

REWRITTEN

Dramatic Monologue

by
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by
Krystle Henninger

I write a lot. Mostly about people that I know like my friends. Sometimes, I write about my dreams, which are as real as my waking life.

I go to familiar places to help me write about certain things. Sometimes, I come here. To this place. A locally owned deli, and a hangout for everyone. I got my first real job here. And this is where I said goodbye to the one person I love.

The original building burnt down several years ago, but it was rebuilt. I come back to visit every year on August 14th. Even though everything went up in flames and fell down in ashes, it is exactly as it was before. When I heard about the fire, I was in shock because I had written a story about it months earlier. It wasn't something that I believed would actually happen. I didn't think anything of it at the time that I wrote it. But let me tell you, I've thought about it a lot since.

The deli is almost like it never burned down. Everything is in the exact same place. All of the black-topped tables, and matching black chairs, the mural on the wall, all of the framed t-shirts on the adjacent wall, and even the toothpicks in the ceiling. It's all here. Even after all these years, some of the same people still work here. They remember me, I haven't changed much. They tell me they wish I would come back to visit more often. Sometimes they joke around and ask me to come back to work.

They make my sandwich before I even order it. I pay them, thank them, pick up my tray and walk to the booth that brings back so many memories. It's not the exact same one, but still, it was our booth.

I sit and eat slowly. Pull out my notebook and start to jot down the memories, and how I wish I could have changed what happened. It wasn't supposed to end like that. It wasn't ... *(pause)*

There have been many "what if's" in my life. I have always tried to picture what could have been different if I had done things that I had planned to do. If he hadn't left, or if I wasn't so shy. But it doesn't matter anymore.

After a while, I start writing in my notebook to replay the things that happened on August 14th in my head:

He was sitting across from me, smiling and asking me questions about my future plans while I tried to swallow tiny bits of my sandwich past the huge lump in my throat. His name was Steven Phillips. We had two classes together during his senior year when I was a junior. I saw him every day at school. We had worked together on a few extracurricular activities, and those memories are imprinted in my mind as vividly today as they were in high school.

Steven and I talked about twenty minutes during lunch, but it seemed like hours. A lifetime compressed into a handful of ticks on a clock. We talked about our summers apart, and last minute preparations for the upcoming school year. He was leaving for college and I was stuck here, as a senior at Holloway High.

After a while, we got to the heart of the conversation, "You said you had something to tell me?" He asked. It's funny. You can spend years preparing for a moment, and when it finally arrives, you're still not ready. One word. One syllable. So simple. So impossible. It might as well have been a song in an alien language for all the effort it took to get it out. But somehow, I did. "Here." I handed him a monologue, written about him, telling him that I love him and how hard it was going to be to live without him. He read it, not missing any words. When he was finished, he smiled at me, and told me that he liked it. I told him I couldn't wonder "what if" for the rest of my life, and I don't know if I was more elated or heartbroken when he agreed with me. He said he wished that I had told him I loved him sooner, because he was leaving for college in less than a week, and that there was nothing that we could do.

We both stood up and walked out of the restaurant into the parking lot. He leaned against his car and told me that he would be back in a few months. After saying our goodbyes, he got into his car and I walked back to mine. I watched him drive off for the last time.

That's when I started thinking about rewriting the draft of my script to make the best out of the situation in the plot. I even wrote more about him and his life after high school, college, the successful theatre career I knew he would eventually have. And then I wrote something else I had dreamed about. A nightmare really. I wrote that he died in a car accident when he was coming home one day. I didn't want to, but the feeling that it was stuck in the back of my mind forced me to write it down. I had to see the words written out in front of me. "Steven Phillips dies in a car accident." So I did. Now, there's nothing that can change the image of those words. Another imprinted memory.

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