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HOME STAY: The Usual Suspects

A monologue comedy in one act

by

Jon Jory

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HOME STAY: The Usual Suspects

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CHARACTERS

5W / 2M / 2 Gender Neutral

NOBODY	<i>The Nobody</i>
CARR	<i>The Football Player</i>
DUSTI	<i>The Mean Girl</i>
LYNETTE	<i>The Student Leader</i>
HORATIO	<i>The Theatre Nerd</i>
TAB	<i>The Brain</i>
SOFIA	<i>The Cheerleader</i>
FLAME	<i>The Outlier</i>
SUE ANNE	<i>The Beauty</i>

SET

Nothing necessary

COSTUMES

Stereotypical contemporary

APPROXIMATE PLAYING TIME

28 minutes

AUTHOR'S NOTE

At the end of each monologue one actor simply replaces another.
The playing order may be changed, as may any word that offends.
The Beauty should conclude the play.

HOME STAY: The Usual Suspects

by Jon Jory

NOBODY

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody too?
Then there's a pair of us
Don't tell! They'd advertise – you know?
How dreary to be somebody!
How public – like a frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June
To an admiring bog!

That is just so perfect, right? That should be the national anthem of us nobodies. All of us. The whole bunch of us. Nobodies of the world unite! I think maybe in the life of us nobodies the high school years are the hardest. I mean when you are sixteen or seventeen to be a nobody seems like it's likely to be a life-long sentence. I think maybe I'm just the biggest nobody in Mount Claire High School. I don't think there are more than three or four people know my name. You don't, right? I'm Emma, which is a name nobody remembers no matter how often you tell them. My sister says it's Olivia, but I think Emma has that beat by a mile. We're the people who come from nowhere with no connections. Like me, I'm from Iowa and we just moved to New Jersey two years ago because my dad works in pharmaceuticals and for pharmaceuticals, New Jersey is like Hollywood. If you say you're from Iowa nobody knows what to say next. Silence reigns! I mean Montana, South Dakota, New Hampshire seem kinda exotic – gives you a little mystery, but Iowa all they think of is corn and corn is not a conversation starter. See nobodies aren't a bad thing or a good thing it's a no-thing. Nobody knows what to say to us so they just don't. I haven't had anybody ask me a question in two years except, "Where's the restroom?" We pretty much live in the big silence. We're good enough to get by, but not good enough to attract attention. Plus there's just not a lot to say to us. Now, I'm on the women's basketball team and I'm trying to work hard enough to be third string. I had a big night last Friday because I scored three points which set my all-time scoring record. I was pretty pumped, but nobody noticed or clapped me on the back or anything like that because what we do is just not noticeable. I don't know how many friends you have, but I have two. One is, naturally, named Arnold which is a name nobody likes to say because it just hurts your mouth. My other friend just came over from the Ukraine and her first name is Yelyzaveta, which no one ever tries because who knows how to say it? We share certain traits because not only are we average looking, but we're smart in a bad way. I mean we're good at stuff like chemistry and trigonometry and being good at those is like an insult to other people. Plus they are not conversation starters. "Hi, what do you feel about the inverse function of the tangent?" Or, "Aren't you excited about anisotropic emission from multilayered plasmon nano composites of isotropic semiconductor quantum dots?" Try that one as a come-on at an assembly. But what I'm beginning to think is that not being noticed might be an advantage.

This is Not the End of the Monologue
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CARR

(In a football uniform)

Yeah, I don't know, I'm not, you know qualified to uh... to speak about that. See, all I know is that it's my heart – football is. It's like what beats in my chest. Maybe it sounds dumb or not a serious thing, but it's what makes me feel most alive, you know? So I can't talk about if it should be that way. I only know it is for me. Like my sister, Wings? Well she's like insane about spicy chicken wings, so I call her that. She's actually Letti but... okay, her heart is a book. Seriously, she's even prettier when she reads a book – like somebody turned a light on inside her. It was my mom who said that but, hey, I get it. Yeah. She was reading some ancient kind of book, maybe it was called, I don't know, *War or No War*... no, *War and Peace*. That's it. Only it took up five books! Seriously it came in this set with five books. So you know, to kid her I hid the third book. I took it out and buried it in the backyard. Well, she went psycho-crazy-nuts. Really. She started hitting me with this box of Frosty Flakes and she tried to stab my football with a kitchen knife which, you know, didn't work out and she cut herself in the ear and my father, he had to restrain her and tied her to the mailbox for five minutes. It's a big story in the neighborhood. Over a book, right?! A book! So the deal isn't just that we fall in love with people, the heart wants what the heart wants! That's the deal. So, when they closed the school because of the, you know, infection thingy, there goes my football and my heart is broken. I'm saying, beyond repair, in a million pieces. I'm broken in pieces like a candy cane falls off a Christmas tree. Like *War and Peace* for my sister, right? And by the way, when I dig it up for her it's a little wet and pages are stuck together so that's another tragedy. It's like two years later and I'm still apologizing. Anyway, my mom seeing I am desolate, she sits me down and says, "Carr" – which is my name – "honey, you have to imagine the games. You have to run it through your head like game film of an imaginary game." And I see what she means, I could do that, but also see, you experience the game in your body so I wanted to get that into it. I wanted to feel the game not just run the film. So I asked mom and dad and Wings and my German Shepard Bruno to help me out and I made it as realistic as I could for myself. In the garage there's a bench and cabinets, right? Perfect locker room. Plus I get the guys to record some stuff like telling shady jokes and rapping and complaining about somebody took their towels, so I can pipe that in to the garage and then I burst into the house like I was coming out of the tunnel and I line up in the front hall to receive the kick-off – which is usually not what I do, but it's my game, right? So my mom tosses me the ball from the living room and I run through the TV room and the kitchen and am tripped up by a chair in the dining room which I figure is around the forty yard line. A pretty good runback, right? Now, I'm like the fullback, right, which in our offense is primarily a blocking back so the ball is snapped and it's a running play to the right and my dad appears and I knock him down, but the thing is our dog Bruno doesn't like that and he bites me, bites my face. I mean he's a good dog, but he's excitable. So I'm bleeding pretty good but, you know, it got my adrenaline up and you like the fans to see you're a little bloody. So we run. "Slice 42," which I carry the ball off tackle and I break through, but the linebacker is there so I give the old stiff arm in the face, but it turns out the linebacker is my mom and I knock her glasses off and they break in a gajillion pieces and my dad goes ape and grabs my hair and I'm ejected from the game into the basement, which is pretty creepy, and my dad doesn't let me out 'til midnight and when I go to bed Wings has poured a bottle of olive oil in between the sheets.

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DUSTI

DUSTI is a mean girl very concerned with her looks and her position.

Hi, Kayla, it's me, Dusti, with an "i" not a "y". We're so sorry to be zooming your application review instead of doing it in person, but it would be just too unfair to have you hanging. Can you see all of us? Donelle, Changa, Lorene, Stile with an "i" not a "y" and me, Dusti, the most attractive one on the left at the top? Oh good. Well, first of all I just want to say you look cuter than a bug in a rug! Doesn't she girls? You so do! I mean I love the layers! And the boots" Just too adorable. And the color of the boots matching the outfit is just too yummy. You should have gotten your hair blown out, but we can't have everything, can we girls? Anyway Kayla, we want you to know that we have gone over your "Mean Girl" application with a fine-toothed comb, though I must say with somewhat mixed results.

(Calls offstage)

Just a minute, mom, I told you I was busy and I don't want to have to tell you again!

(Back to)

I am so sorry, Kayla, to have to interrupt you, but my mom gets a little salty and forgets her place. Where were we? Oh yes. Well, I want to start with the good stuff to keep your spirits up. Let me see – oh yes. Now remember we score on a ten-point system, ten being the highest and we know how good you are at math. Not that that is very helpful, of course. So, let's see, your gossip score is quite high, an eight, and we just loved your caricature of Miss Kisselwhite, the computer skills teacher as a stork sitting in a nest made of numbers which was just way-glitzy. The really good news is your backstabbing score which is a nine with an upside! I do have to say that your backstabbing is, well, a tad indiscriminate as it has included calling me a "seven-faced looney tunes," but even there we give you points for originality. I certainly won't forget that one. Ooooo, that stings. A seven is slut-shaming, that's not bad, and a six in plain old every day envy, but we're sure you are on your way up there. Now Kayla, I want you to stop messing with your eye shadow and hear this good. I know it's hard to be stuck with dirty brown outhouse eyes, but there is no help for that girl, that is unfixable. Now some brown eyes are just deep like a well and sparkly, but that is not you honey-girl – not going to happen. Kayla, Kayla, Kayla your bullying score just sucks. We cannot find a single instance of sustained bullying in the month of October. A mean girl bullies, Kayla, that is just a fact and a necessity. Now, puh-leeze I want to make it clear that bullying is bad. We all know it is bad. But listen carefully, sometimes the only way bullies change their behavior is if mean girls bully them. I mean we are force for good and sometimes we have to make that clear by bullying a bully. We know that is controversial, but we must employ our full arsenal to maintain our leadership positions. Just look at Winston Churchill for example, now that man was a heroic bully and, pardon my saying so, so am I. I recently bullied Ritchie Harrison who was bullying sophomores which is a cheap shot. I mean sophomores are just hopeless. I mean bullying sophomores is like bench pressing a Kleenex, right? Now lastly, and most importantly, Kayla, you have a miserable two minus in using others to get ahead. I mean this is a category where you truly suck. I have to say, using the British term, you are an absolute plonker.

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LYNETTE

Hi everybody, I'm Lynette Cookson your new student body treasurer. Y'all remember my yard signs, right? The nice green ones with my name printed on the dollar bill? Or maybe you remember me from last year when I was student-faculty liaison? Or the year before that when I was vice president of the eighth-grade class and I got us those new cafeteria chairs that were ergonomic, which everybody wanted, but nobody knew what it meant. I know I'm cute, but I have a will to power. Down the road I'm pretty sure I'll be a feminist icon and a highly vetted vice-presidential candidate. See, only 3.4 percent of the population has an actual will to power so I'm not everybody's cup of tea. It became clear to me in kindergarten that in every situation there is somebody running things. We got this new blue plastic slide in our school play yard and Winnie Taffy, who always had this unpleasant expression, would stand up at the top and decide who could slide down. Every time I tried to climb up, she'd shout, "Get down from there toad girl!" And right then, like an electric shock, I decided to be the decider. You want to go down the slide you have to control the slide. Well, I right away figured that was a pretty straight forward problem. I just needed to get Winnie Taffy off that slide. Now my house backs up on a wood and my daddy told me I could play out there, but to look out for the poison oak. Now I noticed that poison oak had really pretty little white flowers in the spring so I went up the slide stairs with a bouquet of poison oak and gave it to Winnie and said it smelled nice and she kept putting her face in it looking for the smell. She was out of school for over a week and I just took over the slide. See it just seems strange to me that most people don't understand that power gives you agency. That just means you get what you want. How come people want things, but they just don't have any ever-lovin' idea how to get them? See most positions of power are not only boring, but they are a lot of work so people just go, "La, la, la" and go to the beach. They just don't want to go through the boredom to get to the perks. Take the President of the United States, which I will eventually be. Hey, you get to live in the White House which has 132 rooms including a bowling alley and a chocolate store! This is not to mention the fitness center, the tennis court, and the swimming pool. Heck, you got your own vegetable garden you don't have to take care of. You got your own helicopter and limousine and your own country home plus an executive chef, a movie theater and I'm not even talking about the pastry chef! And all you have to do to get that is to get Winnie Taffy off the slide. You have to do the boring stuff to get hold of the good stuff. And me, Lynette Cookson, your student body treasurer is going to bore herself right to the top. So on this day where I begin my official boring duties as class treasurer, I just wanted to say to y'all, so long sucker, see you in the rear-view mirror.

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HORATIO

(Wearing a tuxedo)

I'm Horatio. Yeah, I know, very weird name. Lot of people just call me Ratio, but my dad is like a Shakespeare nut so all the guys in my family back to my great grandfather have the names of characters in *Hamlet*. My dad is Bernardo and his dad was Francisco and great granddad, well he was Yorick. Yeah, Yorick, the skull the gravedigger finds and says was the King's Jester, and in great granddad Yorick's will it says his skull was to be given to my father, but if there was ever a local production of *Hamlet*, he wanted to be in it. And there was. The local community theatre did it and great grandpa was in it and he had a bio in the program. Now that's the definition of a theatre nerd, right? Your skull goes on acting. That whole thing got in *Time* magazine and since then great grandpa's skull has been in nine American productions and one in Taiwan. He's always a hit. We send great grandpa on tour. There is no way I'm not following that tradition. When I get a will I'm putting the same thing in my will. I'm going to be an actor until the world is destroyed by some wonky comet. I've been in every play and musical the high school has put on. I've even done plays in three other high schools when they were shorthanded. Now that we're shut in I put monologues on Facebook and stuff. Like this one. This is the monologue of my real life which is to be an actor in a monologue. See, I live in Deadwood, South Dakota where Wild Bill Hickok was killed in a saloon, so I'm just naturally dramatic. I also dress as a vampire, you know, black cape and everything and when there's a full moon I go stand on people's front lawns just to make their lives a little more interesting while they stay home. This one neighbor did take a shot at me, but luckily he missed and he put a hole through the windshield of his Jeep Cherokee. My dad said I had to call him and fess up – you know, pay for it and everything, but he said it was the best thing that happened to him since he had to stay home. See that's what an actor does, we rescue you from the ordinary. That's the gift we give. Otherwise this whole town would be boring themselves blue. You're probably wondering why I'm got up in a tuxedo? Well, I figured this was the perfect time to work on my Oscar acceptance speech which would be a good memory for the folks here in Deadwood when I do get one. So, here we go! Thank you, thank you! I can't tell you what a thrill this is. Getting Oscar, who could have imagined? I want to thank all the great competitors in my category, but I also have to say I deserve it. My work is simply better, more imaginative, and more deeply felt. There's just nobody really in my league. The best deserves the best, right?

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TAB

Everybody calls me Tab as in T-A-B, the annoying brain, which is annoying, right? I mean since when do you become a joke because you know stuff? I mean come on, right? Let's just lay this sucker on the line, knowledge is power – which was originally said by Sir Francis Bacon in the sixteenth century. Well, actually he said, “Ipsa scientia potestas est,” which to be absolutely correct means, “knowledge itself is power.” You know, Bacon, right? Lord Chancellor of England? Anyway, I'm sure you know his methods were based upon inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning? You're looking a little blank here. Inductive reasoning allows you to form generalizations based on your experience and observation. You know, as in “Benny is a barber and Benny is bald therefore all barbers are bald.” You know that one, right? I mean the Egyptians had barbers back in 5,000 BC and they cut your hair with oyster shells. Cool, huh? You know what opening oysters is called? Oyster shucking. Yeah. Oyster shucking which, by the way, is a competitive sport. Yeah, the championship takes place in Galway, Ireland and attracts oyster shuckers from all over the world. Galway's in the west of Ireland where the first humans showed up about 12,500 years ago, but by the late fourth century Christianity was replacing Celtic polytheism though still under pressure from Viking raids. And by the way, Vikings were heavily tattooed and tattooing of human skin started back with the body of Otzi the iceman somewhere around 3,000 BC.

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SOFIA

SOFIA wears a cheerleading outfit and starts out with pompoms.

Who's got the spirit?
Who do? Who do?
We've got the spirit!
We do! We do!

The crowds loved that one. I mean I can't even explain what that feels like. Maybe two thousand people, all excited like crazy saying what you tell them to, all at once? I mean that sends the old chills down the spine. Seriously. "We do, we do." And then they all cheer at the end like I did a really good job. Me, I did a good job! I always want more than anything for my mom to say I did a good job. Cleaning my room. Washing the car. It means a lot when she says that. But two thousand people? That just fills me up with some kind of goodness. I'm just sure you would love that if they cheered for you like that. But see, it's the attention afterwards, after the game. When I like walk into the cafeteria people look up from their cheeseburgers and tapioca. And that means I'm somebody and I never was somebody before. I mean, I've done a lot of failure. I don't know if you have or not. I know you are supposed to learn from it, right? Learn from failure? But for me it's like, I don't know, having these steel strings attached to me. Attached to my brain and my heart and my spine even, and failure just pulls on those strings toward the ground 'til I can hardly look up. It bends my spirit down 'til I can't even stand straight. It's bad. What have I failed at? What haven't I? I took ballet classes from Miss Benneby from third grade on, but I never got cast in *The Nutcracker* at Christmastime. Well, one time as a mouse, but that was just worse in a way. Kids at school started calling me, "Eek, Eek." They'd all say that when I walked down the hall. I would have cried, but I didn't want to give them the satisfaction. So I stared them down, but it cost me on the inside. I had boyfriends, but they didn't treat me nice. They said lies about me, but I don't want to get into that. It never seemed like I could satisfy my dad, but he comes to every game I cheer at and I like that. I do. But that's coming to an end, you know? I graduate this year and then I'll be back to being a nobody. I can't do the acrobatics enough to be on a cheer team in college. I look nice enough, but I don't stop the traffic. I'm not in that percentile where it's oooo-la-la, if you follow my point. So then, who am I? All right, I know it's terrible to say this, but I'm used to being hot. I know, I know, it's in a small pond, but it exists. Come on. Like the wise one says, "Once you've been hot it's a pain to be not." Seriously. See, I've been on both sides of this. I've been an invisible non-person and I've hears two thousand people cheer for me. Before I just accepted my nonpersonhood, my supporting castness, my blend-in, my "yeah, she's alrightness," but now I've been to the promised land and I am going to resent that nobody will give me that "wow, you're a cheerleader" look when I come in. So anyway, I have this idea. I'll be characters. I'll rent costumes. So like one day I'll be on the campus as Cleopatra and the next day maybe Queen Elizabeth. I'll do it like once a week so I don't run out of historical women and I'll go to class like that and I'll get that look.

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THE OUTLIER

No, no, I hear you, okay? I get it. I'm down. I hear you tapping out the message on the prison wall, but you have to understand we are not coming from the same place, okay? Now first of all, you are right – you are dead right. I am looking for attention. You have me nailed to the barn door. I am an attention junkie. Guilty as charged, write me out the ticket! But see, so are you. We just go about it different. You buy into the system and then you get the attention you want by excelling in the system. Like you just got that award for never having missed a day in school. See, I'm going to give you a hand for that.

(Applauds)

You go, girl! Whoooo! All right! Plus you have been celebrated for having participating in all twenty-three available school endorsed, extra-curricular activities. See that is a marathon I just can't run. See, the system, just doesn't turn me on. The system is so boring and predictable that it flat out gives me hives. It does. I got an outbreak right now that is driving me crazy! There is just something in me that gets hives from repetition. Let's just take breakfast for an example. Now are you seriously telling me that for 81.1 years, which is the current life expectancy for an American woman, I have to eat a piece of toast and two scrambled eggs for 29,656 mornings? Lord have mercy! Just thinking about that makes me a raving lunatic. And to top it off you have to do that 29,000 times with a fork! Allow me to ask you why it has to be with fork? How about Monday I do it with a fork and Tuesday with a pair of pliers and Wednesday with a ping pong paddle, Thursday barehanded, Friday I have you feed 'em to me, Saturday I make a little elevator that carries them up to my mouth and Sunday I get those scrambled eggs fed to me by a trained baboon? See I don't mind the stay-at-home order because I can change things around without all you system freaks getting a termite up your nose. I don't want one job for 80 years; I don't want one apartment for 80 years. I don't want one hair color or one lover or one country or one anything you can put on the list. And worst of all, I don't care that I'm not doing it the right way, and yes, I like the attention I get for it. I'm a diva. Live with it! Life is scary, that's a given, but I don't want to take the scare out of it by not living it and if that makes me scary, well, bring it on. Hey, Bridie, does your family have a shrimp fork? I need a shrimp fork only not for shrimp.

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THE BEAUTY

Oh, I got the beauty, there's just no two ways about it. I had it since baby-childhood. My mom, who was a semi-beauty, says she couldn't hardly take me for a walk in the baby carriage, because I just literally stopped traffic and I been stopping traffic ever since. I mean if I'm standing on a corner because of a red light, the traffic with the green just stays there stunned by my personal radiance. Now, listen, I don't commit the sin of pride over it, but I don't hide it under a bushel basket either. I'm just a treat and I have to respect that. Now I didn't just come down with A+ physical appearance, but I pretty much have B+ brains. You put those two things together, I was just born to dominate. I mean that in a good way. I'm pretty much on the earth to justify humanity. Now I know I'll never marry because this level of radiance belongs to everybody, you know, like what they call a natural resource as, you might say, the National Park system. I need to be visually available to all. I would have to say it's a daunting responsibility because when I'm in one place other places have to get along without me. Strong men weep when I move on and I have to keep myself in motion. I would have to admit to you that it's exhausting. I sometimes walk twenty miles a day to provide as many people as possible with the thrill. Sometimes I'm in too much pain so my brother Franklin drives me around in our Mini-Cooper convertible and I wave and blow kisses until the arm cramps shut me down. I'm what you might call a beauty-athlete. A category that cries out for inclusion in the Olympic Games. Now that is why the need to stay home and stay safe necessity has been so painful for so many Americans, because I'm not out there. A life without my beauty is a tough row to hoe. There are plenty of garden variety beauties out there, but nothing transcendent. I do my level best. I stand on my porch and wave to the endless stream of cars from 10 am to 3 pm or until my legs cramp up. But as you can imagine, that is just a drop in the proverbial bucket.

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