

Accompanying Text to Andrea Levy's "Two"

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Here Andrea has written a dialogue. Two people—or entities—are chatting to each other. They are not from this world but from an imaginary place. We might best describe them as bureaucrats somewhere in the offices of the Grim Reaper, whose responsibility is to process the details of those mortals who are scheduled to die. They are discussing a case—the case of Andrea herself. They seem to have omniscient insight into her thoughts and personality. In the exchange that she creates between them, she clearly outlines her own attitudes towards her impending death, or at least the attitudes that she outwardly expressed to the world. In addition they (or she) gently parody the faddish self-help and alternative-medicine blogs, books, and articles that nowadays surround the edges of terminal illness. But there is also a vaguely threatening feeling that the two workers are being monitored by their employer and that they need to keep their productivity levels high. They need to stop chatting, procrastinating, or feeling sympathy for us mortals and just get on with the delivery of their product—death.

This dialogue was created for nobody but herself, quickly handwritten in a Moleskine notebook, and for me it feels slightly uneasy to put it into print. But in its original scribbled form it had already served its purpose for Andrea, whatever that purpose was. I recognise all its themes—they are things that she and I would talk about often—but I can't be sure exactly why she wrote this. Was she trying to confirm, or alternatively to question, her feelings about her life and her impending death? Was it therapeutic, or was it an anxious questioning? But

whatever it meant for her, it shows so clearly her characteristic use of dialogue to explore issues and beliefs, even these profoundly personal and private ones of her own. It's really just a conversation with herself, but one that uses a skillful literary technique.