I. Introduction

The first time I ever heard the pop sensation Katy Hudson, more popularly known by her stage name, Katy Perry, was in 2008 on a road trip with my family. The soon-to-be hit song, “I kissed a Girl” came on the radio, and with the simple lyrics “I kissed a girl and I liked it,” a small firestorm erupted within our Honda CR-V. However, after listening to many of her earlier songs and more recent songs as they came out, I noticed that Perry’s linguistic style changed significantly from her first Christian Rock album, Katy Hudson, released in 2001, to her first major popular music album, One of the Boys, released in 2008, to her most recent popular music album, Prism, released in 2013.

From a linguistic perspective, I noticed semantic, pragmatic, and phonological changes. This essay will evaluate this through the lens of several factors such as a simplification of verse structure, and a decrease in formality over time. I will evaluate word frequency, word associations, pronunciation variations, verse length, and metric structure. I propose that, for the sake of increasing her popularity, Perry simplified her language to appeal to a broader audience through phonological, pragmatic and semantic means.

Because I wanted to focus on several levels of linguistic analysis, I decided that I would need to take a two-pronged approach to evaluating Katy Perry’s linguistic change. First, I would make broad evaluations about word frequency by using each whole album. Second, I wanted to take a closer look at what I suspected would be verse simplification through musical metric analysis using one song from each album. I also used one song from each album to compare cases of g-dropping and vowel stress, and various factors calculated through LIWC analysis.
II. Methods

My dual-evaluation strategy mentioned above helped me more efficiently evaluate data without making broad generalizations when they were not necessary. First, for the album-to-album analysis, I compiled the lyrics to every song in Katy Perry’s 2001 album in a single document. I obtained lyrics through www.azlyrics.com. I then did the same for Perry’s 2008 and 2013 albums, each in their own separate document. I then created one master document that consisted of the combination of these three documents.

I copied the master document into http://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp to get an overall word frequency analysis. I then did the same with each album so I could compare them to the overall average and notice if some words were used particularly more often in certain albums. The reason I chose to use the entire albums to perform this analysis was to reduce individual variation among songs. Just by nature, many popular music songs tend to be repetitive, especially in the chorus. The analysis of the albums as a whole would help minimize the chance of a single word appearing many times in one song, thereby skewing the data set.

However, some of the data that I planned to analyze simply could not be done in good quality given the enormous quantity of three full albums. So, in order to perform more specific analysis, I chose the most popular song from each album. I defined “most popular” as the one song from each album that gained the most views on www.youtube.com and the highest ranking on the Billboard Top 100 (if applicable), to be my three focus songs. These songs were “Faith Won’t Fail” from Katy Hudson, “I kissed a Girl” from One of the Boys, and “Dark Horse” from Prism.

I wanted to enter each full album to LIWC for analysis. However, the system only supports 500 words at a time, so I used my focus songs instead. Since Perry often refers to her songwriting technique as personal and “from her core” I decided that it would be best to compare each of Perry’s songs in the “Personal Writing” category. I then compared the resulting values from each song both to the “Personal Writing” mean, and to the other two songs.

In each of my three focus songs I also evaluated several more specific features such as verse length, pronunciation differences between songs (including frequency of g-dropping), and simplifications of word phrases (i.e. “going to” vs. “gonna”). No outside websites were used for this section of analysis.

The most time-consuming piece of data analysis was creating a musical metric analysis of each focus song. I mostly copied the style presented in lecture 16 “Linguistic form in art, ritual, and play” for each song. However, I modified this structure, stacking each verse on top of each other in different text colors so the differences and similarities in results would be easily recognizable. I first transcribed the meter and beat alignment by hand and then transferred it into Microsoft Excel.
III. Data

Interesting results from word-frequency calculations (using full albums):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>2001 #</th>
<th>2001 %</th>
<th>2008 #</th>
<th>2008 %</th>
<th>2013 #</th>
<th>2013 %</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.2816</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.4447</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.8770</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.6054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.9421</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>4.669</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4.0948</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>4.0948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/He’ll</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.8045</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.1976</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.2394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1207</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0494</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.7091</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.3616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonna</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.1482</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.5225</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.2775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.0973</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>4.4219</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>3.4335</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>4.0948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiss(ed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.3956</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.1429</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wanna</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1208</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.8152</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.4105</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.4877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.0870</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.3832</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.9922</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIWC Results (by song):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Faith Won’t Fail</th>
<th>I Kissed a Girl</th>
<th>Dark Horse</th>
<th>Average for Personal Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-words (I, me)</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social words</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotions</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotions</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Processes</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>12.52</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Summary Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Faith Won’t Fail</th>
<th>I Kissed a Girl</th>
<th>Dark Horse</th>
<th>Average for Personal Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytic</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>44.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clout</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>37.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>76.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Tone</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>38.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

G-Dropping (by song):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Faith Won’t Fail</th>
<th>I Kissed a Girl</th>
<th>Dark Horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0% (0/2 g’s dropped)</td>
<td>No potential g drops</td>
<td>66.67% (6/9 g’s dropped)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*note: only includes g-drops/available to Katy Perry, not computer voices or guest rappers
Pronunciation differences (by song):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation in “Faith Won’t Fail”</th>
<th>Pronunciation in “I Kissed a Girl”</th>
<th>Pronunciation in “Dark Horse”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>foor</td>
<td>for, for*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your</td>
<td>yor</td>
<td>yoor</td>
<td>yør (50%), yør (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>yoor</td>
<td>yør</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Perry appears to use for unless for is needed for a rhyme.

Average Verse Length (by song):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Won’t Fail</th>
<th>I Kissed a Girl</th>
<th>Dark Horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~23.67 words/verse</td>
<td>~18.5 words/verse</td>
<td>~30.0 words/verse</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Musical Metric Analysis:

See next pages.
"Faith Won't Fail" Metric Analysis

You  You  could  could
I     can
x  x  x  x  x
x  x  x  x  x  x  x  x  x
These notes are pickups

### Meter

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<th>Bar</th>
<th>Syllables</th>
<th>Beats</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>10</td>
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### Phonology

<table>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>These</td>
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<tr>
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<td>are</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pickups</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"I Kissed a Girl" Metric Analysis

This was never got so
I don't I
No my ex-
You're x
x x x

er the way I plan-

brave drink in ha-
e- ven know your na-
per- i- ment- al ga-

x x x
x x x x
x x x x
x x x x

ned not

nd Lost
me it
me Juse

x x x
x x x x
x x x x
x x x x

my dis-
my cre-
does-
hu-

tion tion
tion

x x x x x x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x x x x x x
**Dark Horse Metric Analysis**

These notes are pickups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>knew</th>
<th>you</th>
<th>were</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>This</th>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>were</td>
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<td>na</td>
<td>come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>make</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>lev-</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>here</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>like</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>bird-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better choose</td>
<td>Careful</td>
<td>cause</td>
<td>Like a</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I'm down to ear-anything (th) capable of an-thing if you choose to walk a-way of an-thing Don't walk a-way and ev(e)-ry-thing Don't walk a-way
IV. Analysis

Semantics

In the first table, several factors struck me as interesting from a semantic standpoint. One of which was the apparent inverse relationship between “I” and “He”. Perry used the word “I” substantially more in her popular music songs than in her Christian Rock songs. This is possibly the result of a semantic change. Perry’s Christian Rock songs were more likely to be written in second person point of view than her Christian Rock songs, referring to God as “He” and offering spiritual advice to listeners “you.” On the contrary, Perry’s popular music songs tend to be written in first person. This could help explain the twofold increase in usage of “I.”

Also interesting is the dramatic increase in the use of the word “like” with time. Since “like” is often used to introduce synonyms, this increase could indicate that Perry relies more heavily on metaphorical speech. This makes sense because metaphors are often used to describe abstract topics such as love and relationships, which are often the focus of Perry’s popular music songs.

The LWIC data table reveals some interesting trends in Perry’s songwriting. Perhaps most prominent is the difference in negative and positive emotions in each genre. As Perry transitioned to popular music she began to use much more positive language and significantly less negative language. I found it surprising that the Christian Rock example actually had more negative emotions than positive ones. Also striking is the steady decline in the “authenticity” section. As Perry’s audience grew ever larger, she may have tried to overextend her lyrics to apply to everyone, thus decreasing her authenticity. As a small-time Christian Rock artist, having a smaller audience it could be easier to be authentic. Perhaps explaining some of the decrease in authenticity is the spike in emotional tone in Perry’s pop music. Going from just a 21 in her Christian Rock lyrics to a 99 in both of her popular music songs reveals a major change in Perry’s approach to songwriting. This transition to emotional appeal could have helped boost her to fame.

Pragmatics/Phonology

The data also hints at pragmatics changes. I would argue that Perry became less formal in her speech as she transitioned from Christian Rock to pop. First, words like “wanna” and “gonna” never showed up in Perry’s Christian Rock. However they both appear regularly in Perry’s pop songs. Second, Perry also began dropping a significant portion, about 2/3, of her g’s as she switched to pop. I was unable to find any instances of g-dropping in her Christian Rock songs. Finally, Perry put much less stress on the words “for,” “your,” and “you’re” as her popular music career expanded. In the case of “for,” Perry transitioned from exclusively pronouncing the word “for” to mostly using “for” unless the stressed “or” was needed for the sake of completing a rhyme. I found it interesting that Perry’s pragmatic change, writing more informal lyrics, actually resulted in phonological changes in pronunciation.
Phonology

That said, I believe the largest factor that lead to Perry’s increase in popularity after her transition to pop comes from her phonological changes, evident through the musical metric analysis I conducted on each focus song. Stacking each verse on top of each other reveals that the patterns in Perry’s verses were much simpler and more repetitive in her popular music songs than in her Christian Rock songs. Looking at the first two lines of “Faith Won’t Fail,” it’s practically impossible to predict exactly how a supplemental verse would be sung. Perry alters the verses perhaps just for the sake of variation, but this makes it difficult to remember how each verse is sung. Take that and compare it to “I Kissed a Girl.” There is only one variation in the entire song, coming on the second beat of the second measure (second line), when the second verse leaves this space blank. Given a supplemental verse it would be easy to place the words in the correct spots based on inferable rules such as:

1. The first beat of measure one is always left blank
2. In the first measure, all words are on the down beat
3. Words on the first two down beats and following three up beats of measure two, unless you’re a syllable short, in which case leave downbeat two blank
4. Words on the second and third down beat of measure three
5. Words on the first two down beats and following two up beats of measure four
6. No words on the 16th note (single x) spots

Making a list of rules would be significantly more difficult, and maybe impossible for Perry’s Christian Rock. That said, all of Perry’s pop songs are not as simple as “I Kissed a Girl,” but it is possible that this simplicity led to the song’s popularity. As Katy Perry grew more popular, she could use slightly more variation, as she does in “Dark Horse,” without risking losing her audience. Nearly all of the variation in “Dark Horse” stems from having or not having an extra word that could be placed on the last 8th note (two x’s). The only other variation comes in the third and fourth measures of the first verse, where Perry puts “But” on the third downbeat of measure three and leaves a space on the upbeat after the second beat of measure four. This is done to place emphasis on “better” rather than “you.” Even so, there is still significantly more variation in Perry’s Christian Rock than her recent popular music. She could also afford to return to longer verses, as is evident in the final table.

I should note that even my current methods aren’t perfect. For instance, I was surprised to see that the Prism contained 45 usages of the word “walking,” while One of the Boys and Katy Hudson contained only one between them. This didn’t turn out to be Perry endorsing a healthy lifestyle in her most recent album. Rather, one song, “Walking on Air” uses the word “walking” 45 times. Even when put in with every other song from Prism this is still a significant outlier that would have severely thrown off my data sat had “Walking on Air” been one of my focus songs.
V. Conclusion

As Katy Perry transitioned from Christian Rock to popular music she became metrically simpler, but ideologically more abstract. As her popular music base grew she could afford to take a few more risks, but her popular music still remained simpler than her Country Rock. Perry’s music decreased in formality with time, but increased in emotional appeal. Perry also increasingly utilized positive emotions as she transitioned to popular music, and minimized references to negative emotions.

In the end, Katy Perry became more semantically complex, less phonologically complex, and less pragmatically complex (meaning less formal). She increased her use of metaphors through the word “like,” simplified her verses for the sake of catchiness, and simplified her language to connect with a broader audience. Some changes may have been exaggerated for attention when first making the switch from Christian Rock to popular music. Some of these trends may have shifted back a little bit between 2008 and 2013 as a result of Perry’s secure, paying fan base. Either way, the music of Katy Perry is here to stay.
References/Bibliography

Used for metric analysis


Lyrics to “Faith Won’t Fail”
You could throw me
In the fire
And I won't be burned
For my faith
Is Your desire
And Your love endures

You could throw me
In the prison cell
Shackle me up
Against the rail
But time
And time again
My faith won't fail

For He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My trials
And tribulations
And He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My sin
And temptations
He'll prevail
When I fall
And He
Will pick me up
For time
And time again
My faith won't fail
Time and time again
My faith won't fail

You could cast me
In the lion's den
But they won't harm me
For Your grace
Surrounds me
And it sets me free

And I can walk
Upon the water
And I will not drown
For my eyes are
Set upon You
And no one
Can bring me down

For He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My trials
And tribulations
And He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My sin
And temptations
He'll prevail
When I fall
And He
Will pick me up
For time
And time again
My faith won't fail
Time and time again
My faith won't fail

For His angels
Surround me
And You've poured out
This blood covering
And I will walk
And not fail
For time
And time again
My faith won't fail
Time
And time again
My faith won't fail

For He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My trials
And tribulations
And He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My sin
And temptations
He'll prevail
When I fall
And He
Will pick me up
For time
And time again

For He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My trials
And tribulations
And He'll prevail
In the midst of all
My sin
And temptations
He'll prevail
When I fall
And He
Will pick me up
For time
And time again
My faith won't fail
Time and time again
My faith won't fail
Time and time again
My faith won't fail

Lyrics to “I Kissed a Girl”
This was never the way I planned, not my intention.
I got so brave, drink in hand, lost my discretion
It's not what I'm used to, just wanna try you on.
I'm curious for you, caught my attention.

[Chorus:]
I kissed a girl and I liked it,
the taste of her cherry chapstick.
I kissed a girl just to try it,
I hope my boyfriend don't mind it.
It felt so wrong,
it felt so right.
Don't mean I'm in love tonight.
I kissed a girl and I liked it (I liked it).

No, I don't even know your name, it doesn't matter.
You're my experimental game, just human nature.
It's not what good girls do, not how they should behave.
My head gets so confused, hard to obey.

[Chorus]

Us girls we are so magical,
Soft skin, red lips, so kissable.
Hard to resist, so touchable.
Too good to deny it.
Ain't no big deal, it's innocent.

[Chorus]

Lyrics to “Dark Horse” (ft. Juicy J)

[Juicy J:]
Yeah
Ya'll know what it is
Katy Perry
Juicy J, aha.
Let's rage

[Katy Perry:]
I knew you were
You were gonna come to me
And here you are
But you better choose carefully
‘Cause I, I’m capable of anything
Of anything and everything

Make me your Aphrodite
Make me your one and only
But don’t make me your enemy, your enemy, your enemy

So you wanna play with magic
Boy, you should know what you're falling for
Baby do you dare to do this?
Cause I’m coming at you like a dark horse
Are you ready for, ready for
A perfect storm, perfect storm
Cause once you’re mine, once you’re mine
There’s no going back

Mark my words
This love will make you levitate
Like a bird
Like a bird without a cage
But down to earth
If you choose to walk away, don’t walk away

It’s in the palm of your hand now baby
It’s a yes or no, no maybe
So just be sure before you give it all to me
All to me, give it all to me

So you wanna play with magic
Boy, you should know what you're falling for
Baby do you dare to do this?
Cause I’m coming at you like a dark horse
Are you ready for, ready for
A perfect storm, perfect storm
Cause once you're mine, once you're mine (love trippin’)
There’s no going back

[Juicy J - Rap Verse:]
Uh
She’s a beast
I call her Karma (come back)
She eats your heart out
Like Jeffrey Dahmer (woo)
Be careful
Try not to lead her on
Shorty’s heart is on steroids
Cause her love is so strong
You may fall in love
When you meet her
If you get the chance you better keep her
She's sweet as pie but if you break her heart
She'll turn cold as a freezer
That fairy tale ending with a knight in shining armor
She can be my Sleeping Beauty
I’m gon’ put her in a coma
Woo!
Damn I think I love her
Shorty so bad, I’m sprung and I don’t care
She ride me like a roller coaster
Turned the bedroom into a fair (a fair!)
Her love is like a drug
I was tryna hit it and quit it
But lil’ mama so dope
I messed around and got addicted

*Katy Perry:*
So you wanna play with magic
Boy, you should know what you're falling for (you should know)
Baby do you dare to do this?
Cause I'm coming at you like a dark horse (like a dark horse)
Are you ready for, ready for (ready for)
A perfect storm, perfect storm (a perfect storm)
Cause once you're mine, once you're mine (mine)
There's no going back