

NARRATIVE

CARALIS
PORTFOLIO

Writing Samples

2026



WITHIN THE CRYSTAL HILLS

ANIMATED SHORT FILM

Carved within the crystal hills of the great white mountains lay a small town of ironworkers. Each day, they earned their wage by toiling in the mines, pulling ore they would smelt at night in rugged stone furnaces. It was an honest life for honest men.

Of all the workers, the youngest was Sawyer. Sawyer was not a rich man, with little more to himself than his name and an impassioned heart. Sawyer was in love with a wealthy girl from the village named Carrigain. Each night, they would meet beside the falls to watch the glittering stars, and each night she would sing sweetly:

“I dream of a diamond in the hills”

After she sang, they would lie in the night’s cool grass and talk about tender things: How the light shone through the leaves, how skipping stones ripple across a clear pond, or how fat a frog could get before it sank a lily pad. In the hands of the night, the two were as one.

Before dawn, Sawyer would walk Carrigain back to her home, then return to his shack by the mill for another day of drudgery.

One day, while working in the mines, the foremen were boasting about the flakes of mica, bits of amethyst, or crumbs of pyrite they found in the hills; all of which they presented to their lovers to show their affection.

Sawyer, who was too poor to keep any of the spare minerals he discovered, had never thought to show his love to Carrigain with a precious stone. He loved her, undoubtedly so, but did he need a jewel to prove it?

That night, he asked Carrigain if she wanted more. Carrigain assured him all she wanted was someone as sweet and kind as him to spend her life with, her greatest treasure was the love they shared.

But after walking Carrigain home, Sawyer couldn’t help but notice the luxury with which she lived. Her family was gilded with gold. His hands were marred with soot. Though she told Sawyer he was enough, how could this be true? She was always singing of a diamond in the hills. Seeds of insecurity began to grow within him.

Of all the mountains in the Notch, no foreman dared pull from the Ledge. It was said that Death lived within the mountain’s twisting caves, guarding a precious diamond whose glimmer rivaled that of the brightest stars. No mere mortal had ever ventured inside, as to steal from the Ledge would be to steal from Death herself. Sawyer, desperate to prove himself, knew what he must do.

Under an endless sky, Sawyer entered the cave. He told no one of his journey. They would know soon enough.

As he sunk deeper within the stones, doubts began to swell and fester in his mind. The cave was filled with many dazzling crystals, but none of them were the diamond his beloved sang of so sweetly. What if he couldn't find the fabled diamond cave?

All the while, Sawyer heard a voice telling him to keep walking. It was Death. Long had she waited for a mortal to be foolish enough to enter the great caves. But Death was confused. This man seemed untouched by the greed expected to grip anyone who saw the caverns' immense treasures. Did he not covet any of these glistening jewels? Sawyer walked. Death followed, intrigued.

In time, Sawyer came upon the room of diamonds. Before him stood the fabled diamond itself, even more spectacular than he had imagined. But as he stared at the glistening walls, he was reminded of the twinkling stars he and Carrigain would gaze at together in the night sky. He remembered how, during those quiet moments together, their souls felt as one. Sawyer had been foolish, and he knew it. He realized he should have listened when Carrigain said he was enough.

Drowning in the depths of his mistake, he heard a voice floating through the air.

"I dream of a diamond in the hills"

Knowing the risks of trying to cheat Death, he jolted to his feet and began to ascend the cave, calling for Carrigain. His plaintive cry rang through the air, so strong it shook the very core of the great mountain. Suddenly, everything went black.

Sawyer felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Death. It was time for him to join her. As Sawyer pleaded with Death, Death realized perhaps it was not greed that blinded humans, but insecurity. Thus, a deal was struck. Sawyer's worries had turned into a mountain in his mind. Death decided to make an example of him. His body belonged to Death, a warning to all those who tried to best her, but his soul would remain in the mountain, allowing him to watch the stars with Carrigain until the end of time.

FLOWERS DIE FIRST

NOVELLA - OPENING EXCERPT

I never thought my hands were pretty. This, in part, because they ached from twisting wax from before sunrise to sunset and were stained blue. The spirals on the pads of my fingers, consuming ink and smudging it over my clothes and endless strips of paper. Sometimes I find myself staring at the avenues of my skin, how they diverge like the rivers in a forest papa talks about. He dreams of colors I'll never know. Even now, with a diamond, small but still, nestled in a thin gold band on my fourth finger, I do not feel pretty. Perhaps it's the thought of how much that stone is worth. Rent, *surely*. Postage for a year, heat through a California winter. All the stone seemed to do was tumble more thoughts in my head, more things for me to add up. My hands, just the end of another woman reaching.

COMMAND, PLAY EXCERPT

Scene 3

Cleopatra:

Are you at last sated?

Having conquered and slain Egypt's heart?

Never has a queen thought to be so foolish!

Love's thick haze weakens me.

Image of strength as Herculean as yours entranced my mind, yet betrayal thy name is Antony.

No man has poisoned Egypt as you.

I have fallen for words so false they sing sweet songs to me at night's dark hour.

You think me a snake, believe me to be whispering thoughts into your mind while Roman men, who crave to see me fall, fill your head to stupor!

They conspire against me.

"The whore" who has entered this bed with false accusations.

Now, you moan about Octavia while Octavius seeks to seize your power.

Rome's pressure is rising and will not cease till we are destroyed.

Antony!

If you strive to be the warrior-god they so desperately want, kill me.

Steadfast, I am gone when your heart is overrun by thoughts of Octavia.

I am a whore-by her calling, and by the blush upon your Roman cheeks, you have heard this before.

So I pray, tell me, is this the poison of love lost?

I fear you have thought me the fool bound by this passion.

Still, if our flames burn so easily, better am I to drown in the Nile's current-

Or rather, starve in her drought.

Would do more good than to be a flame forgotten in the fiery passion our hearts once held,

For at her bidding, you run!

Oh, most glorious warrior, leave me.

Rather, I a queen in solitude, than a lover lost to dull Octavia.

- Here Mark Antony tells Cleopatra that he must leave for Rome to prevent war, and return to his wife Octavia. Angered by this, Cleopatra believes his motives are inspired by Rome's hatred of her, and the lies they weave.