Tell Us What You’re Doing We Want to Know How You’re Coping with the Pandemic
Kendra Preston Leonard

Characters
CARYA
TILIA
SALIX
Note on casting: the characters can be of any gender, body type, disabled status, and race. I have used gender-neutral they/them pronouns throughout.

Setting: Three homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. These can be highly personalized or minimalist, but TILIA’s home needs to have the representation of a window. The characters can be understood to interact with one another or be interacting with people not depicted on stage. They move from the prosaic to the fanciful to a rejection of commonly suggested or ideas of production and productivity pushed on social media and explore the happiness they find through their own ways of dealing with the pandemic.

These are streams of consciousness that connect at points, and overlap, and fuse and separate, of people all experiencing the pandemic and are finding ways of coping with it that are outside of the social mold that is pushing quarantine productivity. We are so much more than our productivity.

There’s soft light. CARYA is lying on their back on the sofa, making a call. We hear a phone ringing from the caller’s end. It stops and they sit up.

CARYA (on the phone)
How are you doing?
Are you all right?
Is it a bad time to call?

Pause.

I know, I’m the same.
Everyone keeps asking—
I keep asking.

CARYA begins to move around their space, tidying up items or interacting with everyday materials.

But I’m fine:
I’m trying to find beauty now;
I think it might be everywhere—

*Lights go up on SALIX, who is playing idly with a string instrument. They’ve got a tablet in front of them, open and on.*

SALIX
Strumming and picking—
can you hear me?

*Lights go up on TILIA. They’ve got their phone on speaker and is working on a laptop.*

TILIA
It’s fine. Can you hear me?
That’s the new greeting—
not hello,
but:
“can you hear me?”

I was working,
but I can stop.

Working from home
means
working any time,
right?

Or not.

How are you coping?

CARYA *(moving freely about, happy and relaxed)*
I’m singing at home
alone
to the dog
to the peonies—
the soft pink face-surrounding cloud touching whole-engulfing—
I saw
in
someone else’s camera

that I captured
in the before times.

TILIA and SALIX *(laughing)*
The “before times”!

CARYA (laughing)
I can’t believe I said that:
“the before times”!

What are we doing with language?

SALIX
I can’t find the language I need
for now.
I’m looking for new words.

What about you?
What are you doing?

TILIA
Are you as tired as me?

SALIX
I’ve been having strange dreams,
fingers on a pillow—

CARYA (turning on a lamp or a light switch; their space brightens)
More light should help.

SALIX
Light, light
fingers,
longer—

I need time
to stop searching,
to sit and let
the sound fill me,
as everything else empties
away.

TILIA
What are you getting done?

CARYA
Please:
the kitchen is empty and dark.
TILIA
Someone asked me:
don’t you have a starter?

SALIX and CARYA
Starter! Does everyone but me
have a starter?

TILIA
I’m just not the type
to be a parent
to yeast.

(TILIA moves to the window and looks down)
How cherished curbs are now:
they are the site of interaction--

SALIX
--excitement--

CARYA
--transfer—
I’m reading a lot.

TILIA
The places where food and medicines
and books
sit
in focus
on the edge of concrete--

SALIX
--plump with fulfillment--

CARYA
--becoming damp
in the humidity--

TILIA
--the gently sweating singer at the party—
on the stage, waiting for you to come closer
listen--
SALIX
They asked me,
haven’t you written some songs by now?

TILIA
Why haven’t you
baked all the breads of the world?

CARYA
They asked me,
why haven’t you
braided them all into a challah of sound?

TILIA
I told them
I have what the books
bring:
new worlds,
fascinating
people--

CARYA
I told them
I have beauty:
in the photo,
in the skies--

SALIX
I told them
I had new songs:
I hope they’re
listening.