

Last Night I Saw My Life Onstage

By Yolanda Williams

NOTES

Written as a personal, narrative poem, the free-verse style allows a performer to also consider using this piece of literature as a Dramatic Interpretation. This poem is about connection. The performer should connect with her audience as viably as the young woman in the poem connects with the lyrics sung onstage by Billie Holliday. Play the vulnerability, likeability, courage, and hope, as the young woman finds comfort and refuge in the lyrics and determined spirit of an American icon.

Have you ever had the feeling
You were the only one in the world
Who felt the way you felt?
Hurt the way you hurt?

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Ever dream you would
Have more money?
Be lucky in love?
Be happy?

I always felt alone.

Last night my life changed.
Last night I saw my life onstage.



I am in Philadelphia visiting an aunt.
The truth is I am on a break.
My boyfriend and I have been having a little trouble.
I thought it best to leave when he started getting
Physical.



Well, it's Saturday night,
And I haven't been to a club in forever and a day.
I told my aunt I wouldn't be out too late,
But I heard there was going to be a singer
At a club just a few blocks away.
I just had to see her.



Ray, that's my boyfriend.
He doesn't allow me to listen to the radio.
There is no music allowed in his house.

But last night my life changed.
Last night I saw my life onstage.



When I got to the club,
The room was filled with rapture.
Everyone was smiling.
Laughing.
Happy.

I got myself a drink,
And heard, repetitively, the name
Billie Holiday.

*-Billie's coming tonight
-Can you believe we'll hear her sing?*

Billie Holiday.

I got as close as I could to the stage.
If I was going to see the Billie Holiday,
I wanted to be able to smell her perfume.



When Billie walked onstage,
The club erupted in volcanic applause.
She walked to the microphone
Wearing a straight-hemmed, black dress
And a white gardenia in her hair.

As the cat calls and shrieking whistles continued,
She spoke to the crowd.

*If I don't have friends, then I ain't nothing!
Tonight, I am among friends.*

There was a healthy chorus of *Amen's* and *That's right!*
After thanking the accompanist, a Mr. Artie Shaw,
She began to sing a song she introduced as *Summertime*.