

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.)

II.

(Man sitting on couch wearing an expression that can only be described as shell-shocked.)

Wow. That's...I don't know what to say. I'm just...I have to be honest with you, this is coming at me right out of the blue.

(Sits back, exhales audibly.)

I feel...I feel almost sick to my stomach right now. Like somebody's just...like I've been kicked in the guts. Was it...Jesus, even to find the right words. Excuse me for a second. I'll be...I just have to...

(He leaves the stage, sound of running water. He returns with a damp cloth, takes a seat.)

Sorry. This is hitting me really hard. I'm not...dealing with this very well. It's not your fault, I just need some time to, uh, to get my head together. I'll be all right. Just bear with me.

(Lays his head on the back of the couch, draping the cloth onto his forehead.)

I guess I wish you could have, if you had given me some kind of warning or a sign. This is...it's like being hit by lightning. I know you didn't mean it that way but...

Have you been thinking about this for a long time or is this something that's sort of spur of the moment? I guess that isn't really fair, is it? I know you're not the kind of person who--who acts without thinking. That wouldn't be like you. And I realize you're not trying to hurt me and that this has been pretty hard on you too. I respect that. I've always felt that you've been completely straightforward with me and--and--wow. I'm completely stunned.

Is there any way to--can I say anything...no, I suppose not. Obviously you feel that we've reached some kind of impasse or--or dead end...

(Taking off the cloth, sitting forward, very earnest.)

I only wish I could have seen this coming. Then I might have been better prepared and I could handle this with more--be a bigger man about it. I mean, excuse me for saying so but I really thought everything was fine with us, I thought we had something here, something special. We--uh--we seem to get along really well, we seem to connect, there's never been any major conflicts... And that--that has to count for something, doesn't it?

Because when you see the other couples we know, if you made a fair comparison...like Bert and Laura for instance. Now there's two people that--that half the time you have to separate them with water cannons and tear gas. And I am not over-stating things. You know what they're like, constantly at each other's throats. And yet we're the ones who are...and that seems *crazy*. Excuse me for saying so but it does.

We had something, something real and concrete...there was commitment and a whole history. A *history*. And you don't just up and throw all that away. Not without a darn good reason.

And I don't see any reason here. That is the one thing I just can't --I can't bring myself to understand. It's completely beyond my comprehension. If there were conflicts, disagreements, I could see that. Then I could see some kind of rationale.

(Deep breath)

So is there someone else? That would--I guess if that were the case then there might be grounds to--to undo what we've built together. That would at least justify it in some way. Because I have to be honest, I've had opportunities, I've been tempted but I always thought that if anything happened...it just wouldn't be right. Not while...not when we had something that I thought was unique and precious and--and worth preserving.

But, frankly, I would have a hard time believing that you, you know, that you would allow something to happen behind my back or whatever. Because, excuse me, you're not that kind of person. Or am I completely wrong? Maybe I'm wrong about *everything*. All of it...just a figment of my imagination.

(Lying back, replacing the cloth.)

Wow, this is...too much. I'm on overload. Everything I've ever believed in, the entire basis for my existence, *pow*, all gone. And now I'm just...well...look at me.

(Deep breath)

Sorry. I shouldn't be laying this on you. Obviously I have to take some responsibility for what's happened, for what you clearly believe is a no-win situation. I guess I didn't give you everything you needed. I've somehow let you down or not lived up to your expectations. But where? How? Because if I knew what it was I might be able to--to make amends or try to change...

And I *could*, you know. In a minute. If it meant keeping you, keeping what we have alive.

(Removing cloth, sitting up again.)

Because...and maybe I don't say it often enough, maybe that's part of the problem. But I love you. *I love you* and I think you're a very special person. You're an incredible human being and I've always thought I was lucky to--that we--God, even now, when it's so important, to find the right words...

I'll do whatever you want. Whatever's required. I'll become a better person. I mean it. I know that sounds stupid but I believe if you really, really love somebody, you can move mountains. So, honestly: whatever you want, you name it and--and I'll do it. Am I...is there something in particular that I'm doing? Am I too possessive? Because I can pull back, way back, give you more room to grow. I respect you and if you need some space, that's okay, I'll give you all you need. That's a promise. Put it in writing if you want. I'll sign in a minute.

Do you...should I be more passionate, more romantic? Hey, I'm totally into it. Flowers, movies, you name it. Kids? You wanna get a dog? A cat? No problem. To hell with my allergies, I'll just learn to live with it.

What I'm trying to say, what I wish I could make you see is that, sweetie, there is *nothing* you could ask for that I wouldn't give you. Anything, you name it and it's yours. I'll rip my heart out and give it to you if that's what you want. You know I would. *You know that.*

And you don't have to do anything, not a single thing. Just keep on being you. Because who you are...you're perfect to me. You're everything I could ever want, ever need. All my life I've dreamed of being with someone exactly like you--it's like you were made for me. You define me, make me a better person. All I have to do is look at you and I feel stronger, like I can accomplish anything.

So I guess what I'm saying is--let's not give up on this. Let's not give up on *us*. Because, believe me, without you I'm nothing, the absolute essence of nothing. I will cease to exist. I know it. I'll just fade away...

I...love...you.

Do you hear what I'm saying? *Do you?* Those words--they're the most beautiful, wonderful words a person will ever hear. They're like a precious gift, a--a *blessing*.

So why can't you ever say it back to me? *Why?* Even if it's only just this one time...please...say it. For the sake of--of whatever we had....or thought we had. What are you afraid of? *Why* won't you? Why not? Just *try*, okay? Just this once. One time, that's all I'm asking. Okay? *Okay?* Sweetheart? Please...

(Darkness)