

"Nobody - Nobody Special"

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He came upon her at the party. She was dressed so as to be forgettable, her makeup done blandly, her accessories commonplace. Her hair was a background shoulder-length brown, neither remarkably long, nor remarkably short. She was of average height, standing at his chest (he was rather tall), and of average posture. If there was anything distinctive about her at all, it was in her utter lack of distinctiveness.

And yet, he was somehow drawn to her.

She was standing in the midst of a rather large crowd, smiling politely, making small talk. She was decidedly part of the conversation despite the fact that no one seemed to ever address her directly.

She was a mystery, he concluded; a bland mystery in a little black cotton cocktail dress. He became determined to solve her.

He sidled up to her, tapping lightly on one peach-shaded shoulder.

"Excuse me, ma'am. I don't believe I know you," he declared, tilting his head politely.

She started, her smile slipping, replaced by a fleeting surprise. But then she smiled again, and he wondered if he had only imagined that expression leaving.

"Of course you know me," she replied, her voice of a medium timbre, indistinctive, like the rest of her. "I'm here, at your party, aren't I?"

He admitted to himself that she had a point, and then was confused that such a point could be made. There was a guest list! He had not put a single person on it that he did not know, and no one else had been told of the party; such had been his express instructions to his guests. He had even had his security guards double and triple check the identities of all the partygoers to ensure that his list was held to. How could she have a point? Should he call security on her?

She smiled wider, as though she knew the thoughts that flashed through his head. She extended her hand, unpainted nails glinting in the dim mood lighting.

"I'm Nobody - Nobody Special."

He took her hand and shook, now only further perplexed. She was joking, of course. Nobody named a child, well... Nobody.

"Of course..." he murmured, choosing not to voice his ruminations or give into the temptation to laugh aloud. "I'm Somebody Important."

"No, you're not," she replied promptly, hand still in his. "You're a somebody important. There are many of you."

He held her gray gaze, entranced by her mystical averageness.

"I see..."

"You do not believe me," she stated. "I do not blame you. Few people do... Fewer people ask."

"Ask what?" he demanded, startled.

"Anything."

He resolved that she was playing with him; it was the only explanation.

"Of course. I suppose they find it hard to swallow that Nobody Special is so... personable."

For that was what she was. She was charismatic in her classic invisibility, magnetic in her flattering focus. Besides that, she was intriguing, with all this talk of Nobody and somebodies.

But she was unmoved by his statement, accepting it with the air of one who has heard it all many times before and has grown bored with the inevitability of hearing it again. Instead, she tugged her palm from his fingers (for somehow he was still holding it) and tucked an errant strand of hair behind her ear.

"Odd, isn't it? But that's the point of me, you see. I must be personable, else all you somebody importants wouldn't bother with me at all."

He stared at her, a strange breeze on his tongue as his jaw hung open.

"Well," she explained, "You all know me. You talk about me often. That's the paradox of my existence. You know me, but you have forgotten me."

He nodded, having managed to manipulate his teeth and lips back into a barrier against flies.

Seeming to take that as encouragement, she continued.

"I am the background, the backdrop. I am in each and every life, and you do not appreciate me, but were I gone, I'd be sorely missed." She smiled again, eyes holding his without trepidation, as though she were speaking of the weather rather than a complex system of insanity. "Imagine, if you had to interact with one somebody important after another, no break, just importance after importance after importance!"

He twisted his head to the side, eyeing her from that angle in the hopes that the new perspective would produce more sense.

"Why, you'd die of stress! That's where I come in. I am there when you get tired of somebody important. Some people prefer my company more than that of others, actually. More people spend time with me." She was matter-of-fact, as though these were conclusions that could be reached through languid twitches of common sense. "So why shouldn't I be personable, despite the fact that I am not a person?"

"Of...course..." he drew out, not sure of his voice.

She glanced around the room, seeming, for the first time since he had approached her, aware of existences other than their own.

"I'd best be going. A somebody important wants to talk to you," she whispered confidingly. "It wouldn't be kosher for me to stay."

And with that, she turned and walked away.

He felt a tap on his shoulder and he turned to look. Immediately he smiled, pleased by the sight that greeted him.

"Who was that?" his girlfriend asked, looking after the average woman although she'd already disappeared, swallowed by the crowd.

"Oh, Nobody - Nobody Special." He plucked an appetizer off a passing tray. "Mushroom? They're very good tonight."