

## Essential Loneliness

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### 'The Voice on Your Left'

For a while now I've had my voice on the market. It's been sold on tape for things like web ad's and low action video game characters that speak an abstract language full of program commands that a gamer, watch out! can repeat with a mouse-click, endlessly and, if he didn't go this way... we should check the caves. My face never appears on screen and there are no credits to let you know who that voice was. Don't mistake this job for anything it isn't, glamour has no place in the airless, foam-walled, carpeted rooms in which I stand from time to time for a few bucks. There is some kind of black liquid coming out from under that door, Sir, I wouldn't touch that if I were you. My voice is a tool completely (supposedly) disconnected from my life and work. If you heard my voice on these recordings talking over pictures of playing children and a dog in a top-hat, you probably wouldn't even recognize it. The money is all right, but there are times when my voice comes back at me through the monitor, if my husband knew how closely we operated (conspiratorial smile—so it sounds like it) he'd never let me set foot in the Office Mart, and I ask myself how much and what exactly, have I sold?

What I didn't know about my voice before I started letting other people use it, was that the sound uttered by me, my speaking-voice, is literally inseparable from my inner-voice. As a completely untrained, inexperienced actress, I'd always assumed there was nothing to it. It turns out that unless what I'm saying rings true to my deepest self, my inner-voice won't play along. When this happens: my speaking voice sounds false, on your left, the studio sound-takes increase, on your left, the Captain's wife on the black leather couch on the other side of the sound-glass window with the bluetooth glowing through her curls starts talking, on your left, into her hair, on your left, and leans over the console monitor to consult, stop, the sound tech. Millions of people suffer from anxiety every day. Millions of people don't have to. Then I reach for the water.

To read this script and convey tenderness, I make a distorted inner-voice translation. Millions of people don't have to. It is as if this personally conflicting content were a foreign language. When I read, I want to be close to my bank, my inner voice is saying, I could really go for a pastrami on rye with melted Swiss. I want to be inspired by my bank, turns into, tomorrow I am not getting out of bed. I let myself believe the spoken words because I believed those words mean something else entirely. The result is a voice that rings like an embrace.

Do you ever find yourself looking in the mirror feeling like your skin belongs to someone else? That the train you're on is moving in the wrong direction? Your boyfriend just left you for his computer console and your yogurt has never tasted sweeter. When you ask yourself if this is right, and time is on your side, you've come to the right place. John, hasn't been to the Dr. in years. We sell what we can, when we can, if we can. Captain, there's no time! If you're still with me, listen in, Sir Walter, Sir, I've got a feeling we'll be meeting again quite soon. It's hardly much to speak of, just a job, just some time for a dime. I've always found that expression is like shooting fish in a barrel, to be quite violent and gross. It means, that you are doing something very easy and reaping great benefits, but the image is vile. Who would want to eat those fish, all shot up and messy? Captain, we've been down this road before.

– Adrian Williams, August 2014