

## Finding Light

It was dark, perfectly dark. A weary sadness hung in the air, echoes of past visitors trailing around like a promise for the memories of tomorrow. It may as well have been a trick of the light, some dust in the wind, a thought in the mind. It knew it was real, even if no one could see. It knew it was real; it had to be. Isolated and alone, small and afraid. If anyone cared enough to look, there wouldn't be much to see. It was no more than a shadow, a silhouette, a figure. It bore no true features, a blurred face and a fear-encased form. It was Nobody.

The hallways were bustling and bright as joy and excitement radiated from the walls. The space was aglow with emotion and overflowing with person, not merely the physical beings but their hopes and their dreams as well. Hidden amongst all the light, Nobody walked. It trailed against the walls, not daring to step further into the crowd's bubbling wholeness that claimed every vacant space. It envied them, casting bitter waves of jealousy and hurt. How could they be so open, so unguarded and free. The puzzle of their society had come with a broken piece.

The silence that hummed from their figure was jarring; everybody naturally shied away from it. Everybody but Light. Light was warm, Light was sunny, Light was welcoming and secure and complete. Light did not share the same ragged holes that were torn into Nobody. Light was discovered. Light was somebody. When Nobody slunk around the clearing, thriving in untouched corners, Light did not edge away. She did not grimace and turn around, searching for a sunnier, happier space. Instead, Light turned to Nobody, and she smiled. Nobody did not smile back. How could they, with no features and no form. They just watched Light slowly dim, contemplating the lack of response, probably giving up. Nobody wouldn't blame her, why would anybody bother with them if they wouldn't even bother with themselves?

Nobody sat in their silence, unable to move past her shadowy prison. They sat for weeks, long weeks, lonely weeks, silent weeks. Well, almost silent. Everyday Light bustled over and spread her joy across the space. Light's joy never dared to venture into Nobody's silence, but its simple presence was enough to make Nobody nervous. Nobody wanted to speak to Light, they wanted to try. But no matter the strength of her will, words would not form. With no mouth, no face, how could they expect the words to come? Nobody liked being near Light, she was warm and glowing, not searingly blinding but accepting and true. Light was warm, not bright. Light was patient, she might not have shared Nobody's fear, but she worked to understand them, she hoped to relieve some of the burden. The effort was unspoken but clear, Nobody hoped their gratitude was the same.

Together they stayed, the day and the night. The conflicting atmosphere should have been chaotic; it should have been a disaster... but it wasn't. It was peaceful, in a way. Nobody's silence rolled from her form, met by Light's glow with acceptance rather than scrutiny. There was no judgement from either side, though the two didn't understand each other. Day in and day out Light would talk, spinning story after story. Nobody wasn't in those memories, but it didn't matter. It made her feel whole. It wasn't long before Nobody found that she considered Light a friend. It was odd, to yearn for the presence of another after so long alone. It was strange to find comfort in her smile and joy in her laugh. As Light embraced her darkness, the silhouette that confined her began to fracture.

The cracks kept coming, all subtlety abandoned. Nobody wasn't concerned with them though, surely nothing could get through the stillness that surrounds her. Light would smile, Nobody would smile back. Light was so happy, and Nobody was beginning to hope... well, it was silly to

hope. She was a shadow, nothing more. Shadows did not feel anything. She knew this well, yet a defiant glow had started inside her, a discrete sign that she had moved from where she started.

Nobody felt peace. The shadow, which once would have faded in Light's glow, smiled alongside her. Light knew she was real, even if no one else did. She was more than a thought; she was a conscious being. No longer isolated and not alone, she was spirited and happy. Despite her discovery, 'Nobody' faded away. Now, she was present and real; she was something to be seen. She was more than the shadow she had always been. Her self-made prison had cracked; she was released from her isolation. She had a freckled face and a warm yellow glow, not bright and sparkling like Light was, but warm and comforting. A glow that knew a past of struggle and had fought to move forward. Light had helped her find the pieces she buried within herself so long ago. She was somebody.

-Abbey Phelan