

IN A WORD

by

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(Darkness. Nothing happens for several moments. Then there is a sigh, and a cigarette lighter is lit. It illuminates a woman's face (CHAR). She stares at the flame for a second, then lights a cigarette, inhaling. She exhales, letting the smoke drift around the flame for a moment, before blowing out the match. Pause. The tip of the cigarette brightens as Char inhales through it. Pause.)

CHAR

I avoid most social functions these days. Or try to. There's just too many damn people there.

(slight pause)

And I generally avoid the phone when it rings. It's usually someone I don't want to talk to. With nothing but stupid questions. Like, how am I?

(slight pause)

Hell, I avoid the light when I can. There's nothing much I want to see these days.

(pause)

But I'm being rude.

(The lights come up slowly and dimly, revealing CHAR sitting alone in a chair. She holds her cigarette in one hand and an ashtray in the other.)

CHAR

Sorry. I'm not used to company lately. Conversation's just too draining. Takes too much out of me, trying to talk about . . . well, about just about anything. Because nothing matters anymore, you know. I mean, look at the world. Nothing means anything, so what's the point in talking? Words are pretty much useless.

(slight pause)

I've got no use for them at any rate. I mean, you'd think they were pretty simple things, but no, they come loaded

with expectations, obligations, and whatever. Just like

CHAR (CONT.)

people. People who want to stick some neat label on you. But I don't trust them anymore. People or words. They're biased.

(slight pause)

What, you think I'm wrong? Just look at the words we use everyday. Male. Female. Man. Woman. Like that's all women are. Extensions of men. Defined by men. The least verbal people on the planet.

(slight pause)

And it's not just that. There's waiter, waitress. Actor, actress. It's even our names. Don. Ah. Paul. Ah. George. Ah. I mean, I could go on, but you can think for yourself. Right?

(slight pause)

Yeah, I know. You think I'm angry. That I'm a little . . . "overwrought?" That's what my sister-in-law, Julie says. Well, I've got a word for her too. But since I used it the last time she was here she hasn't come by or called again.

(slight pause)

If I knew that was all it'd take, I'd've called her a cunt years ago.

(slight pause)

Sorry. Maybe she's right.

(slight pause)

Maybe I don't give a fuck.

(slight pause)

But really, how many words go the other way? The only one I can think of is widower. Can you think of another word that's female, and you add something to make it male? Widow? That's the word we get? Gee thanks, but you can keep it.

(slight pause)

And the definition of that word is a woman without a man. So even the one word we get refers back to men. What is it with you guys?

(shakes her head, smiling)

And how many men even call themselves widowers anyway?

(slight pause)

Of course, it's usually the men who do the dying first. You make sure of that. So, I guess there's more use for the word widow.

(slight pause)

CHAR (CONT.)

But, like I said, words are pretty useless anymore. They don't tell you anything you don't know the second a man in a dress uniform appears at your door.

(slight pause)

So, I don't need it, okay? I don't want your damn label or anything that comes with it. Okay?! So, just . . . !

(pause)

Just don't call me that. I don't need you to remind me. Like I could forget.

(The lights fade to black, leaving only Char's cigarette. It brightens as she inhales through it. Then it disappears as she stubs it out.)