

# Chapter 25: Speech, Invention, and Reflection: The Composing Process of Soundwriting

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## 6. “Documenting the Mundane” by Carolynn

### Transcript

**Carolynn:** In the U.S. each year about 36 million people do it. That’s one in nine. And this year, I was one of them.

*[Soft music begins to play: ethereal, positive keyboards, with occasional plucked strings.]*

**Female Narrator:** Broaching the Subject. Six months out.

*[Music fades out. The sound of typing begins.]*

**Female Narrator:** January 5th, paragraph 12 of 16 in long, late-night email to Adam, who was away in California.

*[The sound of typing fades out.]*

**Carolynn:** At some point this fall, Revan asked me what I thought about the idea of moving in with you. I can’t really remember why. I honestly don’t remember what I said to her. It was like my brain was powering down because someone had opened way too many internet browsers. And I said that I figured you’d tell me when you felt ready for that. So of course she wanted to know “but what did *I* think about it.” All I could really tell her was that I guessed that I would probably be ready then, too.

A month after that, I was driving down Forest Street and I saw an apartment window that was all lit up. And someone was sitting at a table, and it looked like there were all these plants growing behind them, and I just had this sudden thought, or more of a feeling, of how it would be great if that was my apartment and also your apartment. And I brought this up with Revan, except by the time I was talking to her, what I ended up doing was just listing all of the reasons that living with another person, in the abstract, was a weird and scary thought, and that this is why I would just wait until it came up. And like with the idea of having children, there are legitimate fears I have about anything that is as big a change as that, but the biggest fear for me is just getting excited about something that I haven’t thought that I would have.

*[Quiet, simple keyboard melody begins, along with typing sounds]*

**Female Narrator:** January 6th, paragraph 4 of 7 in medium long, early morning email response to Carolynn.

*[Music and typing fades out.]*

**Adam:** One of the things I wanted to find space to think about during my time out here was home—what it meant to me and what I wanted mine to look like. Over the past few months, I’ve been thinking often about what it would be like for us to live together—a possibility that has filled me with excitement, fear, and occasionally even sadness. I have wondered what our home would look like—how would we decorate it? How would we make it the kind of space where other people feel welcome and at ease? What kind of shared meals would we make? What kind of warm and fuzzy traditions and shared experiences would living together make possible? How hygge would our home be? How would it allow us to grow in our relationship? I’m grateful to you for starting this conversation, and I’m very eager to continue it. I want to be thinking about what it would be like for us to live together, to think about home together.

*[Energetic music begins, with prominent drums and electric guitar arpeggios.]*

**Female Narrator:** The Hunt. Three months out.

*[Music fades down but continues under the dialogue.]*

**Adam:** Whatchya doin’?

**Carolynn:** Craigslist again.

**Adam:** Oh! That one looks nice!

**Carolynn:** Yeah, but . . .

**Adam:** Ooh. Yeah . . . a little out of our price range.

**Carolynn:** How many apartments do you think are for rent in all of Boston?

**Adam:** A lot.

**Carolynn:** We must have looked at at least half of them by now.

*[Same energetic music fades up for a few seconds, quieting when narrator begins speaking.]*

**Female Narrator:** The hunt continues. Two and a half months out.

*[Music fades completely.]*

**Hannah:** Sooooo, how were the apartments you saw today?

**Carolynn:** Perfectly sized. For munchkins. Or for cooking your pasta while holding a hot plate in your lap in your kitchen that also doubles as a hallway. And a closet. It was certainly a conversation starter.

**Hannah:** Ah yes, I’ve seen many conversation-starter apartments in my day.

**Carolynn:** Yeah, mostly a conversation about how we need to win the lottery.

*[Same energetic music fades up for a few seconds, quieting when narrator begins speaking.]*

**Female Narrator:** The hunt continues to continue. Two and a quarter months out.

*[Music fades down but continues under the dialogue.]*

**Adam:** So, what did you think?

**Carolynn:** No.

**Adam:** Yeah, definitely no.

**Carolynn:** Very, very no.

*[Same energetic music plays, fades out, and is replaced by new, gently ethereal music, with repetitive keyboard notes, nonverbal vocal samples, and mellow beats.]*

**Female Narrator:** The find. Two months out.

*[Music fades away.]*

**Erica:** That one looks nice. Like really nice.

**Carolynn:** I know. And it has a fire escape that could double as a tiny little porch, and it’s affordable, and without a broker fee—and Adam is away in Italy.

**Erica:** I think you should text the number anyway.

[*Same ethereal music fades in and out briefly. Text message alert sound plays.*]

**Carolynn:** Hey, they texted back. They are showing it today.

**Erica:** Okay, get your keys!

**Carolynn:** Uh . . . without Adam?

**Erica:** He said if you found someplace nice, you should go for it.

**Carolynn:** True, but . . .

**Erica:** Let's go!

[*Same ethereal music fades in and out, this time with a faster beat.*]

**Erica:** It's that one.

**Carolynn:** I think there's a parking spot up there.

**Erica:** Has Adam called back?

**Carolynn:** No. I don't even know if he is turning on his phone today.

**Erica:** Well, let's go see it!

**Carolynn:** But what if I really like it?

**Erica:** Uh, isn't that the point?

[*sound of car door opening and closing, with same ethereal music with beats fading in and out*]

Erica: Sooo . . .

[*sound of car ignition and car driving away*]

**Carolynn:** It was really nice.

**Erica:** Yeah, you got to go for it.

**Carolynn:** But Adam still isn't picking up his phone.

**Erica:** Send her the references. Maybe he will call back later. They obviously had other people interested, so you need to move fast.

**Carolynn:** Uh, I don't even have his landlord's contact info. We're going to have to break into his apartment.

**Erica:** Um . . .

**Carolynn:** Well, I mean, I have a key.

Erica: [*laughs*]

[*Ethereal music with beats fades in and out.*]

**Female Narrator:** Email to Adam, May 29th, 9:34 p.m.

[*crickets sound*]

**Carolynn:** Dear Adam, I wish I could have talked to you on the phone tonight. I am sure you will love the apartment, but it felt weird to hit go without you. And once I did, my excitement was mixed in with anxiety and a thought on repeat of "I hope I did the right

thing! I hope Adam likes it! I hope I did the right thing! I hope it's not too small! I hope Adam likes it!"

*[train horn outside]*

I spoke to the landlord again on the phone a few hours ago before dropping off the lease and the deposit. And she said that I could arrange with the current tenants to bring you by the apartment when you get back. I am looking forward to the two of us doing a lot of measuring.

**Female Narrator:** May 29th, 9:35 p.m.

**Computer-Generated Voice:** Thank you for your message. I will have limited access to email until Monday, June 5. I look forward to responding when I return. Thank you for your patience, Adam.

**Female Narrator:** May 29th, 11:30 p.m.

*[computer beep]*

**Carolynn:** Dear Adam, Since I sent my last email, my brain has just kept cycling and cycling and worrying and worrying—about your commute, about whether I should have waited for you to be home, about whether you would even like the bedroom. And as my brain has been circling, it seems to cinch down the dimensions of the apartment until I'm just remembering these three tiny, dark rooms.

So, I watched the apartment video my sister took on repeat . . . about 44 times. And I don't know if this was exactly calming, but it did certainly re-expand the apartment to its rightful size, complete with windows. I imagined where the couches would go, and our books, and our table. I imagined where my plants would go. And where our dog would go, question mark? And how we could actually put the bed the way you want it, with space on both sides.

Still, I am going to feel a lot better when you are home and we can go over to the apartment together.

Anyway, I don't think I am going to get to sleep any time soon. Goodnight.

*[Laptop clicks shut.]*

**Female Narrator:** May 30, 12:47 a.m.

*[computer typing and beep]*

**Carolynn:** Dear Adam, Ugh. I don't think, in the future, I will make such a big decision that affects both of us for a whole year without having you here. You know that feeling before the first day of school or a new job, when you are just too jittery to sleep and all you can think is about how you need to sleep now which only increases the jittery feeling and decreases the likelihood that you will ever actually go to sleep and makes you feel sick to your stomach at the same time? Yes, well, that is how I am feeling right now. Okay, goodnight again.

*[Laptop clicks shut; funky music begins, with prominent danceable hand drums and bass.]*

**Female Narrator:** The anticipation. Two weeks out.

*[Same funky music continues under dialogue.]*

**Adam:** Hey, did you see the email I forwarded you?

**Carolynn:** The one from Sasha?

**Adam:** Yeah, she sent me that survey that she made for her partner before they moved in together.

**Carolynn:** Let's take it!

**Adam:** When?

**Carolynn:** Now!

**Adam:** Okay, let me just pull it up. . . . Got it. You ready?

**Carolynn:** Yep!

**Adam:** Question one: Housework. Rank order the following household tasks in terms of your preference for doing them. Don't worry about the total time, just think about which ones, minute-by-minute, you enjoy most.

**Carolynn:** Okay, let's rank them separately and then share afterwards.

**Adam:** Okay, sounds good.

*[Funky music fades up for a bit as time passes, then fades down again when speaking begins again.]*

**Carolynn:** Okay. You first. What's your top chore?

**Adam:** Cooking. What about you?

**Carolynn:** Watering plants.

**Adam:** That was one of the chores?

**Carolynn:** No, but I like watering plants, so I added it. Okay, next?

**Adam:** Alright, number 2, shopping; then doing dishes; and number four, household budget.

**Carolynn:** 2, household repairs; 3, cooking; 4, doing dishes; 5, animal care.

**Adam:** We don't have an animal.

**Carolynn:** Well, it was on the survey. Maybe it's a sign. Maybe we should get a dog.

**Adam:** 5, laundry; 6, dusting and vacuuming; 7, mopping and sweeping; then cleaning and bathroom, then household repairs, then car repairs, I guess.

*[Funky music fades up for a bit as time passes, then fades out completely.]*

**Adam:** Are you excited?

**Me:** Yes.

**Adam:** Nervous?

**Me:** A little bit.

*[jaunty, typical cell phone ringtone]*

**Female Narrator:** The packing. Three days out.

**Carolynn:** Hey!

**Hannah:** How's it going?

**Carolynn:** Good.

**Hannah:** How's the packing?

**Carolynn:** Well, I brought some cardboard boxes up from the basement, and I leaned them against the wall . . . ?

**Hannah:** It's a start.

**Carolynn:** Now I'm drinking cider and staring at them.

**Hannah:** An important stage in packing.

**Carolynn:** Mm-hmm.

*[packing tape sound]*

**Female Narrator:** Still packing. One night out.

*[Soft, solo, thoughtful piano music begins to play.]*

**Carolynn:** Seven years is a long time to be in one place. I keep looking around the room and feeling, kind of preemptively nostalgic. *[zipper sound]* Like I'm already longing to be back here even though I'm still here. I decided I wanted to spend the last night here alone, so now I am procrastinating . . . and putting off taking things off my walls. I know once the walls are bare this will feel really real. And I'm excited about moving in with Adam, but I'm going to miss this place. I've also been thinking about the fact that my mother lived in this apartment when she was pregnant with me. So I spent my last night in utero on the other side of that bedroom wall.

*[Same soft piano music plays for a while until it reaches a hopeful cadence; sound of packing tape being pulled off a box; new music begins: a prominent, cheerful marimba joined by electronic keyboards and beats, plus claps and various percussion; box sounds and music continue under the following chaotic dialogue.]*

**Female Narrator:** Chaos. Day after. And the day after that. And several more days after that too.

**Adam:** Have you seen my socks?

**Carolynn:** Hey, have you seen my toothpaste?

**Adam:** In a box.

**Carolynn:** Ha ha. Very funny. I saw them in a drawer. . . . Do you think the silver silverware should go in here or in here?

**Adam:** My books won't fit.

**Carolynn:** Hey, have you noticed that it looks like the refrigerator is leaking?

*[Running water sound briefly added to the still-chaotic mix; the dialogue is increasingly hard to understand as it overlaps.]*

**Adam:** I found the toothpaste!

**Carolynn:** Uh-huh.

**Adam:** Oh yeah.

**Carolynn:** We should call the landlord about that. That's okay! Okay, let's load up!

*[More home sounds: water, cabinets opening, etc.]*

**Adam:** Good, I think we've got twelve there!

**Carolynn:** Yeah! Yeah, it looks great!

*[Music abruptly ends.]*

**Carolynn:** Cheers!

*[Glasses clink together.]*

**Adam:** Cheers. Just, you know, a dozen boxes to go.

**Carolynn:** A dozen? Try like three dozen. *[laughs]*

**Adam:** Maybe more like fifteen.

*[three quick claps, part of the previous song]*

**Female Narrator:** Home, again. Two months after.

**Carolynn:** So what's your favorite part of the new apartment?

**Adam:** You! What's yours?

**Carolynn:** Our dog.

**Adam:** We don't have a dog yet.

**Carolynn:** Yeah, I think it's a sign we should get one.

**Female Narrator:** Documenting the Mundane. Now.

*[Music begins—probably a female voice humming along with an accordion or similar keyboard/reed instrument; it continues quietly under the following narration.]*

**Carolynn:** Nothing about the story of our move feels exactly profound enough to warrant the effort of being turned into a story. Then again, this weekend, I watched Adam tackle digging through some of the boxes that he brought with him from his old apartment that he hasn't opened since his mother died when he was 18. The boxes are filled with journals and pictures, and mostly mundane stuff. One of the boxes had his mother's date books. And he flipped to his birthday in February of 1988 and his mother had written in giant blue pen letters with a big exclamation point, "ADAM!" exclamation point. As I watched his wonder and delight and occasional tears at all these details, I felt grateful that he kept these boxes and that his mother documented the mundane. Who knows, maybe this ordinary, yet personal, audio will take on some meaning in time as well.

*[Music is briefly louder before fading out.]*