

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.)

VI.

(A tense scene; man upset, embarrassed, angry at the predicament he finds himself in, uncomfortable with the emotions being generated:)

Oh, Christ, don't cry. *Please* don't cry. You know I can't handle that. It isn't fair, Karen, you shouldn't do this every time something happens that you don't like.

Yes, you *can* help it--you're just not trying. You think if you turn on the water works eventually you'll get your way. And that's the whole point, isn't it? You have to get what you want or else you're not happy. And if *you're* not happy you have to make everybody else around you miserable. Nobody else matters, just you.

(Exasperated, leaping up from the couch, pacing around distractedly.)

Would you just *stop*? Put a plug in it or something. Because we can't talk like this, nothing can be settled or decided. You know it bugs me and that's why you're doing it. But you know what? It's not going work this time. I am not going to give in, do you hear me? This is *crap* and you know it. Emotional blackmail. I saw through this stuff a long time ago.

(Angry)

Stop. Are you going to stop or not? 'Cause I'll leave and that's it. No discussion, no debate, I just walk. I won't put up with this. I'm tired of it, this whole routine of yours...it's gotten really old. *(Groaning)* Oh, for God's sake. I wish you could see yourself, how pathetic you look. Your makeup's running, you've got a snotty nose. Use a kleenex at least. Yes, I *am* disgusted as a matter of fact. Disgusted with this whole thing. How I let myself get into this--that's something I'll never figure out.

Oh, come on, knock it off. You know I care. I care or else I would've left a long time ago. Christ, don't you ever get dehydrated? Oh, stop. I'm telling you for the last time: *stop*. Are you gonna stop? 'Cause if you don't, I'm leaving and I mean it.

Now *there's* something I haven't heard before. You don't have the guts to kill yourself so don't even bother. You might drive someone else to kill you, that much I'll give you. But you don't have the nerve to do it yourself. You're not the type. I'll kill myself a long time before you will. And don't think I haven't thought about it. Anything would be better than this.

Get a grip on yourself. Do you know how stupid you sound? You're stuck in a groove: "I'll do it. I'll do it." So *do* it. Don't just talk about it. Throw yourself off a bridge. Cut your wrists, cut your throat--do *something* so the rest of us don't have to suffer. Oh, I'm a bastard, all right. I am one stupid bastard for putting up with you for as long as I have. But let me tell you something: *this is it*. I've had it. You've hit the wall with me. Reached the limit. Right now if I thought you were *really* serious I'd buy you the razors. How about some pills? How about a gun? You name it, I'll get it for you.

Just *stop crying*. It's driving me nuts, can't you see that? Is this the only tactic you have? Can't you--isn't there something else you can try? Break something, throw some plates--but stop *crying*. Because if you don't, so help me...

This is pointless. I'm going around and around here and it never ends. Every time something comes up, ever time we reach a certain point, you pull this routine and--and nothing changes, nothing improves and we're back where we started. I'm tired of it. Sick of your games, sick of your blubbering, sick of *you*...

I've tried to leave! How many times have I stood at that door--I can't even count that high. But then you open the tear ducts, do your thing and I end up staying and, like I said, nothing gets better so sooner or later we're back at it again. The same thing, it's the same thing all the time. "Boo hoo, boo hoo, poor me"--God, what's the point?

(Flops onto the couch, kneading his forehead.)

I'm just...so...tired. You suck me dry. Always needing, always wanting, never giving anything back. I swear you're some kind of a vampire and one of these days I'm gonna wake up with a big hickey on my neck and realize I am now one of the living dead.

It reaches the point where I don't have anything left to give you. I'm just so drained and messed up that I'm not any use to anybody, including myself.

You always say that. I don't know how many times I've heard you say exactly the same thing. But you never change. It's this eternal circle. And I'm getting tired of chewing on my own tail, you know?

I wish I could believe that. But, you know, I stopped believing anything you say a long time ago. I hope and I hope but it's always the same. Because if you were honest you'd admit that even if you did try you can't get better. You're too sick. You need help and--I wish I was the one who could give it to you. But I'm not. I've got nothing left to give that you haven't already taken. When it gets right down to it, you don't *want* to change. Why should you? This way you get everything you need and everybody else doesn't even enter into it.

Why did I come over here today? I should've listened to that little voice in my head, screaming at me: *stay away, stay away*. I didn't want to get into this. I knew what would happen. I should have just sent you a telegram from somewhere. Timbuktu maybe. Some place where you could never find me.

(Slumping back, exhausted.)

You leave me nothing. You take everything and now I'm just--I'm left like this. Don't you see what you're doing to me? Don't you care? You're *killing* me. Slowly but surely. You're not the one going to die, I am. And I can't wait. What a relief it'll be. Oh, go ahead. See if I care. Cry your damn eyes out.

(Pause. Deep breath.)

Please stop. Please...*stop*. Karen? Karen, listen to me. Are you listening to me? It's too much, okay? You're pushing things too far and I can't--I can't deal with this right now.

I know. I *know*. And I'm sorry. I'm *sorry*, okay? I wasn't trying to be mean, I was trying to make you see...I don't know. I don't know anything any more. Just let me sit here a minute. And meanwhile you--try to get yourself under control. Go splash some cold water on your face or something.

I know. I know you try. Sure, I realize that but...all I'm asking is just ease up on me. 'Cause I can't take much more. You force me into a corner and then I lash out and all I want is to get away from you. Escape. You don't know what it's like, the toll it takes on a person.

Sure, that's what I'm talking about. I mean...it's not like I hate you. I love you. I *do*. You may not believe it but it's true. Hey, if I didn't do you think I'd put up with you for as long as I have? There's your proof. You can't do much better than that.

I guess that's right. We're stuck with each other. But can't we make it easier on one another, do there always have to be these...crises, all the big scenes and dramatics? I *hate* them. I just can't deal with emotional stuff. The crying and wailing and carrying on. It frustrates me. I feel so useless.

I want you to be happy. Is that asking so much? And I want to be the one who makes you happy and not always taking the blame for--you know what I mean. Most of the time it seems like we're both so *miserable*. And that's not right. That's not the way two people should treat each other.

So...just promise me that you'll at least *try*. And I will too. Wipe your eyes, okay? Nobody's going anywhere. I know I said that and I'm sorry, I shouldn't have. I didn't mean it. You know I'll always be here for you. *Always*. You know that. You're my lady and--and I'll never, ever leave you. And that's a promise.

Hey, look: you've stopped crying...

(Darkness)