

# Narrative writing – the girl on the walkway essay



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At first, I thought she was drunk. She walked like she was drunk. Anywhere else but college, the sight of someone drunk at ten in the morning would be odd. At Fairfax University, it means it must be a school day.

As I got closer to this girl, I noticed her hand to her ear. I understood why she was zigzagging from one side of the cobblestone walkway to the other. She wasn't drunk; she was on the cell phone. Still, I had seen people walking and talking on cell phones before, and most of them could at least maintain a straight line.

Not this girl. I watched the people on the walkway avoid her. The people coming at her made sure to give her a wide berth, and those walking in her direction would have to do a stutter step before deciding which way to walk around her. Her meandering made it difficult to tell which way she would sway next. I knew that soon I would have to make my decision on how to walk around her unpredictable gait. When I got to about ten feet from her, I began to overhear the conversation she was having on the phone. I never find myself interested in what anyone has to say during his or her private phone conversation in the middle of the public thoroughfare, but after watching this girl walk like she was wounded for the last ninety seconds, my curiosity was piqued.

I thought she might have been trying to figure out what happened the night before. Maybe she woke up in a stranger's dorm room, or one of the frat houses. "No, that's not why," she said softly. Noticing she was drifting towards the right, I decided to pass her on the left, though oncoming human traffic would make this more difficult than I thought.

As I managed to avoid bumping into her and a guy who trudged in the opposite direction, I heard her say into the phone, “ It’s just not going to work. I’m sorry.” I realized that she was breaking up with someone, probably in the worst possible way: on the phone—a cell phone, in public, on the way to her car. I wondered if this was the state of modern love.

Walking past, I looked at her out of the corner of my eye. She sniffled and seemed to stare hundreds of yards into the distance. It was a wonder that she stayed on the walkway at all. “ No, it’s not you,” she said, much to my disbelief. I waited and was not disappointed when I heard, “ It’s me.

” I started walking slowly in front of her, just within earshot. I knew there was no chance of her walking past me, or even of her noticing that I was walking as slow as her. I just wondered why, if she really cared for the person on the other end of the phone, she was breaking up on the phone? But, if she did not care for this person, why did she seem so devastated?“ I know, that’s not why,” she said. “ No, Michael.

” She sounded almost as if she were about to break. I began feeling guilty for listening and sympathetic towards this poor girl, and pity for Michael. “ Please, don’t say that,” she pleaded, and she started crying. I almost felt compelled to see if she was okay, finding it difficult to walk by someone crying without addressing it. I slowed down and turned my head slightly, just enough to see her with the cell phone firmly planted to her head.

I realized that I could do nothing for her. Though she was in my world, I was not in hers. In her reality, she wasn’t even in public; she was in her mind,  
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the most private sanctuary, picturing all the good times she had with Michael, seeing his tears, feeling his sadness, wishing there was another way, but not finding it. We shared the same path, but were separated by circumstance and intentions. I increased my pace and soon the girl was yards behind me on the walkway. As I emerged from the shadow of the oak trees and crossed the side street, I looked back to see the girl still walking erratically, still holding the cell phone firmly to her head, and still being avoided by the people walking by her in both directions.

No one stopped or even looked twice at her. Ten minutes later, after driving out of the parking garage and onto the road that passes back through campus, I saw the same girl waiting to cross the street. She was still on her phone. I sat in my car at the red light as she crossed directly in front of me. I wanted to hug her, tell her everything would be okay, offer hope. Instead, having no time to spare, I drove home and started on my homework.