

The Break: 10 The Hard Way

By Cliff Burns

This monologue has been selected from a one-person show on the theme of relationships breaking up. There are ten monologues written for ten separate characters, with a wide range of emotions depicted. Though written from a male perspective, either gender can play the role for the purpose of the classroom exercise. Strong language has been used in some cases, feel free to adapt it as needed.

Questions to consider as you prepare this monologue piece:

- 1) Who is the person speaking? List qualities of the person's character.
What do you think they look like?
- 2) To whom is the monologue addressed? What is the relationship to this person?

Note: A simple, minimalist set--a generic sofa placed slightly off-centre; a small coffee table in front of it containing a push button telephone, a scatter of magazines, beer bottles, etc., whatever each scene requires.)

III.

(Uncomfortable, abashed; jumpy, hyper, alternating between standing up and sitting down, earnestness and self-deprecation:)

It's not that I don't care about you. That doesn't even enter into it, believe me. Put that thought right out of your mind. As a matter of fact, I think you're a terrific person, you're

beautiful, you're smart... you've got...good teeth, impeccable personal hygiene...there is absolutely nothing wrong with you.

The problem is *me*. It's always been me. I'm just not very good at relationships. I have no concept of what's required to be a good partner. You need someone who gives, who's more willing to share...and that's not me. I'm like a kid, totally self-centered, I want to keep all the toys for myself and that--it doesn't leave room for anybody else, their needs, their expectations. You see what I'm saying?

You're different. You'd give the shirt off your back to a total stranger and not give it a second thought. I'd probably shoot him. Think about it--when was the last time you ever saw me donate to charity or do any kind of volunteer work? I'd rather have a tooth pulled.

And, see, it's like I said: I'm selfish. There's no getting around it. I'm selfish, I'm completely unfeeling and insensitive. You remember that time you cut yourself when you were slicing, uh, it was a frozen bagel, wasn't it? Remember? You're gushing blood all over the place and I was pissed off at you. I actually asked you how you could be so dumb. Remember? Remember that? Rather than being worried, I saw the blood and the first thing I did was freak out and give you hell. Is that the kind of person you--you want to be with? That's crazy...

And *cheap*? I'm so cheap it's not even funny. I got cobwebs in my wallet I'm so cheap. When was the last time I took you to a movie? Or--or bought you dinner. You see what I mean? Why do you put up with crap like that? I wouldn't. I'd dump me in a minute.

You're too good for me. You don't see it but you are. You deserve someone who treats you a lot better. Right now, you might as well be a dog. *I'm not exaggerating.* You're an awesome person, you're caring, you're loving and what do you get back from me? I'm nothing but a creep. A loud-mouthed, insensitive creep. I wish I could make you see that.

How about the fact that I refuse to meet your folks? And every time you try to arrange something, Christmas dinner, whatever, I'm always making up some lame excuse why I can't go. You know why I do that? Because they would see in a minute what a jerk I am. I don't want to end up embarrassing you. I'm sparing you that, okay?

And what about my friends? Yeah, what about *them*? Now there's a perfect example. You *hate* my friends. And rightfully so: they're a bunch of *losers*. Losers, every one of them. Remember that time Clint puked on you in the car? I mean, come on. And you know what they say: you can always judge a person by the quality of the people they hang out with. Well, there you are, case closed. *Bobby*? Bobby likes to run down cats. I told you about that. Whenever he's in a bad mood he goes out cruising, lanes, back alleys, whatever. And when he sees a cat he deliberately tries to hit it. That's *sick*. And he's one of my oldest friends. Do you see what I mean? And Rennie. Rennie's gonna be on Death Row some day, believe me. The guy is a complete sociopath. That's--c'mon, you can't argue with that. What kind of a guy has people like that for friends? What does that say about *me*?

And it's not like *I'm* any better. Worse in fact. Remember that party when I got drunk and I was hitting on your friend, what's-her-name? Practically groping her right in front of you and--don't make excuses for me, I knew what I was doing and I went ahead and did it anyway. You should have booted me out right then--slapped the crap out of me and

walked away. And you would've had every right to. No one would've blamed you one bit. Least of all me.

Your problem has always been that you--you're too decent. You forgive and forget and, I gotta tell you, when you do that people are always gonna take advantage of you. You keep turning the other cheek, dear, and one of these days somebody's liable to take your head off.

And I don't want it to be *me*. I don't think I could live with myself if I ended up hurting you. It would be like committing some kind of mortal sin.

That's why we gotta call this off right now, before it goes any further. It's all leading up to some major league, big time hurting and rather than go through that I'd just as soon call it quits and let you get on with your life.

I *know* you love me, I *know* that. But it's like you love me too much and it leaves you vulnerable, it leaves you wide open and that's not right. You're better off finding someone else and starting over again--and maybe next time you'll meet somebody who'll look after you and appreciate you for what you are.

I just don't see any hope that I'm going to get better or improve with age--suddenly become a good person, worthy of you. I'm just too set in my ways, too messed up to be of any use to anybody right now. Open your eyes, this is who I am, I'm showing you the real me now--but you're not seeing it. Take my word for it, you're a lot better off without me.

And, you know, it's not like we're never going to see each other again, if that's what you're thinking. We can still be friends. That's no problem. I love hanging out with you, you're--you're a fun person. Just because we won't be together doesn't mean we can't go out, can't, you know, do stuff together. You think I want that? You're terrific company. One of the gang. And it would be great for both of us. We'd both be free to pursue--to see other people and explore other possibilities and--and see where it goes from there.

And *you're* the one getting the better end of the deal, you're the one who's getting off lucky. I'm the loser here, whichever way you look at it. I'm losing you, maybe the best, most terrific person I've ever met. That's my loss and, believe me, I feel it. I'm really, really torn up inside by all this.

Look, I gotta get going. Look at the time. I promised I'd meet Rennie. If you could, you know, take a look around, find your stuff and --and take it with you, I'd really appreciate it. I think it would be easier for both of us. No reminders, that kind of thing.

Are you gonna be all right? I feel just awful about this, about hurting you...the whole thing. But, you know, I still say it's for the best. Better now than down the road some time, when there's more emotional issues, heavier stuff to deal with. And don't let this--let it affect the way you feel about yourself. I'm the bad guy here, I'm the villain. Just be clear on that and, you know, try to realize that this is right, this is the right thing to do. Okay? Okay?

I'll call you, all right? I promise I will. Scout's honour. And you...you take care of yourself. I'll be seeing you around. Oh...and could you leave your key somewhere? Great. Okay...see you. Yeah. Me too...

(Darkness)