

## VIVIAN / CARLA SIDES

VIVIAN

Carla: here's what is known. I am going to slowly disappear. I'll be unable to recall my likes and dislikes, who you are, who I am, how to take care of my basic human needs. I won't be myself. That's the facts!

CARLA

That's not facts. That's biased.

VIVIAN

Oh god, see this is the problem today. Nobody agrees that there are facts.

CARLA

Who's to say you will "disappear"?

VIVIAN

People with Alzheimer's can't complete basic cognitive tasks. Fact.

CARLA

And completing basic tasks would show me who "you" are?

VIVIAN

It would show you that I'm here.

CARLA

I don't agree. Why do we dismiss people whose brains are not functioning in a typical way as "gone"?

VIVIAN

God damn it, Carla I don't have time for a philosophical debate.

CARLA

Well I'm not going to help you kill yourself just because you tell me to. I'm not jumping on *that* treadmill.

VIVIAN

You're overthinking this.

CARLA

Maybe you're underthinking it. What I'm saying is that maybe if you weren't conditioned by society to think that you'll be "disappeared" or "not yourself" then you wouldn't want to end your life.

VIVIAN

You don't know what you're talking about.

CARLA

When I volunteered at the dementia ward, there was this man James who insisted on wearing a bowtie every day.

VIVIAN

He could communicate?

CARLA

Not with words. But he would hum. He would smile.

VIVIAN

Oh god.

CARLA

See. That's our society's viewpoint. And you've picked up on it yourself. The complete disdain for anyone suffering from this disease.

VIVIAN

I have disdain for the disease, not the person!

CARLA

Every morning he would bring that bowtie to his nurse, she would put it on, and he would visit each room he passed. He'd been a financial guy when he was younger, and apparently a social guy and he stayed that way until the end. He was still there.

VIVIAN

And do you think he was happy?

CARLA

I don't think he was unhappy.

VIVIAN

Not unhappy. While having people feed him baby food and wipe his ass.

CARLA

Instead of helping people with brain trouble to kill themselves, maybe our focus should be on shifting how we treat people who are struggling with dementia.

VIVIAN

I don't have time for your lofty principled bullshit

CARLA

It's called the sanctity of life!

VIVIAN

BUT WHERE DOES MY SAY COME INTO IT???

I am a person. I am losing...what is myself. To me. Do I get to decide what is myself?

CARLA

Of course. That's not what-

VIVIAN

Myself is...beyond describing. Deep thinking, stitching concepts and descriptions. Stories. Sarcasm! And jokes that are funny because of context...and smart...smarts.

I'm losing...so for me this is the end.

(Beat.)

CARLA

How long have you been planning this?

VIVIAN

I don't know...pretty much since I got my diagnosis.

CARLA

I started coming here, and then you decided to kill yourself.

VIVIAN

Don't...I'm the one with a serious problem here.

CARLA

I thought you said it isn't a suffering contest.