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Motivationally Hypocritical

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Author Bio

Kristyn Turner is a sophomore at Gettysburg College and is majoring in English with Writing concentration and a Music minor. She is from Seekonk, Massachusetts and originally came to Gettysburg to pursue a history major. She became an English major after taking a class on the history of the English language with Professor Fee and has been loving every minute. She greatly enjoys writing and playing the oboe in the Wind Symphony on the Sunderman Conservatory of Music. She also participates in the colorguard and on the Bullets Dance Team. She is hoping to combine her music and English studies to work in publishing and write songs someday.

Kristyn Turner

Motivationally Hypocritical

It was another typical tour for Meredith. As she walked up on stage, she passed the familiar life-sized cardboard cutout that she still remembers posing for, with her hair pulled up into a tight, professional looking bun, and her most warm-looking red pantsuit. The same phrase highlighted across the top, 'No man is a complete mystery.' Her publicist was just so creative, it sometimes boggled Meredith's mind. She peered into the audience, blinded by the spotlight shining just for her, putting her on display for the hundreds of women sitting on the edge of their seats, eyes wide with anticipation, hearts full of hope as they anxiously awaited her carefully composed speech. She knew they would desperately be listening for her words, praying they would free them from themselves. As the light beam reflected off the diamond ring on the left ring finger of a woman sitting four rows back on the right, Meredith took a half-hearted sigh and began.

Being a woman herself, Meredith understood the everyday problems of the ladies gathered around her. She grasped the concept of errands, the household chores, and while she did not have one of her own, she understood the need of tending to the family, as she had watched her mother do it for many years. Outside the regular norm of life though, Meredith had one insight these women couldn't comprehend for themselves. She could tell them what they needed to know about dealing with men. That was Meredith's specialty. They could be old, young, married, single, gay, or straight. It didn't matter. If you had a relationship problem, she had your answer; and these women, like so many before them, paid the money and traveled the miles to hear what she had to say. Meredith was a rare commodity and they all wanted a piece of her.

Meredith spoke for a solid forty-five minutes. The same speech she always opened with. Verbatim. Men think this way, women think that way, communication is complicated, but still possible. Do not let him treat you this way, no one takes all the blame, it is never going to be perfect. Never. Blah, blah, blah, always the same. She had said it a thousand times before and would say it a thousand times again, always getting the same responses. Always an ooh or an ahh, a loud echo of 'of course!' reverberating off the back wall. She always said exactly what

they needed to hear, but how many of them would act on it? How many of them truly listened? The same thoughts went in and out of her mind as Meredith opened up the floor to her audience, the people who idolized her and hung on her every word as if they were all precious gems. Now it was their turn to cry and complain as they shared their pathetic stories and awaited her remedy.

The first handful was all the same as the ones before. Same stories, only the names and faces changed.

“He doesn’t appreciate me!”

“Why doesn’t he understand?”

“What am I doing wrong? How do I make him love me more?”

The typical questions got their typical answers. The women marched off the stage with a new presence of self-worth and confidence, welcomed back into the world by a roaring applause from their peers. And all of them, like clockwork, paused on the last step, turned towards Meredith, and smiled. In return, Meredith met them all with the same plastic smile she plastered on her face for every typical tour.

Story after story continued as woman after woman found her way on stage, spilling their all too familiar tales. Meredith was relieved to learn that she only had to listen to one more sob story before her long-awaited lunch break. She noticed a younger looking woman in the back left. She had medium brown hair, average height, and normal weight. She wasn’t a beauty queen, but not lacking in the looks department either. She seemed like another typical woman that would normally attend one of Meredith’s seminars, but she reminded Meredith of her best friend from high school so she was called up anyway. Her name was Jamie Quinn.

As Jamie took the stage, she walked on like every other woman, a slow, unsure pace with a stammer in her footsteps. Another typical woman, Meredith thought, unconfident and underappreciated. Probably single too, Meredith added to herself, as she noticed the empty and undecorated left hand approaching her. Jamie shyly made her way across the stage and took her place in the velvet red chair sitting across from Meredith’s. Her eyes swiftly scanned the crowd and rested on Meredith. They were a deep green with almost a hint of hazel. They were full of fear and uncertainty, clouded with doubt. Meredith handed her the microphone and prepared herself for one more story that would be just like the rest of them.

Jamie started with a soft voice, barely audible even through the microphone. It was clear to Meredith that Jamie was instantly washed in a bright shade of red as the embarrassment of what she was about to do suddenly hit her. At least it should be a little more interesting now. This one won’t talk easily, Meredith thought to herself, the story has to be pried from her. Maybe she was a good pick after all.

"I actually don't know why I'm up here," Jamie began as she squinted from the blinding stage light, "He is just a good friend. We don't have any real issues that need help."

"Is that how you truly feel?" Meredith asked. "You wouldn't have come to this seminar and walked up on this stage if you didn't believe that deep down you had something to say. This is a safe place, it is okay to open up here, these women are all your friends. We are all here to listen and to help."

"Really, it isn't a big deal. We have been very good friends for a long time, sometimes I just find myself thinking..." Jamie trailed off.

"What are you thinking? I can't help you if you don't tell me what's really on your mind. While I can assess the problem, I can't read your mind and pull it all out of thin air." Meredith egged Jamie on.

After a little pulling and prodding, Meredith finally got Jamie talking, making Meredith feel at least a little successful about the day. Once Jamie opened up, Meredith just had to sit back and listen, formulating her response as Jamie went on. Meredith started to drift out of the story and found her mind wandering back to where it always went when left unattended. Her life was hectic and these seminars always took up too much time. She found herself organizing her schedule and planning her shopping list when she realized where she was. Her seminar was dedicated to making women understand how to get what they deserve, and that included attention and appreciation. Her daydreams had to be for private time. Meredith snapped back to attention and zeroed in on Jamie. She had a job to do, no matter how routine it might be.

"...I always find myself getting lost in his eyes, imagining our lives together, just me and him. I know it probably sounds crazy, or like I am one of those obsessive women who get a crush and can't move on, but it's like I feel way down deep in my gut somewhere that we are meant to be together. It's like you've found a home away from home, and everything is just so comfortable with him. Do you know what I mean? We spend so much time together, we are always smiling and having fun, we argue sometimes but hardly ever really fight. It seems so perfect, but for some reason all the pieces can't fall into place. I want to be with him, it's all I ever think about, but I can never understand why he just doesn't make a move. Maybe he doesn't like me, maybe friends is all he will ever want to be, but maybe there is more and he is just scared to ruin what we have. I feel so confused all the time, everything is just so frustrating..." Jamie's rant continued. Now that her gates were open, the flood was an unstoppable force pouring out.

As Jamie's story went on, Meredith found herself in quite familiar territory, not because it was a story she had heard a thousand times before, but because it was one she had lived through. Jamie

spoke of the best friend that she wanted to have more with, the boy who she spent every day with but longed to spend every night with. As the detail in Jamie's story became more vivid, Meredith's mind began racing through her memory until it focused in on him, with his hair caught in the warm summer breeze and his placid blue eyes sparkling in the glow of the sun. Jamie poured out her heart and soul on that stage, crying over the love that was never returned, but holding on to the bond of friendship that she could never live without. It was as if she had hurt so much when she was around him because she could not have him, but hurt more without him there simply because he was missing. Jamie's life had become one of choosing the lesser of two great pains. Meredith knew this feeling. She understood this feeling. Meredith even understood the perspective of the man in this situation, that was her job after all. She knew exactly what she needed to say to Jamie, because not only was it her job, but also because it was the same words she told herself every morning and the same words her friends crammed into her brain every night when she called them in tears. Jamie kept going, afraid to let go of the friendship she still has with her best friend, but too scared to hold on, too damaged to decide. It was up to Meredith to give Jamie all the answers. It was Meredith's choice now.

Tell Jamie she deserves better, to make peace with their friendship and move on, or tell her to hold on to something they were both hoping was meant to be and would find a way. In any other situation, this would be a no-brainer. Meredith could take out her typical script and go to Jamie with authority. You are a person too, with feelings and emotions. You need to take care of yourself. You have been holding on for too long, you must get on living your life. You cannot wait around forever. If this were truly meant to be, there would be a way for it to work itself out in the future. You cannot make it happen. Let go and live on. Meredith had given the speech a thousand times, to wives and ex-wives, to girls in the worst relationships, and to girls looking for relationships with the worst kind of men. It was easy then to tell them how ridiculous they were being, to show them the common sense side of the world and force them into it. However, this shy, quiet, lost and confused girl that so quickly went from looking like her high school friend to being her own reflection; she was not so easy to tell. Meredith wanted to tell this poor girl that if you keep trying, if you just keep holding on and show him how wonderful you are, then he will come around. He will sit down one morning, drinking his coffee and talking to his wife and suddenly realize, this life is wrong. He will know then that you were the one for him and he will stand up, grab his car keys, and come find you. You will get him and you will live happily ever after because sometimes life can be like a fairytale.

Meredith wanted to say this more than she wanted to say anything in her entire life, but how honest would that speech be? If

Meredith gave the necessary and proper advice to Jamie, would she have to give the same advice to herself? Meredith quickly became one of the typical women in the audience, the one that listens and pines over every word she says, the one that understands the truth when it is thrown in her face, but the one who still cannot follow the right path when it is laid out in front of her. Meredith became one of the women who lost her independence.

There was not a solitary breath in the room; everyone was waiting for Meredith to speak. She looked Jamie in the eye, a hard look that Meredith had never used before during a seminar, but this wasn't a typical seminar anymore. Meredith tried to speak, she took in a much-needed breath, but the words backed up in her throat as if she was choking, like a fish out of water. Meredith saw Jamie tense up. Jamie was prepared for the straight truth and Meredith knew she had to give it to her. That was her job. Meredith removed herself from the picture. She became the host she needed to be and not the person she had so recently become. At the end of her typical speech, Meredith's face was white and unwavering. Jamie just stared. The audience erupted in an explosion of applause. Meredith had said what they all needed to hear.

Jamie finished her story as Meredith's mind was racing for a solution to her dilemma. There was no solution. Lunchtime finally arrived as Jamie descended from the stage. She did not pause on the last step and smile in Meredith's direction. Meredith did not have a plastic smile waiting for her anyway.

Both women were left alone and shaken, not knowing what was ahead of them. Would either one of them have the strength to let go or the ability to hold on? Meredith stood up and walked off stage, mustering a half smile for the women still looking up to her. Her publicist was waiting for her back off stage right and led her around to the star dressing room where a classy lunch tray waited for her. Meredith sat in the dark blue velvet chair, wide-eyed and empty. She did not eat her tuna salad. She could only bring herself to slowly unscrew the plastic water bottle sitting in front of her and sip the cool water. Meredith needed to end the seminar early; there would be no second half after lunch. She was lost and broken. His face was still flashing across her mind. Every moment they shared together was preserved perfectly for her to see, as if she could relive it all whenever she wanted.

Meredith had called him last week, but his wife answered. She said she would give him her message. That night Meredith went back to the hotel and crawled under the covers of her freshly serviced king-sized bed, crying as she waited for the phone call she knew would never come. As the minutes ticked away on the clock, she stared at the blue pinstriped suit laid out, ready and waiting for tomorrow's seminar.