

A Follow-up to Terrible Memory

Two more monologues
By Adrian Clayton

Adrian Clayton
ID 1804392
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Characters

RILEY, 22, nonbinary, a fictional friend of Adrian

SET, age ambiguous, male, an eRasure overreliant in the year 2167

Settings

RILEY's living room, present day

SET's apartment, 2167

SCENE 1

RILEY sits on the couch in their living room, talking on the phone.

RILEY

Speaking.

(pause)

Oh, okay. Yeah, sure, I got time.

(pause)

No, yeah.

I know Adrian pretty well, actually. We grew up together. I was in third grade, and he was in second.

(pause)

22. My birthday's in January.

(pause)

Yeah. He approached me, I'm pretty sure. He was trying pretty hard to make friends, at the time.

He probably doesn't remember any of this. That's what he tells me, but it's also pretty obvious in some of our conversations, too. It kind of sucks, because we did a lot of stuff together that he just has no idea about. Like, the broad strokes, but that's it.

Is this—

(pause)

If you say so.

He kind of repressed it, I think. He struggled a lot during elementary school—had trouble making friends, and interacting with people. I was there for it—we're not as close, now, but we were definitely best friends back then. For a lot of it, I know what happened better than he does.

(pause)

I don't really wanna get that deep into it, sorry. I feel like I should at least ask him first, just so I know it's okay to share that stuff.

But I can vouch for him, totally. He's a great guy—and hey, he's doing a lot better these days, too. He's really passionate about stuff, too.

(pause)

Yeah, for a while. I'm actually the one who introduced him to that. Junior year of high school, I talked him into taking a programming class. Well, programming-slash-game-design. He got really into it, and when we talk he says that's what made him want to make games.

I introduced him to a lot of stuff like that, even if he doesn't really remember all of it. But I'm glad to see him happy. He's doing well for himself, which is good. Even if we don't talk all that often anymore. He deserves it.

SCENE 2

SET sits on his couch, looking straight ahead (above the line of the audience). The stage is dimly lit, with a soft, neon glow hanging around the corners.

SET

Hey, uh...

Yeah. I'm Set, I'm, uh...

I'm an eRrasure overreliant.

(pause, eyes closed for a beat)

See, you uh... you get into it pretty easy. I mean, who wouldn't be tempted?

'Course, it's regulated, now. Make sure psychotherapists aren't prescribing that dross eyes-closed.

Problem is, it's still way easy to get your hands on.

(pause)

I don't get how it isn't obvious. How no one saw that temptation.

Just... forgetting.

And it starts innocent enough. You already play around with mods because, well, that's what everyone does.

Maybe you have a bad breakup, and that's when those stories start to sound like a dream come true.

(pause)

You can't understand how vulnerable that feels. Not unless it's happened. When your whole world is fucked up like that...

You'd do anything to get rid of that feeling.

(pause)

So you find someone who has the mod. You try it, and...

(unenthusiastically)

Poof.

SET leans back against the couch, draping his arms over the back.

SET

I sounded convincing there, didn't I?

Garbage. I have no idea what got me into eRasure.

That's kind of the problem.

(pause)

No, that's not it. The problem...

Once you get your hands on a mod, it just... keeps working.

There are some people into physicals. They have to pay out the ear every hit. But eRasure?

Just run the routine.

And once you've started, why would you stop?

(pause)

So there you go. A bad day? One button and it pretty much never happened.

Get caught up thinking how **fucked** it all is? Just forget.

(pause)

And eventually... that's it. I know my name. Know a few... seconds of my childhood. But otherwise it's just... whatever I was doing recently. A few good Holooids, that kind of stuff.

And when you get bored? Flip the switch. You can watch them all over again.

And now...

(pause)

I'm scared. I think part of me wants to just... stop. Start over, you know? A clean slate.

Or the opposite.

But every time I'm gonna go for it, I just think... "It can't be this."

(tediously)

"This can't be the first memory of my new life."

You feel like it needs to be an occasion. Like you know if those come around often.

So I keep resetting. What other choice do you have?

SET leans forward again,
returning to his original
position.

SET

(scornful)

There. There's your "story". Hope you overload on it.

SET closes his eyes for
several beats, silent. He
opens them.

SET

Hey, uh...

Yeah. I'm Set, I'm, uh...

I'm an eRasure overreliant.

(voice fading as lights dim to darkness)

See, you uh... you get into it pretty easy...