so often does. It’s a **TEMPTATION**, **LIMERENCE** and **SECRETS** song with maybe a subtle **ESCAPE** overtone, like a lot of the ones on this album, but has a weird kind of angle that shows up midway through.

“”

*Sweet talker, I'm not gunna stop you
You talk so sweet and it's dribbling like honey
It's just one taste
I see what your tryin' to do, oh oh, yeah yeah,
Its hot, stakes are getting higher*

“”

See here, the idea of the stakes raising, thusly implying the “just one taste” is wrong or forbidden, making it part of the **Bad/Forbidden Love** subtheme category. Also, though it appears in a different context, there’s that word “Higher” again. Not making anything of it. Just pointing it out.

“”

*Lazy lover, oh, you slide me through your
Slide me through your
Lazy lover I will slide me through your window
And I'll give you, oh, the sweetest dreams you ever had
Make your early morning not so bad
I can see just what you're tryin' to do*

“”

So already here we have the “pitching a sexual/romantic relationship bit,” along with sub-themes of **Dreams/Sleep/Beds** and **Saying Something Without Actually Speaking**. So far, fairly innocent.

But of course, it cannot ever be left at that.

Here’s an early appearance of the Carly Rae Jepsen Re-contextualizing the Jepsen Second Verse Twist:

“”

*Don't you ask for more that wave
Just tumbles me round till I'm lost somewhere
With baby, I just can't make a sound
It's so unfortunate
But I've already been through this
And I can see just what your tryin; to do
I can see just what you need to do*

“”

There it is: Carly is resigned to the failure of *even this casual sexual encounter, intimating it will leave her **Lost And Alone***. And noting as well, the idea of a “wave that tumbles her around.” We are drawn endlessly back to the idea of emotions, particularly the Limerence and excitement associated with sex, as a dangerous and destabilizing force.

9 - HOTEL SHAMPOOS

This is possibly, next to “Tell Me,” the most fascinating artifact on the album. As we get further in, I’ll discuss its relevance to the larger whole, as Hotel Shampoos could have significance beyond measure to the Jepsen Pattern.

But for now, let’s look at the pieces that make it idiosyncratic, special, and most hauntingly, *specific*, amongst all her other songs.

For once, Carly only very briefly talks to a “you.” Instead, she’s telling a story, a VERY SPECIFIC STORY about ONE MAN, a HE, a HIM. A man who was her friend and her equal, but fulfilled her worst fears for him once he became successful.

Sound familiar? It should, because this **man is, in context, very possibly the same man discussed 8 years later on the Emotion track LA Hallucinations, who she says she knew early in her career. The same guy who wrote a song for her on Almost Said It, the Guitar String Wedding Ring guy.**

Context clues from both of these songs strongly point to that being the case.

Hotel Shampoos is the mother-load. Hotel Shampoos is the string that connects *everything* on my precious wall of printed-out Carly lyrics, scribbled on in crazed handwriting and crayons I found in the dumpster where I now live.

I mean this figuratively.

I don't actually have a Carrie Matheson-style Carly wall. But I do badly want one, and often I feel like the act of me wanting one is honestly as bad as me actually having one, or maybe even worse.

What I'm trying to say is: Hotel Shampoos is a **KEYSTONE SONG**, focusing on **TEMPTATION** and **MISERY**, that plays a huge role in the Narrative aspect of the theory.

One of the first songs Carly ever recorded details in inarguable specificity a doomed relationship with a friend who ultimately abandons her. The first time I heard this song, I was deep into my Raesearch, and it hit me like the t Jepsen Second Verse Twist wist at the end of Sixth Sense.

Let's take a look.

““

*I survive on hotel shampoos
I'll be runnin' out soon
You've gone away again
Gone to collect some more
Your hands pressed hard into me
I thought this summer you'd be gone away again
Oooo he's gone away again*

””

For possibly the first time, we're with Carly Rae Jepsen, *specifically* Carly Rae Jepsen of 2007, a twenty two year old touring musician, who had just placed third on Season 5 of Canadian Idol. She's living life on the road, from hotel room to hotel room, but she's found someone to care about her.

Or, in Carly's typical sexualization of romance, "press his hands hard into" her. And, as always, she doesn't have high hopes for where this affair is going: he'll be gone by summer.

““

*We were poor, yeah, we were dream chasers baby
Sky scrapers are not too tall
He's gunna to prove me right 'til I'm wrong*

Craving all the gold and the riches

*I don't want to wash my own dishes
He's gone away again, hmm he's gone away again
Driving in a sweet brand new car
Living the life of a superstar
I got my way again, hmm I got my way again*
“”

On “Black Heart,” off Emotion, Carly bemoans that Her Love will cry to his “generation,” but won’t cry to her. This idea of an emotionally unavailable, unhappy, but successful musician is touched on here, where Her Love has become successful, a “superstar.”

It’s very hard for me not to draw a direct line between this song and LA Hallucinations, which, when lyrically placed side by side, appear to describe the same situation, the same relationship, in two slightly different tonalities. Two young artists, new to Los Angeles, slowly being pulled apart by the realities of show business.

LA Hallucinations appears to be a kind of prequel to this song; the “Young freaks just fresh to LA” described in that song exist as the same couple in this song, which gruesomely details “the teeth come out when the cameras flash” and the “little black hole” in Carly’s golden cup.

Songs and songwriting only occasionally are referenced in Carly’s work, and almost always in reference to a lost lover. This “superstar” with the “new car” seems to fit that bill quite nicely. It’s also interesting that Carly says, “I got my way again.”

She got her way...”Again.” This appears to be a reference to an unspoken hypothesis of hers that was proven: If this man became successful, he would reject her, no longer be interested, no longer see her as an equal, and no longer be interested in her romantically.

“”

*Where's his love
Where's his kisses
He says 'sorry babe, this has got away from me'
He's gone away from me*
“”

I often end Carly song analysis with an “ouch” or a “yikes” of some kind, and I feel that would be appropriate here. But just this once, since Sour Candy is up next, let’s leave it at: Sorry Carly.

10 - SOUR CANDY

Oof. This is as openly unhappy as Carly gets, and surprise surprise, it’s about a brief failed relationship she regrets being in. Jarring here is the open expression of despair and loss, planting this song squarely in the **MISERY/LONGING** category, with vague undertones of **TEMPTATION** and **REJECTION**.

We start off with the always distressing **Lost and Alone** sub-theme, this time contextualized by a what sounds like a hangover:

“”

*Sour candy endings
Coffee stains but where?
Oh I'm so tangled up in my
Big sunglasses and bed hungry second day fare*

“”

What's up with Carly? What's got her so sad? Could it be because a Lover Who Seemed Like A Bad Idea Has Abandoned Her?

“”

*No we went under
The weight was too much to carry in
I felt the thunder
Mr. Don't look so scared
I never knew, I never knew
That I could be so sad
We went under*

“”

Again, these lyrics are way more specifically devastating than the more reliable hidden despair in Jepsen songs. “I never knew that I could be so sad” is a very frank statement; Carly usually couches her current misery or sadness in some kind of pop “but maybe...” Many of her songs, while grim and depicting a sad, frustrating and disappointing situation, make some kind of bouncy hope out of it, or observe it from a canted angle.

Not this time. This time she's just hungover and outright bummed. The “Mr. Don't Look So Scared” is interesting, too. It seems to imply that this relationship is potentially a **Bad/Forbidden Love** or even **Love As A Fatal Or Dangerous Thing**.

“”

*I've been very cautious
Trying numbness instead of pain
All your humour makes me, makes me nauseous
What a twisted twisted twisted game*

“”

It's so rare to see Carly just go in on someone like this. Again, her usual depiction of anger or romantic frustration is framed more as longing, hoping they'll remember her, run away with her, or somehow concede that she was the one for them all along. Here, she's outright salty and angry; “trying numbness instead of pain” is straight up Fiona Apple type shit.

“”

*Ohhhhh get your self home
You leave him alone
On second thought I regret the pink stiletto
Soo ohhh, oh ho
Sour Candy... endings
And I was barely even there.*

“”

Something ended before it began. Which is sad, because, so beautifully and poetically articulated here, Carly had put on pink stilettos to try to capture his attention. Almost like she was **Partying With An Ulterior Motive**.

PART 5: EPILOGUE

IF THE SHOE FITS

“Sour Candy” is the last song on her first album. And the final lyric is the namedrop of a subtheme that will reoccur again and again, culminating pretty notably in “I Didn’t Just Come Here To Dance.” Carly was going out, now in pink stilettos, to either get the attention of her lover, or forget him, but never to have fun. Never with her friends.

Finishing my first listen through of this album was meaningful to me; I had now listened to, I thought, everything Carly had released to that point. I didn’t have an encyclopedic knowledge of the artist or her music, but I’d gone through *every song* start to finish and made notes. Little weird crazy person notes, yes, but the fact that I had heard it all felt big.

That alone gave me a, possibly unearned, sense of accomplishment; I mean, I hadn’t done that with the Rolling Stones’ discography. I hadn’t done that with The Beatles’ discography. I had chosen a task, and I had pursued it exhaustively. My backwards journey of Jepsen ended in Sour Candy, an openly and tearful bum-out about the end of a relationship, felt fitting. Tug Of War had put the last tile on the roof, the last nail in the coffin, the rubber stamp on my theories and conjecture.

TEMPTATION OBSESSION LIMERENCE SECRETS ESCAPE REJECTION MISERY

What was I going to do with this? Why had I done this? Yes, fair point, Carly Rae Jepsen makes good ass music, but what were the notes? What about my...what was even the word, “theory?” Oh christ, was it a THEORY? Is that what I’d created here?

“Well, maybe all popstars are like that.” I thought, wondering if I hadn’t actually discovered some unique pattern. I took a look around a few albums. I broke down a Taylor Swift record. Then I tried Britney Spears. Then Christina Aguilera. Michelle Branch. Katy Perry. P!NK.

Nope. It was just Jepsen. This was *her* thing. And that was so EXCITING OH MY GOD and yet, my efforts to explain it to my friends felt...at best, idiotic. Or something else, something darker than stupid. And what was worse was I couldn’t seem to get anyone to care.

This had become meaningful to me. The discovery of this pattern in the music felt representative of something bigger, something special, even if I didn’t know what it was. My google searches became variations of “Carly Rae Jepsen friend-zone” as I frantically tried to find someone else, anyone else, who’d noticed the themes, sub-themes, Acts and possibly repeated narrative within Jepsen’s work.

I kept typing in different combinations of “carly rae jepsen unifying theme” and “carly rae jepsen only sings about one thing” and coming up completely dry. Nothing. No one. And surely there were bigger, more obsessive Jepsen fans than myself.

Like there were people who woke up in the morning and put on Carly Rae Jepsen t-shirts. There were probably people who wrote her fan mail and tweeted her every day and

commented on every Instagram picture and had listened to every song 10,000 times and gone out of their way to see her live.

Not one of them had noticed? It was just me? A person who has only watched two Carly Rae Jepsen music videos? To me it seemed so obvious, but was there not one other person?

Not even one?

And during the moment of silence that followed this line of thought, I typed a new question into google:

“how to tell if you are going crazy”

PART 6: PROLOGUE

JUST FRIENDS FOREVER

I have a friend. Or I guess I should say, I had a friend.

She hasn't stopped existing, and she hasn't stopped being my friend. But she stopped being herself, so that makes it hard to qualify what our relationship is right now. I'm not even sure where she is, but apparently she's kept the same number; I hear from her about once a year.

I met her when I first moved back to Los Angeles, at a big party in the Hollywood Hills some music producer threw. She was an archetype; this slender brunette in a tastefully sexy dress, cell phone in hand, leather jacket, the classic "girl at a party a hollywood producer is throwing." We made jokes, briefly, over drinks, and really seemed to enjoy each other's company.

What impressed me about her immediately was that she seemed fixated on doing memory games. She claimed to have a perfect memory, and would challenge me to remember things from my own life, as a gateway to me offering a challenge to her, and surprise, she knew the answer. Name of her third grade teacher. Every Halloween costume since she was five years old. Stuff like that, but like, a lot of it.

One part of me suspected she was just making it up, until she was able to do stuff like pull release dates for movies out of thin air, and, upon a quick check from my phone, be proven right. It was cool. Like magician cool.

I got REALLY into this. It was like playing a computer program for information I didn't even know I wanted. I thought I was witnessing something I'd heard about my whole life, a photographic memory, but she quickly dismissed that.

"Photographic memory doesn't exist. It's a hoax, it's a scam thing." She said, drinking her Moscow Mule, lit in the blue flickering light of the pool, all of Los Angeles behind her. "It's phony."

Coincidentally, I can remember that image, those words, her annoyed tone, so clearly.

I pressed her on this, and she explained that she had a lifelong fixation on "mnemonics," a term I hadn't heard outside of the Keanu Reeves movie. She described them as "memory exercises" you could learn, that made you able to remember anything, and access your own brain "like a computer."

"You turn everything into a riddle, basically." She said. I asked for an example. She declined to give me one.

It was one of the most interesting conversations I had ever had. It still holds up, but in light of everything that's happened in the eight years since then, it's taken on a slightly different tone.

I left the party at around 1:00, but around 3:00, she texted me, and said I should come over. She was at “her aunt’s house” in the canyons and we could go swimming and do cocaine. I thought: “This sounds like a thing I am definitely getting back out of bed immediately and going and doing,” and I actioned that pretty quickly.

Arriving at the house, I knew something was weird. It was massive, and strangely empty, clearly not lived in; it struck me as a rental, a party venue maybe. The front door was open. She was already walking around naked. Well, this is cool, I thought. But something was wrong.

My male brain and my logic brain entered an immediate war the likes of which my fragile twenty-four-year-old psyche had never seen.

She’d already done coke, she explained, and I could have some too, but I had to be really quiet because her “aunt was sleeping.” She was saying all of this in a loud voice, talking a mile a minute, laughing, ranting about how much she’d hated the party, asking me back the questions I’d asked her. It was a little scary.

I figured whatever was going on was probably from the coke, so that was a no for me. I strafed her, asking about the pool, and she laughed and said “yeah let’s go.”

She led me out into the massive back yard, which was elaborately landscaped with stones and statues, and I watched as she walked happily barefoot on sharp gravel up to the pool, and plunged in. The back yard, I should add, was not lit; she said “the lights out here are broken,” but I was pretty sure she just didn’t know how to turn them on. Don’t ask how I knew. I just did.

I bent down and touched the water as she rose out of it, hair slicked back, water glistening off her collar bone in the moonlight.

The water was freezing fucking cold.

The pool was not heated at all. It was a full on January chill.

“Come in, it’s great!” She said.

“No, it’s not.” I said, not knowing how to respond. “It’s...very cold, actually.”

“No, it’s great! What! Get in!” She said. She was shivering, her words shaky.

“You should get out.” I said, standing up.

The pool situation was a resounding victory for Logic Brain. I no longer believed I was going to get laid, or that if I was, it did not feel like it would be in a safe or sensible way, and “safe and sensible” suddenly felt like a very urgent priority.

So I left.

I left her there, in the pool; I explained that I was tired, and she laughed and told me to have a great night and to call her, as though my eleven minute visit had been a gratifying experience worth repeating.

Driving home, she sent me a text:

“It wasn’t really my aunt’s house. Will explain soon.”

She never did.

But once a year, I’d get a text from her. They were at first pretty brief, detailing radical changes in her life; she’d met a guy, usually with a ton of money, and he’d changed everything.

New text: now she was vegan, and living in a commune. New text: new guy: now she was a Scientologist; they were teaching her a lot of things. She'd put her old life behind her.

Months later, new text: new guy, and Scientology is bullshit.

This new guy and her were traveling the world.

He's a photographer.

Here's a picture of me in Thailand.

Did you know a secret society controls the world?

New guy; he's my age for once!, she says excitedly.

Tech guy; she's living in San Francisco, getting really into finance.

Not a model anymore!

Did you know that the NSA can bug your house with no warrant?

Did you know the government records almost every phone conversation and keeps them in underground labyrinth?

New guy! He's a model. We met at Cannes. I was invited to Cannes by the old guy, the actor, and here's a great pic of me on the red carpet of *On The Road- wait, the actor? What happened to the tech guy?* Oh he turned out to be a stalker. He was gas-lighting me. He almost drove me insane. I hate him. The model guy is great.

Satan doesn't exist, but something like him does.

Something created by the United States government.

They keep it underground, like the phone calls.

I met a new guy! I'm really into music now. I'm learning guitar and piano. Writing my first album.

Do you believe crystals have power?

Do you remember the night we met? I was invited to that party by a member of the Illuminati. They put something in my drink, they've been grooming me my whole life.

People I know are being murdered.

No one believes me.

How are you, Max?

So two things were happening here, and they were happening at the same time. You can take your pick of how you view her lifestyle; either as an independent who gets what she wants, collecting experiences and living a wild, exciting life, or, to take a less kind approach, a parasite, a woman whose beauty led rich and powerful men to want to buy her into their lives, sweep her off her feet, only for her to jump ship as soon as something more interesting came along.

But the other, more insidious element, was that her effervescence, her charm and that goofy, friendly demeanor, so silly and unpretentious and approachable, combined with her incredible physical beauty, was hiding a clear deterioration in her hold on reality.

She left an impression on me I'll never shake. She's one of the most interesting people I've ever met. But watching her come unglued via text message was one of the most unsettling things I'd ever experienced.

I'd seen schizophrenic ideation manifested digitally before.

A friend of mine from high school, who was schizo affective, once began sending me bizarre messages about the novel *Ender's Game* every time he smoked weed. And he started smoking weed all the time, so that meant he started talking about *Ender's Game* all the time. And not in a subtle way. He believed himself to be part of the novel.

He's okay now.

A friend of mine in college, who struggled with bipolar when I knew him, began leaving me weird voicemails and posting bizarre statuses, with muddled incoherent thoughts and kooky mis-usages of big words. Talking about a friend from childhood who he was convinced was stalking him. Talking about Xanax, a lot. Talking about people with vendetta's against him. Hidden messages he was receiving by listening to static. Starcraft videogame commenters were sending him coded information through their Starcraft videogame commentary.

I heard he'd gained a bunch of weight. Grown a big beard. Last I heard he'd wandered off into the woods.

I have no idea if he's okay. He still posts on Facebook, so that's a thing.

In all three of these instances, I had experienced these people tell me, in perfectly reasonable and sane seeming voices, in totally specific seeming terms, things that, under any level of investigation, fell apart. I watched theories and conspiracies and secret messages and hidden systems consume them.

So the question stood:

Was it possible I was alone, and would REMAIN alone? Was it possible that I was projecting a pattern that didn't really exist? There was really only one way to know. One way to stop trying to explain the Carly Theory to my friends. One way to exorcise this demon:

I had to write it down.

I'd go song by song, analyzing each one individually. I'd work backwards, charting my own progress through her music. I couldn't just release a massive list of songs, so I'd buttress my annexes into her music with short essays detailing my own experience in discovering this phenomenon. I like to write; love to write. This could be fun. This could be really fun.

And if I pulled it off, soon everyone would see what I saw; that Carly had pulled off one of the coolest, most special, and most bizarre achievements in pop history, a bright and shiny behemoth floating on winds of tempting limerence, miserable obsession and secret escape, who had more happy, bouncy songs about rejection than most musicians have about...well, anything.

Look, there's a reason I took this diversion into my past. It wasn't just about identifying and describing my own experience of insanity. It was because we're about to do Carly's latest album, Emotion Side B.

Emotion Side B is going to fucking blow your mind. I needed to give you a break. It literally feels like it was written as a companion piece to whatever I've done here. It's a final and complete submergence into this being a real thing. If you're not there already, which goddamn, like, HOW, then you are about to be.

So was there no one else who saw the pattern? Well, it used to be that way. But now there's you, bud. Hang up your coat and put on this straight jacket; you'll need it for this one. To paraphrase Billy Joel:

You may be right, I may be crazy, but you might just be the lunatic I'm looking for.

PART 6 ANNEX:

EMOTION SIDE B - A

TRACK BY TRACK

EXPLORATION

We've reached Carly's 2016 follow-up to Emotion: Emotion Side B, and oh boy, are we going out with a bang. This album hits the themes, sub-themes and narrative harder than ANY of Carly's work. "First Time" and "Fever" are about to blow your fucking mind. Like we are going **HARD DOUBLE BARREL BLACK DIAMOND FULLY CARLY** on this album, and somehow, *EVEN LESS SUBTLY THAN EVER BEFORE.*

Roughly HALF of the songs on this album involve begging/pressuring someone to spend the night with you who clearly has hesitations. This is not fucking around. Like you could do a think piece JUST on this album as a potential concept album, or a New Yorker article about its connections to Emotion.

And the best part is: it's fucking AWESOME music. Three of my four favorite Carly songs are on this album. If there's only one thing this leaves you with, it's "Emotion Side B" is a great album. So. Here we are. Last one. Let's fucking DO this.

1- FIRST TIME

MISERY/LONGING! OBSESSION! REJECTION! Emotion Side B starts off with a bang, hitting themes and sub-themes head on in the opening lyrics, with a vintage Jepsen upbeat, happy sound song about being an absolutely depressed crying wreck who was rejected from a relationship before it even started.

Like seriously, if you listened to this song without paying attention to the lyrics, you would NOT think it was a sad song. This thing comes on like "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" and is literally about being left alone pining endlessly after someone who doesn't want you.

“

*Catching tears like raindrops here in the glass
Keep them safe in case you should ever ask
Or if you'd like, we don't need to talk about it
I don't care
I will wait right here by my windowsill
For the sun to come, if it ever will*

Everyone says I can never get my fill but I don't care

“

Carly pretty consistently positions herself as far away and forgotten by the person she blew it with, and these opening lyrics, she's there more than ever. She's crying by her windowsill, pining after a lover and trying to play it cool, waiting for him forever to come back. There's an implication also of being **Separation by Physical Distance/Geography**, and also **Not Saying Something or Saying Something She Regrets**.

“Everyone says I can never get my fill but I don't care” is another namedrop of the “Black Heart” Carly; the romantically insatiable figure who appears on many songs, endlessly pursuing something **Bad/Forbidden Love**, whose friends warn her against pursuing a dead end on “Boy Problems.”

It's always been unclear to me if this figure is an innate piece of the Carly character that sings the songs, or more a coping mechanism created by the rejection of Her Love.

The question to me becomes centered around the idea of whether or not Carly is singing about many relationships or just one; is pursuing unavailable men a favorite songwriting subject, or are all these songs about a single incident?

It's this sort of question that makes the Narrative/Acts aspect of the Jepsen theory so tempting to engage with, but ultimately, impossible to conclusively prove. Either Jepsen is playing a character, drawn to specific themes, or singing from her own experience, and ultimately there's no way to know.

“

*We won't get too sentimental, not tonight
I could meet you in the middle, we won't fight*

“

Here's Carly attempting to reach a romantic compromise of some sort, again implying love or sentiment is somehow **Bad/Forbidden Love**.

“

*Looking back, I followed you everywhere
We were kids just playing with truth and dare
Let's be honest
No one else can take me there, but I don't care*

“

A look into the past, when a younger, more earnest Carly felt an affection for someone, an admiration. If you've been reading this in order, you'll recognize this as the LA Hallucinations/Hotel Shampoos Carly, a young, naive person pursuing a relationship with a man who is in some way her collaborator or fellow artist, but also potentially more experienced or successful than she is.

And then there's the “no one else can take me there,” fitting into the **All The Other Boys** that try to chase me recurring theme of Carly specifying that the person who doesn't want her is the only one she's interested in, and everyone else falls short.

I saved the chorus for last:

“

*'Cause when my heart breaks
It always feels like the first time, first time
But if you stay here
We could kiss away the goodbye, goodbye
Through all the heartbreak
We'll make it feel like the first time, first time*

“

I want to linger here for a moment on a massive, but thus-far mostly unaddressed element in Jepsen's work, and that's the use of **HYPOTHETICAL** situations. In the majority of her **ESCAPE** songs, and even most of her **LIMERENCE** songs, Jepsen describes romantic or intimate situations as proposals, sort of “pitches” of what “could be,” usually framed as being sent from a place of deep emotional need, like “c'mon let's do this please.”

Carly almost never describes a current “happy” reality. Instead, the hypothetical situations Carly pitches in her songs generally fall into three categories:

- o Hypothetical Romantic Escape From A Vaguely Unhappy Situation, like “Making The Most Of The Night” or “Melt With You”
- o Hypothetical Romantic Entanglement After, like “Sweetie” or “I Really Like You”
- o Hypothetical Romantic Reunion, like this song, “First Time”

With the notable possible exception of “Drive,” Carly is never in an ongoing relationship, and, along the same lines, with the notable exception of “Store,” Carly is almost never “over” someone; all of her break up songs, if you can even call them that, contain some version of “But actually I'm still waiting, and in a hypothetical were you to come back, I wouldn't mess it up this time and everything would be great.”

I'm taking some time to point this out now, because it comes back heavy on this album. The chorus of First Time is a wonderful microcosm of this theme. Clearly this person has left her, maybe even hurt her or broke her heart repeatedly, and earlier she expressed that to be with him she'd have to “not get sentimental.” Oh but **MAYBE** if he just **ACCEPTED HER** and they **KISSED** everything would be perfect!

It's this sentiment, the “No but please just give me a chance” aspect of Jepsen's work, that I think is a fundamental unspoken element of her appeal. Carly Rae's focus on rejection, longing and depression is **VULNERABLE**. Call Me Maybe is **VULNERABLE**, it's sweet, it's confident only in the most cautious, hopeful, eyes down, hands in the pockets way.

Even when she's kicking ass and having an amazing time, there's always some element introduced to namedrop that it is weird, suspicious, very new, or temporary.

But those are rare: more often than not, the good times are in an imaginary future, or buried deep in the past.

2 - HIGHER

Back to **LIMERENCE**, full force, on what might be my personal favorite song of Jepsen's. As I mentioned, in a lot of ways Emotion Side B feels like a focused actualization of many of Carly's sub-themes; since her first album, Carly has repeatedly stated the want or need to get "high," and repeatedly equated love with being "**High**."

This bursting-with-energy powerhouse is wonderfully Jepsen in its deceptiveness. A loose listen would make you think it appears to be describing a wonderful ongoing romantic relationship, but a closer examination reveals the truth.

"

*I was lost
Alone, and searchin'
For someone who understands me for who I really am
Didn't know that I was hurtin'
'Til you lift me up inside, finally opened up my eyes, oh*

"

Here's the subtheme of being **In A Bad or Dark Place Until She Met Her Lover**. It would seem, out of context, to be a very basic love song trope, but in context, we see that Carly has REPEATEDLY expressed feelings of being **Lost And Alone** before meeting someone who changes everything, and even sung whole songs about this period, like "Worldly Matters," a song very literally about being "lost, alone and searching."

"

*If you wanna know what I'm thinkin'
Ever since you came, I'm livin'
On top of the world, I can't deny
Every one of my fears has vanished
And I don't know how you managed
To wake me up and come alive*

"

We have a small nod to the subtheme of **Dreams/Sleep/Beds** here, but the bigger news is way more subtle. Have you noticed that Carly still hasn't said she's with this person; Higher is very possibly something closer to "Call Me Maybe" or "I Really Like You," a bubbly, enthusiastic declaration of love. The similarities don't stop there: like Call Me Maybe and I Really Like You, Higher was the first single off its album.

""

*You take me higher than the rest (hey)
Oh, everybody else is second best (oh-oh-oh-oh)
You pulled a gem out of a mess
I was so cynical before, I must confess*

""

Here we find the usual call in to the idea that Carly was in a bad or negative space before meeting Her Love, and as usual, the idea that Her New Love has dispelled her unhappiness completely, framing herself as cynical and that being instantaneously over.

And then there's the "The Rest," back to the subtheme of **All The Other Boys** that try to chase me from Call Me Maybe. It's rare to see an artist single out that there were inferior competitors

for her affection; they were even given names on “Didn’t Just Come Here To Dance,” remember?

“”

*Took some time
A few mistakes, but
You quite didn’t show me how
Never let me hit the ground
All the love was hesitating
But ever since you came around
I feel more than safe and sound, yeah*

These are great lyrics; one kind of wonders what the “mistakes” mentioned are referring to, in both the “learning to fly” metaphor and the “falling in love” metaphor, but that drifts past in the face of the idea that there was no love until this person arrived, and now everything is going to be great.

Again, she doesn’t specify she’s actually with the person, and that continues throughout the entire song.

As with the majority of Carly’s “love” songs, this is more of a confession, a declaration. In many ways, via its wording, it inherently doesn’t require the other person to reciprocate. Though at one point she says his love “turns her on,” she doesn’t really go into that, and instead again focuses on explaining how he makes her feel,

Like “Call Me Maybe” and “I Really Like You,” this makes the song come across as a kind of blushing, enthusiastic confession, i.e.: “I need to tell you how I feel,” given as a pitch or a proposition for a relationship, containing flustered apologetic language. In Call Me Maybe, “this is crazy,” in I Really Like You it comes in the form of “It’s way too soon,” and here, it comes in the form of literally using the word “confess” within the lyrics.

3 - THE ONE

So, wow, this one is...This one is a doozy. It’s a **TEMPTATION** song, but in a radically different way than anything else Carly’s done.

Though it ultimately fits the pattern, it’s extremely hard to categorize tonally, because of how utterly bizarre the subject matter is. This is a song that’s layered, thematically; it appears to be one thing, but it’s actually something else, in a more complex way than Carly’s primary catalogue. It’s kind of a Russian Nesting Doll, song-within-a-song, Inception type of scenario, and it took me several read-throughs to settle on what it was actually about.

If you’re barely listening, it sounds like a song about a girl who is being pressured into sex by her friend and is too drunk and indifferent to resist. Listen closer, and it appears to be about a girl who’s comfortable with a one night stand, but doesn’t want a relationship.

It’s not about this, either.

Sit down with the lyrics, and it becomes clear: **This is a song about a girl who is either pretending or in denial about being in love with her friend.** Because this song assumes a flippant attitude, it's EXTREMELY misleading at a glance.

Let's get in there, cut through the cognitive dissonance, and take a look at "The One."

“”

*Truth is I never thought of us together
You're just a friend of mine
We should know better
This can't last forever
Kiss me one more time*

“”

So it's already off to a very complicated start. We have two **Friends Upgrading To Lovers** and entered into **Bad/Forbidden Love**, and both of them should know better, and it should probably send soon.

Now this isn't a rarity amongst Carly's songs, as I'm sure you've noticed by now. "OUR LOVE IS WRONG OR A MISTAKE OR SOMEHOW FORBIDDEN" should be on the cover art of all of Carly's albums and in giant neon writing during all her live shows, that's not news. But there's another element going on here that took me forever to figure out.

See that first lyric? "Truth is I never thought of us together." That's extremely out of character for Carly. Cynicism of that nature is usually reserved for dismissal of the people who would get in the way of Carly and Her Love.

Carly being the pursued, rather than the pursuer is a huge shift. It represents a situation where Carly is desired, and chased after, by her lover, rather than expressing her **LIMERENCE** and **OBSESSION**, proposing they **ESCAPE**, or pining for them in **MISERY**. This is something completely new.

Or at least it would be, if that's what actually was going on in this song.

“”

*Romance is fine, pour me some wine
Tell me it's just for the fun of it
Far from your eyes, hard to deny when
I don't want love, don't want none of it*

“”

Ah, okay, now we're in slightly more familiar territory. Here we have the guy minimizing the connection between them, saying it's "just for the fun." Carly espouses agreement; it's just for fun, and she DOESN'T WANT LOVE.

“”

*If you want to, you can stay the night
I don't want to be the one, the one
If you want to, you can hold me tight
I don't want to be the one, the one
It's too much pressure*

*It's too much pressure
It's too much pressure
I don't want to be the one, the one*
""

This chorus is PACKED with layered meaning, and actually REALLY confusing. Carly appears to express indifference, putting onus and imperative onto Her Love, saying basically "I dunno dude, do what you want," but then it changes.

What's this "I don't want to be the one?" A casual glance could lend the idea that Carly is saying she'll have casual sex with him, but doesn't want to be "The One," i.e., his true love. But sandwiched between her putting the imperative on him and then "it's too much pressure," the phrase "the one" takes on a different meaning.

""
*We're cookin' dinner, I wear your socks and slippers
It's been a long, long day
It's just so easy, love the way you read me
I never have to say*
""

There's the siren and the flashing lights; it's a Jepsen Second Verse Twist, transmogrifying and re-contextualizing the entire song. Does this sound like a one night stand? Does this sound like Carly doesn't care?

We have the **Saying Something Without Actually Speaking** subtheme here, but more impactfully, it becomes clear what "The One" really means: **She doesn't want to have to be the one who makes a move**. They've hooked up several times, and she's been the one to make a move, but this time, it's too much pressure, and she wants him to take initiative.

The whole cooking and wearing someone's clothes and loving how easy it is to be with someone and loving the way they understand you after a long day is not day one shit. It's not friends shit. She is in love with this dude.

""
*Don't fall in love, fall in love, fall in love, fall in love
Don't fall in love, fall in love, fall in love, fall in love
Don't fall in love, fall in love, fall in love, fall in love
Don't fall in love, fall in love, fall in love, fall in love*
""

This part is interesting, because it leans on the assumption she's talking about him, when it's just as likely she's talking about herself, repeating a mantra to protect from heartbreak. Throughout this song, we have leitmotifs; **Being In Someone's Arms, Spending The Night Together**, but they're subtle, and if it were any other artist, you'd barely notice them. Only in the larger pattern do they stick out like sore thumbs. Carly trying to pretend not to care on The One is an atypical position for her to take...

...But asking people to stay the night, specifically in those words, is going to come back in **two more songs on this album**.

4 - FEVER

OBSESSION. REJECTION. MISERY. This is Carly Classic, acid-burn cherry soda. Fever, to me, is iconic because it's one of the songs that leans heavily into the pattern, creates a metaphor for it that ALSO fits the rubric, and then seasons this jambalaya with new, specific details that add color and depth to the story it tells.

Fever is one of the main songs I point to when I talk about the Jepsen Theory; it is blatant, but articulate, in its evocation of Carly's primary thematic unifier: **DESPERATION**. And thusly, it joins its peers like "More Than A Memory," "Almost Said It" and "Tell Me" as a truly tragic **KEYSTONE SONG**.

This song is like a very crowded airport, with familiar leitmotifs and sub-themes crisscrossing in all directions. Hang on to your hat. Your Max Landis Brand Carly Rae Jepsen Tin Foil Conspiracy Hat.

“”

*Don't tell me this is how it ends
I burn a fever that I caught from you
My breath was lost when you said "friends"
Well that could work but I'm still hot for you*

“”

Lovers Have Become Friends, Carly's intimacy with Her Lover being downgraded against her will to platonic affection, and she's not happy about it. Nothing new here, but what's incredible is the evolution in the next lyric.

“”

*So I stole your bike
And I rode all night
But I'm so damn scared
You don't even care*

“”

Two more sub-themes already here: **Staying Up All Night** and being afraid of **Being Forgotten**, plus the wonderful image of being so mad you got friend-zoned that you steal someone's bike. But there's a chance this guy does not take Carly seriously at all; he might not even care she stole the bike.

That's the level of emotional investment her "Friend" has in her and her emotional plight.

“”

*You wanna break my heart, alright
I caught your fever, I'll be feeling it forever
You want a brand new start, alright
I caught your fever, I'll be feeling it forever*

“”

So here we have yet another subtheme, of **Love Being A Bad Thing**, like a sickness that you're trapped with forever; you could also argue that this fits the subtheme of being **Stuck In Someone's Head**.

Let's also briefly talk about the fact that Carly NEVER ends up independent and happy. Relationships almost always end in isolation, rejection, and longing to be together again; Beyonce, she is not. There is no "to the left to the left" for Jepsen. There is no "What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger."

Carly always ends up twisted, alone, and trapped with a love she cannot force herself to forget. Fever is a whole song just about that.

""

*I've still been sleeping at my friend's
Dropped off your helmet and lock for me
I wrote some things I didn't send
Three words to say that meant a lot to me*

""

There's an argument to be made here that they were living together, but the nature of the "break-up" described doesn't sound intense enough for an actual couple; it sounds more like the deceleration of a fling, and the lyrics back that up, so I'd like to indulge the idea that she's with the friend for emotional support, rather than shelter.

So, the "dropping off the helmet and the lock" is a nice move of this dude who just broke her heart, but then again we have the idea of **Not Saying Something/Saying Something You Regret**. Here, the unsaid thing is probably the three words that I believe are the cause of many of Carly's regrets: "I love you."

As I said, the lyrics back up the idea that they weren't living together; "**I Love You**" is kind of a prerequisite in most of those situations. Let's see what Carly does next.

""

*So I rode your bike
To your house last night
And I'm so damn scared
Cause your car's not there*

""

Ah, that itself forms a **KEYSTONE** lyric. I love when this happens; it makes the whole thing so much more exhilarating. See, this sentiment actually links us very directly back to "Tug Of War," on which Carly opined "Don't go out with the girls tonight, I will turn to drink, wondering who you're screwing."

That sentiment is repeated here; not only is this person already over her, but he's already out on the town, very possibly in the arms of someone else.

""

*And my lights stay up, but your city sleeps
It's a different world when you're not here with me
Go on and break my heart tonight*

I caught your fever, I'll be feeling it forever
“”

More **Staying Up All Night**, and even a possible hint to **Separation by Physical Distance/ Geography** as Carly accepts defeat, slouching into her sickbed of obsession and rejection. That sentiment, “*I've caught your fever, I'll be feeling it forever*” truly sticks out to me.

Because it feels so honest, in the context of everything else. She is feeling it forever.

Or, if not forever, then for AT LEAST three albums.

5 - BODY LANGUAGE

TEMPTATION, SECRETS and **ESCAPE** take center stage on this track, with an undercurrent of **REJECTION**. In as calm and reasonable a tone as she can muster, Carly attempts to convince her disinterested and emotionally unavailable friend to have sex with her.

I'm not being even a smidge hyperbolic here, either. As with the majority of the songs on Emotion Side B, we are dealing with High Grade Carly Methamphetamine, ten years in the game having honed her artistic focus so much that she's able to exercise the rubric and still keep it catchy every time.

I mean come on: this song's title is literally **Saying Something Without Actually Saying It**, one of Carly's major sub-themes. And, like other songs dedicated entirely to specific sub-themes, Carly goes hard as fuck on lyrical specificity in explaining and contextualizing that **THIS IS NOT A LOVE SONG** in any typical sense of the term.

Carly's a very sharp knife at this point; just look at the way she artfully slam-crums shitloads of familiar sub-themes into the opening verse:

“”
*I think I'm in trouble, I can't see the end
I call you my lover, you call me your friend
I'm keeping it secret, yeah even from you
I call you my lover, oh what can I do?*
“”

Four lyrics in, and we've got **Love As A Fatal Or Dangerous Thing**, being **Stuck In Her Head/ Trapped By Emotions and Lovers Downgrading To Friends**.

“”
*I've been lonely baby, I
I've been hangin' on the line
(Been hangin' on the line)
And if you love me baby, don't
Don't, don't hang up this time*
“”

Guess where Carly is? She's **In A Bad Or Dark Place** lately. But I think we both knew that. But there's hope! Guess who it is? Her Love! But you guessed that too, didn't you? You're getting good at this. Soon you and me can get matching **QUEEN CARLY** inner lip tattoos.

It would be remiss not to point out the "this time." It implies Carly has to some degree put out feelers of her love for Her Friend in the past, and they didn't go over well. This notion is backed up on the chorus.

""

*Body language will do the trick
If you stay with me tonight, then we'll talk it over
That's the danger with missing it
I just think we're overthinking it, I think we're overthinking it*

So yeah, this is a deeply clever lyric. When Carly asks you to *spend the night*, she's actually asking you to **Stay Up All Night**, because when she says "We'll talk it over," think about what she means. How do you talk with "Body Language?"

Carly is talking about S-E-X, major big time bone zone. The plan for the evening is: they're gonna have a lot of sex and he's gonna fall in love with her and not reject her this time. Cause he's been holding back; "overthinking it." She is literally, on this chorus, saying "Stop overthinking it and hesitating and have sex with me."

She continues her pitch in the second verse:

""

*This could be perfect, that we could be free
To do what we wanted, you do it to me
We only just started, don't say it's the end
So call me your lover, don't call me your friend*

Again, the escape. The idea that some kind of outside force is **trapping them** and stopping them from being together. She again implies that he has unspoken desire for her, and, as on many of her songs, "I Know You Have A Girlfriend" and "Almost Said It," it feels like projection.

This guy is already in danger of saying, or, as it's implied earlier, HAS ALREADY SAID he is not interested. And yet Carly persists. "You do it to me." At last, she wouldn't be doing all the "Heavy Lifting."

Cause that's a Carly song about this also.

Do you even remember that song? Has it all blurred together?

My brain is a haunted swamp of Jepsen at this point; I imagine you walking up a dirt path, listening to the frogs in the grass, the Banyon trees forming a canopy under which you move in blue moonlight, pulling your jacket tighter against the cold as you make your way to my little New Orleans shack on the water.

You push open the old wooden door with a loud creak. "Hello?" You say, a tremble in your voice. You can only hear vague muttering from the corner, a hoarse voice saying "No, don't compare it to other popstars, other popstars don't do this, it's a unique phenomenon."

You consider leaving, but then suddenly I rise, lit by a flickering lantern, the orange and yellow light illuminating me from below and giving my face a hollow, shadowed look, my eyes sunken like a horrible dead skull. You shudder, stepping back.

The light from the lantern just barely reveals words scratched into the wood of the wall behind me: "I THREW A WISH IN THE WELL, DON'T ASK ME I'LL NEVER TELL." Under that, scrawled in blood, are the words "THE PATTERN IS REAL."

A dead, half eaten raccoon lays rotting in the corner, next to a copy of TUG OF WAR on vinyl. Will you leave? Will you stay? I raise a single entreating hand, beckoning you forward. "Please." I say, my voice cracking. "Please, there's just three more songs left."

6 - CRY

Though desperation and sadness pervade Carly's discography the way blue pervades the sky, outright up-and-up sad songs that don't wrap their heartbreak in bubblegum are relatively rare for her outside of Tug Of War.

Not this time. On "Cry" we're dealing with a song where the bridge is literally just Carly singing the words "I wake up without you" again and again and again in a squeaky, near-tears voice, punctuated by yelling the word "cry."

But "Cry" is special for more reasons than just being a sultry bummer. Entrenched firmly in themes of **MISERY, REJECTION**, "Cry" functions almost suspiciously well as a direct sequel to "Body Language," and an attachment piece to "The One," all three of which are specifically about casual sex with a platonic friend who you want to love you.

Remember way back in Part 1 when that would've blown your mind?

Right?

You were so young then. We've been through so much together. At this point you're like: Of course those three songs are connected by a super specific theme. They all are, jeez. It's hard to ignore this furthering the nascent Carly Narrative Theory, and forming a really interesting bridge between Act 1 and Act 2 of the wider implied narrative.

On Body Language, Carly entreated a hesitant, emotionally uninvolved friend to stay the night and have sex with her, despite him refusing her in the past. Cry is almost literally the same song all over again, with one crucial difference:

He gave in. They're hooking up. But...it's going badly. Carly's assurances that "This could be perfect, we could be free" on Body Language have dissolved into fantasy, and now, Carly is being used for sex by someone who is already in the process of rejecting her, and never really went there emotionally in the first place.

Cue Carly Rae Jepsen Theme, basically.

“”

*You're king of the castle
Whenever you're here, you know it feels right
Don't need to worry
Don't need to move, I've got the spotlight*

“”

These lyrics are just legit weird. We've got the term "King Of The Castle," which is generally used to denote a manly sort of Leader Of The House And Family type figure, which is weird, because then she immediately reveals this guy does not actually live with her, and him not living with her is in fact a key element of the song.

Carly saying she has the spotlight, and urging him not to worry makes more sense; the well trodden path of Carly as both the saved and the savior, offering a salvation from whatever Her Love is going through, being the person to love him best.

“”

*I want you to
Do you want to?
I want you to stay tonight
I want you to stay
I want you to*

“”

There's the old projection of desire bit, where someone **Isn't Saying Something**, along with the subtheme of **Spending The Night Together**. Carly again is echoing "Body Language," the old "I Want You To Want Me" bit (more on that later).

Except here, as it will soon be revealed, "stay tonight" isn't just a metaphor, it's an alarmingly literal request of how much chronological time someone is spending in a given location.

“”

*He never wants to strip down to his feelings
He never wants to kiss and close his eyes
He never wants to cry-y-y, cry-y-y
I never really know when he'll be leaving
And even with hello I hear goodbye
He always makes me cry-y-y, cry-y-y*

“”

This person is emotionally unavailable to Carly. Remember on "Black Heart," when she says someone will "cry to your generation, but you won't cry to me?" There's another direct link: it feels again like she's talking about the same person, the same relationship, and in doing so, making the narrative theory frustratingly compelling.

She knows what she has with this guy is temporary and alienatingly cold; she is crying and alone because Her Love is fundamentally not interested in her as anything more than a sex object.

Now, you might be wondering where I'm getting the "sex object" thing. So far, like many of Carly's songs, we have a perceived rejection without any concrete proof there was any true intimacy in the first place.

Not this time, though. Check it out:

""

*Wake up without you
Flood in my room, I see your headlights
And you got your reasons
You've got a way that makes it alright*

""

So yeah, Her Love and her have sex, and he leaves in his **Car** shortly thereafter, leaving a dazed Carly to ponder his departure. He literally doesn't stay the night.

She then says he has "A way to make it alright." Sure. Yeah, except he doesn't, and the rest of the song is spent repeating the verses about how he makes her cry-y-y.

What a fucking bummer. But hey, she went into this knowing what she was getting.

7 - STORE

Pardon my lack of eloquence here, but: this song is fucking weird.

The choice to make it the 7th song on the EP, conscious or unconscious, makes it very hard not to notice an extremely surreal "echoing" effect within the song's lyrics, subject and word choice, that reflects, on its own, separated from the context of the Unified Jepsen Theory, separated even from the context of being a Jepsen tune, it seems like a normal, bubbly, jokey You Go Girl break-up song. But once you place it within the rubric, this song is deeply strange.

So let's get the premise out of the way: For the first and only time on all of Carly's songs, it's Carly who's doing the dumping. This is Carly's only song that features her willingly ending a relationship. But even so, it goes above and beyond to fit The Pattern. And that's what makes it so strange.

See, this is a **REJECTION/ESCAPE/SECRETS** song, about Carly leaving a guy for a different, new guy, via the goofy metaphor that she's just "going to the store," presumably never to return. But I mean...Okay, look, the best way to do this is just to let you see it for yourself.

""

*Sunlight, moves upon my skin
Wake up and I'm next to you
But I wish that I was next to him
Looks like this could be the end
Know that you'll be alright
Maybe one day we'll be friends*

""

See that? **Spending The Night Together** and **Lovers Downgrading To Friends**. Ostensibly, this should be a song that breaks the pattern; after all, the subject matter is flipped. And yet, we are STILL hitting sub-themes loud and clear.

And, I know this will sound a little nuts, and it might just be me being too microscopic in my examination, but one song previous, on “Cry,” Carly said Her Love had a way of making it “alright” that he was leaving her.

Here, she tells the person being dumped that he’ll “be alright” now that she’s leaving. Check out this next part, too, which features another repeated idea from “Cry:”

“”

*I'm not that good at goodbyes
Sometimes it's best to just fly
Ask where we're going, oh, I
Can't talk about it, can't talk about it cause*

“”

Okay so bear with me here because this is hard to pin down and might just be me being crazy this time, but...It’s just the words and wording here that sticks out so much when set closely against the other songs on the album; she’s literally using the same words to describe the opposite situation. Remember on “Cry” she talks about “goodbyes” too, and the “Can’t talk about it” does seem to pair loosely with “we’ll talk it over” from Body Language. Maybe I’m reaching on that, but what’s not debatable is the slightly modified nature of the **ESCAPE** theme on this song.

Usually Carly is fantasizing about an escape WITH someone, to “fly” WITH someone. This is the only song where she specifies an escape FROM one of **All The Other Boys**, and of course, the escape she’s describing is **Being In Someone’s Arms**, the arms of a different boy, Her Love.

“”

*I'm just goin' to the store, to the store
I'm just goin' to the store
You might not see me anymore, anymore
I'm just goin' to the store*

“”

It’s a bit of a mindfuck; Carly really only has two songs where the You she sings to isn’t Her Love: “Store” and “Boy Problems.” And, fascinatingly, both of them are centered around the idea of letting her audience down or hurting them in the exact same way:

On “Boy Problems,” she’s singing about frustrating and alienating her best female friend... Because of a guy she wants to be with.

On “Store,” she’s singing about dumping and alienating her boyfriend...Because of a guy she wants to be with more.

“Store” isn’t an empowered break up song, just like “Boy Problems” isn’t an empowering song about female friendship. They’re both about the desire for Her Love destroying a preexisting relationship, with no guarantee that this new person even actually cares about her.

“”

*Don't cry
I can't play pretend
Wish it hadn't come to this
But you know there's some things you can't mend*

“”

There's the “don't cry,” echoing into “Cry:” unlike the guy in that song, who she WANTS to cry in front of her, this guy, the Boy From Before who is undoubtedly one of **All The Other Boys**, is low-key annoying her with his tears; she can't play pretend. The whole sentiment here being the diametric opposite of Body Language is really noticeable in contrast, if you're looking for it.

This “empowered” Carly isn't really empowered at all, just kind being kind of an insensitive jerk, actually. She's leapfrogging from relationship to relationship, turning this break up on her end into a disinvested jokey gag, that she's “going to the store” and he should hurry up and exit her life to allow room for the new guy.

8 - ROSES

“Roses” is the direct, unabashed sequel to the track “Black Heart” from Emotion. The songs contain thematic and lyrical crossover, as well as a few images that tie them together very directly.

But the connections to other songs don't end there; “Roses” is its own little micro-universe, containing myriad lyrical hat-tips to previous Carly tracks. It's songs with direct, flashing-neon-sign connections like these that make me think Jepsen, at least on some level, is aware of the massive pattern I've uncovered.

Before we start with this song, let's talk about trees. There's a lyric I didn't mention in my analysis of the song “Black Heart,” from Emotion, that's very worth bringing up now. Trees, in Carly's work, seem to represent “hope.” There's, “Make your arms a willow tree,” on “Money And The Ego,” and the cedar tree she wants to climb to get higher on “Worldly Matters.”

There's also an unreleased, possibly unrecorded track that I can't find called “Cutting Down The Big Tree.” It's the first song Jepsen ever wrote. She was nine.

And then there's the Blossom Tree. The Blossom Tree appears in two songs. “Roses” and “Black Heart.” What is its importance? What does it represent? “Roses” is overflowing with connections to other songs, but that Blossom Tree sticks out.

Let's begin: **OBSESSION, REJECTION**, and deep, heartfelt **MISERY**.

“”

*Knock on the door, leaving it open
It wasn't you, why was I hoping?
Said it before and I'll say it again
That I'll always be here when you need a friend*

“”

So “doors” isn’t truly a subtheme, but I would at this point like to remind you of this lyric from the **Keystone Song** “Tell Me:”

— *Inside you there’s a room, A room with a door, I finally come knocking* —

And let’s also take a look at this lyric from “Curiosity:”

— *Knew that you would come before you ever even made a sound, I know, I know, I know you got the key* —

And here’s one more, you haven’t seen yet, from Carly’s unreleased second song ever, “To Be Without You:”

— *To live without you is like a room without a door* —

There’s a textural thing at play here, the idea of a long awaited arrival (in both an emotional and physical sense), leaning into the idea that these people knew each other before they were lovers, which makes sense, because it looks like **Lovers Have Downgraded To Friends**.

Carly, however, hasn’t moved on, and as always, offers her companionship. She then moves on to recount a memory of the rejection itself.

“”

*I sat with you on my bedroom floor
And I couldn’t move, all that we were losing
I saw you like I never did before
I never did before*

“”

Oof, rough. Poor Carly, another rough friend-zoning, but, again, we have a super direct lyrical connection to a much earlier Carly song, “Heavy Lifting” off Tug Of War, on which Carly sings the following:

— *I see a side of you I never saw before* —

These lyrical crossovers feel intentional, or at least purposeful. Again, she seems to be describing the *same specific relationship*, or at least drawing from the same well of emotions. This is furthered in the next couple lyrics.

“”

*And I can feel you reaching through the cracks
A simple change of seasons and you’re back
All the roses in the garden fade to black, ooh-oo*

“”

I’ll take this moment to remind you of this lyric from “Black Heart” if you don’t mind:

— *In your black heart, is where you’ll find me, cutting through the cracks of the concrete* —

Even the most cynical doofus could see the connection here; it’s not exactly subtextual. The metaphor of cracked concrete separating two people, mixed with the color black and the darkness of night is a Carly trope, by now.

“”

*Yeah I can feel you reaching through the cracks
A simple change of heart and you attack
All the roses in the garden fade to black, ooh-oooh
I won't take it back*

“”

So I think the change of heart referred to here is Carly **Saying Something She Regrets**, and that read is seemingly confirmed by the final “I won’t take it back.” It being a change of heart that leads to an attack or rejection implies again, to me anyway, that the thing she regrets saying was “I love you,” the “three simple words” from “Fever.”

“”

*Cat got your tongue, it's been forever
Have you been good? Have you been better?
I've said it before, I'll say it again
That I'll always be here if you need a friend*

“”

That to me counts as **Saying Something Without Speaking**, because the message is clear. This is a person who has purposely not spoken to Carly for a long time, and who is very possibly made uncomfortable by Carly’s presence.

It also kind of sounds like they’ve been separated by geographical distance, but there’s no hard evidence of that here so I’m not gonna put it up on the scoreboard. I’ve been keeping a scoreboard this whole time. It’s a mess.

“”

*Drunk on cigarettes
Last chance, say the words
Dancing in the dark
Love made in the park
Big white blossom tree
Baby cover me
Hold me, left to blow
Please don't let me go
Please don't let me go*

“”

THERE’S SO MUCH TO UNPACK HERE, I don’t know where to start. This is the bridge of the song, sung in a breathless, whispery yell; most people I know who know the song aren’t even sure what she’s saying here, and sing along with every lyric right up to this verse and then awkwardly kind of go “da da da” when this part plays, then immediately start singing when the chorus comes back. It’s one of those.

Let’s start with “Last chance, say the words” by remembering all the time Carly has accused Her Love of **Saying Something Without Speaking**, and that being unfulfilling for her. Look specifically at this lyric from the Keystone Song “Tell Me:”

— *Tell me, Last chance, Hold me in your arms and say, if you want this love to walk away* —

Quick Reminder: These songs were released nearly EIGHT YEARS APART, but certainly do seem to describe the same situation, one in which an initial rejection spiraled Carly out to some degree, causing her to beg Her Love to reconsider.

And then, If that isn't enough of a hat tip, here's the lyric I had left out from "Black Heart" earlier:

—Under the blossom tree, come a little closer won't you come a little closer to me—

The implication, paired with this song's "love made in the park" is that there was a memorable sexual encounter under a blossom tree.

You see them all over her hometown of Vancouver. Cedars, Willows, Blossom trees. All native to Canada. Blossom trees are all over. I'm looking at one out the window right now. They're so strange looking; these pink, delicate things, like something from another world, so oddly fragile. The **Bad/Forbidden Love**. Two friends, kissing under a blossom tree in the summer as they crossed a line.

One of them was in love.

The other one wasn't.

PART 7 - **TELL ME WHY**

“Who is this *for*?” A close female friend asked, after reading everything you’ve read so far. “This thing is like- a hundred something pages long. Who, in your mind, reads all of this?” I answered honestly:

I do not know.

“And what does it mean? What does any of it mean? Like, do you think Carly Rae Jepsen is crazy or a genius or what?”

I again answered honestly:

No, I don’t think she’s crazy. A genius, definitely. But crazy, I mean, probably not. I can’t even speak to if *The Pattern* itself is intentional, it’s just there. The sun is bright, water is wet, and Carly Rae Jepsen only sings about combinations of seven relatively specific themes and nothing else on every single one of her songs.

My friend sighed, nodded, but pressed onward: “Right, okay, but what if, let’s say Carly reads this, and just says ‘No, this isn’t right. I’m *not* doing this.’ Then you wrote all this for nothing, so like, what was the point?”

To that, I had a more complicated response: if Jepsen herself commented, ultimately, it could only affect part of what this is, and only barely.

If Carly Rae Jepsen handed me a sheet of paper with the word “DOG” written on it, and then in an interview said she’d given me a piece of paper that said “CAT,” the page in my hand wouldn’t suddenly say “CAT.” It would still just say D O G.

The Pattern is not deniable. It’s just there.

You can prove it with scientific method; choose a Jepsen song at random, and it will fit the rubric I’ve created. You really can’t do that with other popstars at her level, or even above it. You can’t even do that with the majority of mainstream-popular bands, or rappers, or authors, or playwrights, or even screenwriters, or actors, or entertainers of any kind, at least not ones that have more than ten samples to look at.

The overwhelming presence of the primary idea of Romantic Desperation, the seven themes, the sub-themes that repeat endlessly, even if Carly Rae Jepsen herself hand-waved them in an interview or a tweet, it wouldn’t matter, because they’re there in the text, they’re not extrapolations, and her beautifully literal lyrics don’t offer themselves up to varied interpretation.

A song like “I Know You Have Girlfriend” doesn’t lend itself to myriad philosophical interpretations; it’s about what it’s about. And as for the Narrative aspect, songs like **Heavy Lifting, Emotion, Curiosity, This Kiss, Roses, Tell Me, Hotel Shampoos, Turn Me Up, Body Language, Fever, Almost Said It, Talk To Me, To Be Without You, Black Heart**, amongst many, many, *many* others, really do seem to be describing a suspiciously similar type of doomed unstable unbalanced romantic relationship between friends, where Carly is the one who falls too hard and ends up on the losing end...

“Yes, but like what is the point of this? I understand that it's real, it's a real pattern,” My friend said to me, this acknowledgment of my Jepsession meant to buttress me from what was coming next, “But like...Do you want her to read it and like...Give you a prize? Be like, ‘oop, you caught me!’ Is this supposed to make her fall in love with you? Do you want to date Carly Rae Jepsen?”

The question confused the hell out of me. It was like someone had asked Michelangelo if he'd painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel because he wanted to “date God.”

Carly Rae Jepsen as a human being who I might bump into in Vancouver, who I had in fact met, very briefly, at one of those meet and greet things and seen perform live, felt completely separate from the ever-growing document on my laptop.

This project had become its own thing, occupying the same space in my mind I imagine is occupied by academic pursuits, or sports for other people, people who haven't created a Spotify list titled “SONGS WHERE CARLY MENTIONS TREES.”

So, the question of “What is the end goal?” kind of threw me.

This engendered two bigger feelings in me: Firstly, I felt shocked that someone so close to me could think that I could possibly believe a massive, online partially autobiographical conspiracy-theory doctoral thesis about someone's work would somehow make them feel anything but, at best, a little bit weird, and at worst...let's not even get into that.

But the second feeling that flooded into me was more complicated, because I realized how little I knew about Jepsen herself, the human person.

In fact, when my friend posited this, I had an awkward moment where I realized I **couldn't even clearly picture what Carly Rae Jepsen looked like in my head.**

She had...bangs? Right? Bangs? She had...she was...very.....short?

Everything I was invested in, I was picking apart, it all came from the text, the lyrics, the songs, the measurable metrics. I'd purposely avoided going too much into the biography of the person, because that felt like it would lend to speculation, rather than hard, concrete research based on the block of information provided to me.

Which raised a stranger, more confounding issue: Was what I was doing wrong?

The patterns in Jepsen's music were present for anyone to see, if they took the time to look. And no one had. I was the first one. Neil Armstrong. I did it, clap clap, good for me, or maybe like, *scary* for me, in terms of the implications about both my mental health and my use of spare time, but...

I hadn't actually read a lot of “real” music criticism; literary explorations of themes and ideas across the work of artists. I also was not a doctoral student; I didn't know how to cite things, to phrase them correctly, to speak in a truly scientific tone.

Despite my ambitions towards academic specificity, this was, ultimately, just a thing I was writing out of pure passion, so excited to be the Oppenheimer, the Madam Curie, the Magellan of Jepsen.

Internally, I had been comparing it to the massive investigations people write online about Lord of The Rings, or the themes of certain television shows like Game Of Thrones or X-

Files, but when I stopped to think about it, my investigation of the narratives in Jepsen's work were different because she's a, you know, a...what's the word.

Oh that's right: **a real person.**

I was forced to confront the biggest unanswered question of all this, the one I didn't really even want the answer to: Was the narrative aspect of the theory real?

Was the story about an unhappy, lost-feeling young singer songwriter girl who meets a depressed, unavailable older musician boy, falls for him, has short momentary fling, declares her love and asks him to run away with her, only to be rejected, demoted to "friends," and left alone, endlessly wishing he still loved her...

...Was it true?

Did it reflect with any kind of verisimilitude an experience in the life of the singer-songwriter from Mission, British Columbia, Canada, a woman who a quick google search showed me was only three months younger than myself?

Was it a single true story, or an amalgam of true stories with similar outcomes, or maybe some kind of creative construction, or perhaps a consequence of the themes in question and the emotional situations she chose to sing about?

And if in the unlikely case it was a true story, was me talking about it in a public way somehow inappropriate? Was I, by uncovering this, dissecting it and then piecing it back together in a single comprehensive volume, violating some kind of sacred boundary between artist and audience?

And it raised a bigger question:

I found this thing. I categorized it, quantified it, dissected it and spent hours of my life arduously picking through it with tweezers and staring at my laptop screen, going lyric by lyric, piecing word by word together a masterpiece of tragic romantic longing.

Good for me. And good for you for sticking with me this whole time. But.

What does it **mean**?

I had to dig deeper. What did Carly's early music sound like? What was her career BEFORE Canadian Idol, and Tug Of War? Did she have one?

Some research revealed yes, yes she did.

And the big surprise is: there are no surprises.

PART 7 ANNEX - **CARLY'S FIRST SONGS**

These are songs from Carly's first EP, written when she was 16 and 17. They received no official release, and are only available to listen to on YouTube. No big surprise that they're fucking great; Carly's talent and cynical brand of sweetness are already hugely apparent even in her earliest work.

This is the final step now. If Tug Of War was Ground Zero, then this is the Big Bang. This is where it all started; not just the career of Carly Rae Jepsen, but the introduction of the themes that would form a phenomenon within her music for over a decade, the first pieces of silken thread that would eventually hold together the web of Jepsen's infatuated, yearning bravura symphony of self-inflicted emotional torture.

A point that's been raised to me occasionally by casual fans as I try to proselytize the Sermon of Carly to people is that perhaps Jepsen is totally divorced from the themes in her music, and that in fact she's just "singing what sells to teenage girls."

This is of course obviously bullshit to anyone paying attention, but it is a truly magnificent epic brand of bullshit when consulting these three songs.

These are written BY a teenage girl, who once worked as a barista and a bartender, playing on a guitar given to her by her parents, or so says Wikipedia, my only source for this information. It's fun to note that I think this is the first time I've checked Carly's actual Wikipedia Page since starting work on this project.

This is not a shaped image. This is a Carly that played with a family band. This is as close as we're gonna come to the real her. And of course, The Pattern is Present. Looking at that Wikipedia page, I felt a lot of different things.

I found myself staring at a picture of Carly, singing, resplendent, passionate. The picture was just color, shapes; it could've been a picture of anything to me. Because really, the only information my brain took in from the image was a question, one that I'd found myself asking again and again:

Does she know?

// ~ DEAR YOU ~ //

This song is so rare it has barely 1,000 views on YouTube. This is an **OBSESSION** and **ESCAPE** song, with an undercurrent of **REJECTION**, but gosh if it doesn't sound romantic at

first listen. It would be a sweet love song, but for the implication, as ever, that something has already gone wrong.

Jepsen's voice is really the star here, as she pops out a cornucopia of sub-themes on the first song she ever released. Check it out; her first ever publicly released

“”

*Dear you,
I'm still thinking 'bout you,
And I can't seem to get you from my mind*

“”

So there's **Stuck In My Head**, alongside the implication that this guy has already to some degree left her life, romantically.

“”

*It's true I imagine us together,
And I won't pretend it doesn't feel just fine*

“”

So there we have the fantasy element, introducing the idea that this is an **ESCAPE** song.

“”

*Dear you
I want to share your flannel shirt
I want to share my joy and hurt
With you alone*

“”

There's the very specific subtheme of **Wearing Someone's Clothes**, specifically the involvement of a shirt. Dear You is, in many ways, a prototype version of “Your Heart Is A Muscle” from Kiss, which also mentions the shared ownership of a shirt, and entreats a lost lover to come back and be together again.

There's more, of course, cause there always is: on The One, Carly mentions wearing Her Love's socks and slippers, and on the unreleased track “Wildflowers,” Carly includes the lyric “I wore your shirt as I was running away from you.”

There is some baggage attached to wearing someone's clothes; it's a sense of intimacy Carly is chasing, with someone who isn't giving her what she needs. It's fascinating to see this theme show up on Carly's first ever song.

Oh, and also being **Alone With Someone**, duh.

“”

*If you taught me to knot your tie just right
Could I maybe keep it for the night
With you attached*

“”

Spending The Night Together, obviously, but also: What kind of age appropriate love interest for a 17 year old girl is wearing a tie regularly? Could this perhaps be the same older, more mature figure referenced on "Talk To Me"? Just a thought.

“”

*My dear dear dear you,
I'm aching to be near you,
Could I slip into your arms,
Just like a puzzle piece,
We fit so perfectly*

“”

So there's **In Your Arms**...

“”

*Would I melt under your hidden charms
And close my eyes
And fall so desperately
For my dear you
I'm waiting to be near you*

“”

So this concept of being desperately in love and waiting endlessly for someone to come around to the idea that you're meant for them, despite them not being interested in you, is a totemic representation of Act III of Jepsen's narrative. The idea that you end up alone, not over it, totally dejected but somehow still endlessly waiting.

This image, of Carly waiting for a disinterested lover to want to be with her, is constantly implicitly painted, but most specifically on "When I Needed You," "Curiosity," "First Time" and "Black Heart."

“”

*Dear you
You are the only for me
No one else can win each game
You'll see
And still have my heart*

“”

There's **All The Other Boys**, even on her first song.

“”

*You'll see I'm so abstracted by your smile
I'm so attracted all the while
It's hard to speak*

“”

There's **Being Made Shy**, and wow, what a fucking great lyric. "I'm abstracted by your smile." By this, Carly means his smile takes her out of the situation, removes her and makes her unable to participate. Beautifully stated, teen Jepsen, just fantastic.

“”

*My dear dear dear you
I'm dying to be near you*

“”

Love As A Fatal Or Dangerous Thing. And things are taking a turn here.

“”

*Dear You
One day I will be near you
Yours most sincerely, completely, so lovin and dearly,
Dearly
From me*

“”

She literally signs this song promising she will eventually be with Her Love even though he appears to have rejected her, and then the song just flat ends into silence. That's how Jepsen ends her first song ever.

// ~ TO BE WITHOUT YOU ~ //

I cried openly listening to this song.

The song is good, but that's not why I cried. I cried because, when placed into context as the second song on Carly's unreleased first EP, inside the pattern, in the catalogue, this song is deeply moving.

It's a Tiny Baby Carly looking out into a dark future of longing that will define her entire artistic statement for years to come.

There is no way the teenaged Jepsen who wrote this song, clearly from a real experience of **MISERY, REJECTION** and **OBSESSION**, had any idea that these same emotions, these same images she was accessing, would go on to make her a global celebrity and rich beyond her wildest dreams, a pop icon who would entertain millions of people, whose songs would be quoted by A-list celebrities and sung by drunk best friends in karaoke bars.

No moment in my Jepsen research was as emotionally overwhelming for me as this one. For this reason, instead of pointing out sub-themes, I'm instead just going to insert lyrics from Jepsen's work that serve as echoes of this moment in her life.

“”

*If you never see my face
You won't see a trace of what I'm going through
And I'm going through a lot for you*

“”

— *I wonder where you are, and if you think of me sometimes, cause you're always on my mind,
You know I had it rough, tryin' to forget you* —

-- **Beautiful, KISS**

“”

*I can see that you don't care
And I'm scared to fall without you
It's so hard to fall without you*

“”

— *I know I'm just a friend to you, that I will never get to call you mine—*

--Your Type, EMOTION

“”

*To be without you
A sea with no shore
To live without you is like a room without a door
And I keep wishing I could break free
If you would come back here and free me*

“”

— *Inside you there's a room, A room with a door, I finally come knocking —*

—Tell Me, TUG OF WAR

“”

*I've been living for your eyes
For that second you might turn to see me
Can you see me
Really see me*

“”

— *I'm right outside here wanting you, You don't see me, but you should, Why you gotta make it hurt so good? —*

— Hurt So Good, KISS

“”

*Now I see
It's all a lie
That I lived inside my own illusion
All this being mean
Means nothing*

“”

— *A simple change of heart and you attack, All the roses in the garden fade to black —*

— Roses, EMOTION SIDE B

“”

*I get so lonely
and
I am so lost
lost
lost*

“”

“”

—*I was lost, alone, and searching*—

- Higher, EMOTION SIDE B

“”

*So I get myself upright
Try to dream of anything but you tonight
Because waking
Is a losing fight
Every dream just doesn't last
And I wake to realize the truth too fast
And I'm wishing for my past*

“”

—*Stuck in a real bad dream and man it feels so new to me, should be in your arms but I'm begging at your feet, It's been a real hard night, And I just hold my pillow tight, It won't love me back, no, It's not you and I*—

- Tonight I'm Getting Over You, KISS

// ~ IN MY BEDROOM ~ //

Interestingly, the final song on the EP is one of those camouflaged tracks that appears to be a straight up love song. Songs like this one, that come so close to breaking the pattern but don't, really interest me. It's like Carly can't help it, like a tic or affectation that's out of her control. There has to be some degree of hesitance, some vague implication that something is wrong.

That was why, when choosing my initial set of themes, I chose "limerence" over "love." Carly's specific brand of love is reliably New, Thrilling, and Uncertain. She has zero chill; nothing is ever "fine." It's either "too good to be true" and tripping her out, or it's a secret, or it's already over.

On "In My Bedroom," there's a chance it's all three, but for clarity's sake, let's just stick to **LIMERENCE, ESCAPE** and **SECRETS**.

“”

*So yeah he loves me
And I miss him too
Cause he felt so constant which is something new*

“”

This is one of the only times on Carly's discography she indicates love openly coming her way from someone else, rather than her being the pursuer in a romantic relationship. She immediately contextualizes it, though, into something else.

The choice of the words "and I miss him too" rather than "I love him too" feels extremely purposeful and a little strange. It implies that this is a guy who is not available to her, or, if they're still involved, not available to her right now.

Carly also does the customary nod to the idea that the love is **new**, and that up until this point she'd never experienced anything like it; that's a vague hint at **All The Other Boys**, as well as a possible **In A Dark Place**. Maybe not direct enough to pin down, but it's definitely something.

“”

*White flowers haze and little else
And vanilla scents massaged into your skin
We danced in my bedroom
But we could see the moon*

“”

This just sounds like a really nice night. Again, notice the past tense framing.

“”

*And for the weekend baby,
You stay by my side,
When Monday comes I know a spot where you can hide*

“”

And again we have this strange idea that, without secrecy, the romance could only last the weekend. On one of her first songs ever, we're hearing an echo of the ideas and lyrics in EMOTION's "Run Away With Me," with this, the subtle implication that there is something more complicated going on here.

“”

*My room is small
But it holds all the world inside
I'll keep your secrets if you'll just confide*

“”

Again, it's a blink and you'll miss it lyrical sleight of hand here, where we get both the word secrets, but then alongside this, a vague implication that the guy is **Emotionally UnAvailable** to her. There'll be more on this in a few lyrics, but it definitely sets up a very specific notion:

That the romantic encounter where they danced in her bedroom was a one-time thing, and Her Love is already perhaps off the table as an option to her.

“”

*Let's dance in my bedroom
Where we can see the moon
Some things are meant to be
I bet you were made for me*

“”

So there's the chorus again, but this time, it's in the future tense. The context of the chorus has mysteriously changed from memory of the past to a proposed fantasy of the future. What changed?

“”

And if he asked me I'd do anything he'd say

*Anything to help him drive the fear away
And just to keep him here for one more perfect day
I tell you there's no price I wouldn't pay*
“”

There's some “you” and “he” syntax here, but that goes on throughout the song, and I don't think there's any great deal of semiotic significance to it. But again we have some very Carly lyrical weirdness going on here: “drive the fear away?” The “fear?” Of what? Why is he afraid to be with her?

Why is he leaving? Why is she offering to pay any “price” to be with him? And again, there's a not-so-subtle hint that whatever “perfect” romance she'd had is already ending.

“”
*Let's dance in my bedroom
Where we can see the moon
Close every curtain so it's just me and you
Some things are meant to be
I think you were made for me*
“”

And there's the **Alone With Someone** subtheme, but oddly conflated with closing curtains, a gesture more often made to denote secrecy.

“”
*A candle flickers and the shadows catch my eye
I'm praying that we never have to say goodbye,
His breathing hums to me a gentle lullaby
I watch the ceiling but I see the sky*
“”

There's **Spending The Night Together**, and possibly the genesis of Carly's holy grail, someone sleeping over and it's **Getting** her **High**.

This last verse contextualizes the rest of the song very differently, and I can give you my read of it, but you might have your own.

This is the last song I'm doing for this project. I'm so happy it's this one.

So, here is my interpretation of this song. My interpretation of the *final* song.

Carly has slept with an older guy. She believes he's in love with her, but he's already gone away, afraid that a sexual relationship with a younger, possibly underage (Carly was, after all, at the time this was written) is a bad idea, and already trying to distance himself from her. But as she lays with him **Spending The Night Together**, she fantasizes about a future where she would have this unavailable man's heart completely, something she knows she's in danger of losing now.

Let's leave this last annex now. Let's leave Carly listening to him breathe, happily imagining a future that will never happen.

PART 7 EPILOGUE:

GLITTER IN THE CUT

You don't really see things when you do mushrooms.

Or rather, you do, you definitely do see things. But what I mean, I guess, is that your eyes are only one venue on which the show is playing. There's a second, wider, and wilder act going on inside of your head, the space usually reserved for the private performance of your daydreams, which is, via psychedelics, converted into a massive concert hall, a kind of thirty thousand person outdoor music festival of the mind, where you can dip so deeply into the fantasies of the internal world that your eyes don't appear to be seeing anything at all.

You see all sorts of stuff in there, in your head.

There are undoubtedly some Carly songs I missed, here. I nearly entirely skipped the Curiosity EP, not realizing it contained unique songs not found on KISS. I'm sure there's a collab or two that slipped my radar. But if there's a song or two I overlooked, I urge you to apply the rubric. It has never failed me.

Even as I went into Carly Rae's unreleased songs, I ended up immediately finding lyrics like this one on the song "Bullseye:"

“
*I could give you what you wanted
You never told me what you needed
I could give you what you wanted
Tell me what you need, tell me what you need*
”

Or this part of one of her early tracks, "Katie's Kicking In The Corner," a song ostensibly dedicated to her sister, Katie, who is barely mentioned, the song instead focusing on a drive with a guy and the desire to be with him:

“”
*You and me we think differently
We're still deciding
Baby, I don't know
Come on tell me nothing can destroy this
I am living for your happiness alone*
“”

Or how about this big section of unreleased track “Wildflowers,” which pours down leitmotifs like a hurricane:

“”
*I wore your shirt as I was running away from you
'Cause I like to keep the good things
I know you're hurt and I'd like to sit right next to you
But you'd only say the worst things
And every city was our city
Like every road was our own
And you loved me like you knew you'd miss me
It's like every prophecy you told, oh
Wildflowers you brought me
Are crumbled in my hands
I killed them, you caught me
The stain is on my hands
I took a trip to the furthest place that I could find
'Cause I like to do the wrong things
I walked a street that I had never walked down once before
'Cause I like to try the new things*
“”

Wearing the other person's clothes. Geographical separation. Love being dangerous or wrong. Streets and roads. I'm not even bolding the sub-themes any more, because at this point, you've come out the other side with me, you can see it without me holding your hand any more. You've joined me in Carly Rae Jepsen's twisted beautiful cult universe of romantic agony.

Welcome, homie. Welcome. Enjoy the Kool-Aid, it's fresh from Canada.

After reading all of this, a close friend of mine found themselves convinced, initiated, converted, enlightened, however you want to qualify what the fuck happens to your brain by reading this fucking mess, and internalizing its divine truth of the semiotics of a Canadian popstar.

“You're right Max, this is really interesting,” He said to me, unaware that this small piece of validation was the most meaningful thing to happen to me in my life.

“She has to know. It's too much, it's too many things. If it's in her first songs, if it goes all the way through, I mean, on some level, she HAS to know.”

Okay, so let's say she knows.

So what...

Again, what does it mean?

What does it mean that when Jepsen was in the live TV production of Grease, she played Frenchy, a lonely character whose only solo song, “All I Need Is An Angel,” is about being depressed and needing someone to love her and bring her out of her cloud of misery?

What does it all mean?

What does it mean that Jepsen, when asked to cover a song for SiriusXM, she chose “The King Of Wishful Thinking,” an 80s hit primarily about hiding your sadness after being rejected by someone you were having a casual fling with, and forever longing for after the person left you?

What does it mean that if you actually read the lyrics of the Fuller House theme, which Carly covers, you find despite its cheery chorus, it’s primarily about feeling lost, alone and searching? What does it mean that the only contemporary song she has chosen to cover, Shadow by Bleachers, is a plaintive offer of love to someone in a dark world full of apathy and heartbreak?

No, seriously: what does it mean.

A new Carly song came out while I was writing this. It was called “Cut To The Feeling.” At first, the only copy I could find was on YouTube, clearly edited to fit the trailer of the animated film it was on the soundtrack of. Somewhere inside me, I was slightly afraid it would break the pattern, and yet, even more strongly, I somehow knew that it absolutely wouldn’t.

Lo and behold, the full version was released, and hey, surprise:

The song is about wanting to **ESCAPE** with someone who is hesitant to be with you. First lyric is about dreaming. The second lyric of the song is “We crossed the line and it was on,” implying that they’re **Friends Who Became Lovers**. The song goes on like that. Dancing alone. Getting HIGH.

The lyric, “I’ve been denying how I feel, you’ve been denying what you want.”

This whole discovery still begs the question: Are the Unavailable Emotionally Guy, The Friend With A Girlfriend, The Older Guy and The Musician all the same person? I don’t know. I don’t know what’s real and what’s art. I just know it’s connected. But what does it all mean? What does it fucking MEAN?

And the answer is, as ever:

I don’t know.

I really don’t.

Maybe Carly doesn’t even know.

But here is what I do know:

Being aware of this infrastructure in a massive collection of art makes me feel like I’m flying. It gets ME high. Maybe you can feel it too; the idea of a popstar’s entire catalogue being a single concept album about Forbidden, Hesitant, Doomed Love is unbelievably compelling. Surreal. Baffling. Impossible.

But there it is.

I bottled it and put it on the page.

The discovery of the Jepsen Pattern came at a time in my life where I was undergoing huge personal change, and forced me to reexamine my own work as a writer in a new way. It changed me, fundamentally, to be on the frontier of such a bizarre, goofy, inane, powerful, ridiculous, moving, shocking, inconceivable horizon.

I want to take a moment to revisit some lyrics on a few different songs.

“
Tell me
I swear I'll take it on the chin
Don't sugar-coat where I fit in
What's going on
Inside you there's a room,
A room with a door
I finally come knocking
And I've been here before
”

I mean there it is. There it all is. Forever waiting. Forever knocking. Forever longing.
“*I've been here before.*”

Yes, Carly. And you'll be there again. And again. And again.

“*I know, I know, I know you've got the key and I know, I know, I know that it's for me.*”

The nervous, jittery rush of realizing you want someone for the first time. The frantic, aching, midnight message desire to escape and have someone to yourself, casting off the harsh boundaries of the real world to cuddle all day alone with each other.

“”
If you never see my face
You won't see a trace of what I'm going through
And I'm going through a lot for you
“”

The pain of wanting someone you can't have, because they don't want *you*, painted in shining, vibrant colors. Metamorphosing rejection, obsession and misery into complete catharsis, exuberant dance pop that, in the grand tradition of an ontologically-aware humanity smiling through its tears, sprinkling glitter in an open wound. A tragedy in neon pink.

Pop was bullshit. Pop IS bullshit. Pop has always been bullshit. Heavily produced corporate bullshit, a superficial product for superficial pleasure, the ultimate dilution of relatable human emotion into a bite size snack to experience casually in a car or a bar or on a dance-floor. A fake color to paint your world with, a shadow of a feeling you might find familiar.

But crawling beautifully, tragically out of Jepsen's work, if you take the time to look, is something moving, something devastating and massive and churning like an ocean in a storm, reaching endlessly for a hand that will never reach back, begging, pleading, fantasizing, entreating, endlessly upward and onward even as it sinks deeper and deeper into itself.

Shining out of Jepsen's work is something **real**.

Hey, I just met you. And this is crazy.

But all of Carly Rae Jepsen's songs are connected.

Oh, by the way: 604 Records is an independent record label based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. They put out a Christmas album filled with mostly covers by local artists. Carly first sings "Let It Snow," a song asking to have a romantic night **Alone With Someone**.

But that's not the only song she sings on the album.

She also sings a song called "Mittens." It's a Christmas song, about buying mittens because your hands are cold.

It's a Carly original.

So let me leave you with this: a song, by Carly Rae Jepsen, about mittens.

""

*Home tonight
Rest my head
In my single childhood bed
Close my eyes
Count to three
Wish that you were here with me
Last year when my hands were cold,
You were always there to hold
So give me your warmest pair,
your strongest pair of mittens, please
Something to get me through,
The loneliness of Christmas eve
I fell for you, like crazy
And I can't get thoughts of you, from me
So give me your warmest pair,
your strongest pair of mittens, please
By my table I survive,
Fix the makeup from my eyes,
Fake a smile so they will see
Wish that you were here with me
Last year when my hands were cold,
You were always there to hold
So give me your warmest pair,
your strongest pair of mittens, please
Something to get me through,
The loneliness of winter
see, I fell for you, like crazy
And I can't get thoughts of you, from me
So give me your warmest pair,
your strongest pair of mittens, please
Shine your name,
Through the snow storm, baby,
You can break me, to the bone, oh
I was wrong, you were wrong to make me
feel like I was all alone,
Walking through my old home town,
No one else but me around,
Make an angel in the snow,
Pray that I can let you go
I fell for you, like crazy,*

*And I can't get thoughts of you, from me
So give me your warmest pair,
your strongest pair
your warmest pair
see, I fell for you, like crazy,
And I can't get thoughts of you, from me
So give me your warmest pair,
your strongest pair of mittens, please*

THE CURIOSITY EP

How the fuck did I miss this. No joke, I listened to this album LAST; I somehow tricked myself into believing that the entire track-listing had been folded into Kiss, which co-opts Call Me Maybe and Curiosity off this record. What a fool I was; I nearly missed one of The Carly Pattern's greatest fundamental signposts; an entire album linked tightly by songs in Act I and Act II.

This EP is interesting, because of these specific songs being grouped together. Separate, you wouldn't conflate them, but putting "Call Me Maybe" and "Curiosity" on the same album with these songs has an interesting effect worthy of pinpointing.

Namely, all of these songs focus on the promise of a relationship, rather than one that's existed and ended, and all of them contextualize the relationship as something that hasn't actually happened, or is in only the absolute earliest stages of possibility.

Furthermore, the idea of it being a **SECRET** is on overdrive throughout the whole album, and, judging by the song "Talk To Me," with very good reason; Jepsen presents herself as jailbait. This notion, of the secret, forbidden love affair is of course a constant in all her work, but never so succinctly as on "Talk To Me" and "Picture."

And that's not where the overlap ends. Both contextualize Her Love (as usual) as a musician/singer and "someone unlikely to date her, possibly famous." There is heavy thematic crossover between "Call Me Maybe" and "Talk To Me," with "Talk To Me" very directly functioning as a more sexually aggressive version of Carly's biggest hit.

1 - PICTURE

So here's an **OBSESSION, ESCAPE** and **SECRETS** song to get us cooking, with a deeply odd and specific theme involving forbidden documentation of a secret relationship that Carly wants to be real and emotionally complete, but alas, appears to be limited to the realm of hook-ups.

""

*I could take a picture
Of you and me together
No one would believe me
No one would believe me*

""

We're off to a very interesting start here, because this is not an inherently romantic statement, to the degree that's arguable if it's romantic at all. It's unclear of the "why" here; WHY would no one believe them? Because they're such an unlikely couple? Or is it that it's unlikely he would be with her? Why?

I'm drawing attention to this because in a deceptively simple opening lyric, Carly has already contextualized her love as both secret and, for some reason, unlikely. She hits this further in her next lyrics.

“”

*Say it in a whisper
That baby it don't get much better
Would I like to see you again?
You name the day
And I will pick the city
We'll fly away
Til then, call me when you miss me
If you're asking if I'd really like to see you again
I say, oh just say when*

So obviously there we have the idea of a secret escape being introduced, as well as being **Separated By Physical Location**. We also have:

“”

*Tell me that you feel it
This you and me together
No one would believe me
Even I cannot believe it
You kiss me like you mean it
Oh baby, it don't get much better*

Again, “Tell me;” and, as ever, shock and disbelief that this romance seems to be turning out okay. Again, we are **Saying Something Without Actually Speaking**, with his kiss substituting the verbal declaration of love she asks for. And again, she contextualizes the idea that this romance is secret or unbelievable.

“”

*Two different worlds I thought they'd keep us apart
I'm ignoring my head, follow my heart*

So there's Carly acknowledging that she's ignoring logic and reason to follow her strong emotions for this seemingly unavailable person.

The idea of being from two different worlds, separated by both culture, status, and geographical distance reappears occasionally in the Carlyverse. On “Gimmie Love,” Carly talks about worlds colliding, and in “Guitar String/Wedding Ring,” Carly again paints the picture; even on “Black Heart,” Carly describes the separation as being more than emotional, but intrinsic; “he'll cry to his generation, but he won't cry to me.”

This is an iconic Carly thru-line; “hey, it seems like we got a good thing going even though it isn't reliable yet, and I'm waiting on you to affirmatively tell me you love me,” the type of song I call an “Act II,” but the “no one would believe a picture of us” element I think is important.

To my eyes, it furthers the idea that Her Love is someone important, or recognizable.

2 - TALK TO ME

Sexuality, and sensuality, has always been engaged with in a very specific way by Carly. She doesn't run away from direct mentions of hooking up, but more often depicts sexual encounters with the euphemism of being "in your arms," or "spending the night together."

Not on this song. On this song, Carly wants to *fuck*.

There's actually a tremendous amount to unpack here; the song functions as a more sexually aggressive revamp of "Call Me Maybe," the modus operandi of the song being sexually driven and forward in very specific way.

Because Carly isn't urging the person to love her; not here, not yet. She's just urging them to make a "mistake," by hooking up with her. This one is a trip.

""

*Every morning as I go walking by
I feel you looking, that's why I take my time
Oh oh, yeah*

""

Carly is strutting by a guy. She enjoys his desire. Nothing new there, this could be a Katy Perry or Taylor Swift lyric. It could be a Demi Lovato lyric. But then:

""

*I can see what you wanna do to me
You can feel it, something's gonna break
Well, I'm in if you're in
Let's make a big mistake*

""

What? ...Why contextualize hooking up with her as a mistake? It's like an actually bizarre lyrical choice, until you sit it in the wider pantheon of Carly songs, and engage with the idea that the guy she's singing to is very probably the same character who Has A Girlfriend.

""

*Talk to me
Why won't you talk to me?
Can't you see I'm burning up?
When you look like that and I'm looking right back
Why don't you talk to me?
Walk with me, baby*

""

So here's the **Saying Something Without Actually Speaking** aspect of Carly's songwriting, in which she projects her own meaning onto the non-actions of others, can't you see she wants you? Can't you see she loves you? Why aren't you speaking to her? She knows you want her. Even though you've never spoken.

“”

*When he's singing his song
While all the young girls sigh
And we'll be wearing those things
That make a grown man cry
Oh oh, yeah*

“”

Here we again have Her Love positioned as a popular musician or singer, but alongside this, interestingly, we have Carly positioning herself as one of the “young girls.” This to me self-evidently calls back the “let’s make a big mistake” line, and asks a problematic question of the lyric that hadn’t previously been raised:

Is Carly under-age in this song? Is she inviting the attention from an older man, for whom a hook up wouldn’t just be a bad decision, but a “big mistake” of the kind that could ruin your life?

I’m not projecting this onto the song, it’s right there for anyone to see. It brings one’s mind back to Carly tying the tie of a man who couldn’t spend weekdays with her on her first unreleased EP, on the song “Dear You.” That song was written by a seventeen year old Carly around 2003; at the time, the age of consent in Canada was 14, but a famous adult hooking up with someone that young would still probably be considered a “big mistake.” Especially if they had a girlfriend.

“”

*I can see what you wanna do to me
You can feel it, something's gonna break
Well, I'm in if you're in
Let's make a big mistake*

“”

Again, Carly offers herself up. This “offering of self” is Carly’s primary romantic weapon throughout all 3 acts of her repeating narrative. In Act I it’s a “hey I’m down if you’re down,” in Act II it’s “I can save you and help you escape if you’ll only let me,” and in Act III it’s “I’m still waiting and I still love you, I’ll love you forever and be waiting forever.”

“”

*Come on, take me away
I've been yours from the start
Summer nights, summer days
I'll be your summer heart
Come on, take me away
I've been yours from the start*

“”

Again we see the idea of an escape, her offering herself up as a “vacation” from his real life. Whether the Summer is literal or figurative is left up to the imagination, but again, the “young girls” line does seem to make it feel like it’s referencing both a figurative reinvigorating romance and a literal summer season off of school.

3 - JUST A STEP AWAY

Here's a song about dancing with someone, staring at them, wanting them to understand that you love them and will always be there for them, but you aren't saying it, just feeling it, and you feel forced into loving them even though they aren't saying anything to you, and you will be in love with them forever, and they're a musician, and you cry alone and wish they'd go away with you cause you love them so much even though they probably don't love you.

Yep.

It's **OBSESSION** and **ESCAPE**, one of Carly's pleading, romantically framed devotion songs, where she wonders if this guy, who has been reasonably intimate with her, is down to take it to the next level.

Carly devotees will see parallels to several other songs, most notably the unreleased "In My Bedroom," which features a similar "dancing alone but do you really like me I want to be with you but do you want to be with me?" theme.

“”

*In the space between the words
In the silence of your eyes
In the hands that know the touch
It's the way I feel inside
Here we are
Dancing cross this floor together
With every step I take I seem to want you more than ever*

“”

So as usual we have a proclamation without a proclamation; statements about what Carly wants and what's going on with her, and nothing but vague speculation about what's going on with the guy. But they're together, right? No, they're not. Check it out:

“”

*You made me love you
Look into my eyes
I want to tell you
I'll never let you down
And I'll never go away
And if your ever feeling down
I'm just a step away*

“”

Carly clarifies she hasn't let this guy know it's love. She again offers him comfort from a cruel world, **Saying Something Without Actually Saying Anything**. And, in traditional Carly fashion, she's there, waiting, so close, and yet so far.

“”

*It's the beating of your heart
It's the tear I have to hide
It's the sound of your guitar
It's the way I feel inside*

“”

So again we have him positioned as a musician, but also an important verification that Carly's desire for him is for some seen as **Bad/Forbidden Love**, and she has to hide her sadness over not being with him, keeping it inside.

“”

If you need a shoulder
Or someone to hold you
I'll keep my arms open wide
I'll be the one who loves you
I'll be right there by your side
“”

This foreshadows so many Carly's promises to be waiting forever, the "I'll always be here if you need a friend" from "Roses" coming to mind most quickly. As I said, this song functions as a continuation of "In My Bedroom," from Carly's first unreleased EP, but also "To Be Without You."

What's incredible is these songs, when framed as a trilogy, go over basically the exact same scenario with three different tones, actually fitting the Three Acts Of Jepsen. "In My Bedroom" is Act I, all excited rush about a new secret love, "Just A Step Away" is Act II, promising an escape, even if it probably isn't going to happen, and "To Be Without You" is unquestionably Act III, left alone, miserable, still waiting, endlessly forever.

4 - BOTH SIDES NOW

So here we are at last: a song about an abstract concept, in this case "clouds," representing a larger idea. Worth saying: Carly did not write this. It's a cover of Joni Mitchell, a fellow Canadian singer/songwriter whose heyday, if you're unfamiliar, was in the 1970s.

I'm not going to go into the lyrics, because this is not a thesis about Joni Mitchell, and so we'll talk about it the way the song talks about its themes: in the abstract. The lyrics talk about seeing clouds from above, and them being beautiful.

The song is about looking at clouds, and how when you look at them from above, they're beautiful, and magical, and make you feel happy. It draws an allusion to new love, the excitement of connecting with someone.

But then the song talks about how you've also seen the dark side of clouds, and realized the happy feelings were only an illusion, and you end up alone, and cynical, wishing you could see the bright side again.

So yes. Carly covered a Joni Mitchell song. About **LIMERENCE** and **MISERY**.