

NOBODY

A TEN MINUTE MONOLOGUE

By Dennis Bush

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SYNOPSIS: A community service project for school brings 17-year-old Georgia face to face with the father who walked out on her and her mom four years earlier. Struggling with memories that weigh her down and make her feel unworthy of a relationship with her wealthy boyfriend, Georgia is overwhelmed by her past on a collision course with her present.

GEORGIA (f)17, a high-school student who has survived more than many people experience in a lifetime

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Reading: New York City, March 2013

Premiere: Phoenix, AZ, April 2013

Both the reading and the premiere performance featured Meggy Lykins as Georgia.

AT RISE:

Lights up on GEORGIA, 17, as she braids her own hair. Clear-eyed and with a no-nonsense attitude, she struggles with circumstances that leave her weighed down sadness and feeling unworthy.

GEORGIA: It was a school project. (*Clarifying.*) Community service – for my social studies class. That’s why I was at the soup kitchen. (*Quickly, awkwardly.*) I don’t know why I was surprised that they were actually serving soup at a soup kitchen. But it seemed a little strange to be handing people bowls of steaming hot soup on a very warm day at the end of April. Though I guess, when you’re homeless, food is food whatever temperature it is. (*Simply.*) We went through five really big pots of soup. I was surprised how many people were there. And I was surprised when my dad showed up. (*A quick beat.*) He didn’t recognize me, but I knew it was him. I could tell right away, as soon as I saw his face. He looked like he was halfway invisible, like he wasn’t dead but he wasn’t really alive, either. (*Pause; a breath; facts, not emotions.*) He hasn’t lived with my mom and me for almost four years. It got too hard to have him around. He was taking the rent money – which almost got us evicted. And he stole stuff from our neighbors. It was always something and it wasn’t getting any better. Sometimes, when I came home from school, I’d find him drunk or high or both, laying in a heap, in the hallway in front of our apartment door. I’d take him inside and get him cleaned up and put him to bed before my mom got home. It was like he needed me. That’s how it felt—like he needed me. It was quiet and it was just him and me and I took care of him and he needed me. I imagined the things he would say to me, if he could. I believed that he was glad I was there to take care of him. Him never told me that, but I believe it’s true. And I’m pretty sure he loved me. As much as he could. But it got too hard to have him around. Him and my mom fought a lot. When he was awake. And in the apartment. Arguing with somebody who’s drunk or high is frustrating. They don’t make sense and they laugh when you tell ‘em they need to get it together because they have responsibilities. They get drunk or high to *avoid* responsibilities – and everything else. My mom told him he was like a little kid. But she was wrong. I was a little kid

when I was packing my dad's lunch in the morning and cleaning up his vomit in the afternoon. Back when he had a job. Then he stopped going to work, just like he stopped coming home. My mom never kicked him out. He just stopped coming home. He didn't say goodbye. No note. No nothing. No more dad. *(Pause.)* Until I looked into his eyes when I handed him a bowl of soup. *(A quick beat.)* I may have gasped. I'm pretty sure I gasped. But nobody noticed. If somebody had noticed, I'd have noticed them noticing, so I'm pretty sure nobody noticed. Tripp was working in the kitchen, so he wasn't even in the same room. *(Explaining.)* Tripp is my boyfriend. We met at a *Partnership in Education* program – where a private school is paired up with a public school and like five kids from each school get together and talk about issues and stuff. Tripp was one of the private school kids. We started off just being friends. I teased him about his name. I thought he'd gotten it because he was clumsy. Turns out Tripp is a pretty common nickname for guys who are “the third.” Tripp's grandfather is senior. His dad is junior, and Tripp is Thomas Waverly Richardson III. *(A quick beat.)* He's not from my neighborhood. He lives on the Upper East Side with his family. They have a townhouse. The *whole* townhouse. *(Quick pause.)* They've got a place in the Hamptons, too. And a condo in Colorado, for when they go skiing. I've never been skiing. Never been to the Hamptons, either. Tripp wants to take me. He says his parents told him it would be okay. His parents are nice. I've been to their house for dinner. They have a formal dining room. That's where they eat dinner. They have a maid or waitress – I'm not sure what they call her – who serves the food and cleans up after. And they have a lady who cooks for them. *I cook for myself.* And I eat in front of the TV. Alone. My mom works 3 to 11, six days a week. That's 3:00 in the afternoon till 11:00 at night. She's a nurse's aide. So she's asleep when I'm awake or at work when I'm home and at home when I'm at school. Tripp hasn't met her yet. It's been a scheduling thing. He hasn't been to my apartment, either. That's so people don't get the wrong idea. Really. At some point – on a Sunday or a holiday or sometime – when my mom is home and we've had a chance to clean the apartment, he'll come over. Maybe once it's dark so the graffiti on the building is less

noticeable, but not before it's so late that the nighttime people are hanging around doing sketchy things. So, at some point in that window of opportunity, Tripp will come over and meet my mom and that'll be that. But, until then, I'll just keep meeting him at the movies when we go to a movie or at the restaurant when we go out to eat. It's just easier that way. Avoiding conflict isn't being passive or weak, it's smart and diplomatic. So when the lady who's in charge of the soup kitchen told the volunteers that we could either take around trays of dessert and mingle with the homeless people or we could help with the clean up, I decided to be useful in the kitchen. I knew more people would want to serve dessert and talk to the homeless people, so I figured somebody had to balance that out. And I was right. Five girls grabbed the dessert trays and starting working the room. They were chatting and asking questions. People were laughing. I don't know whether they were laughing *at* them or *with* them, but the homeless people were definitely laughing as the girls circulated with the red velvet cake and vanilla ice cream. The lady in charge told us not to clean off the tables until after the people had left. She didn't want anyone to feel like they were being hurried out of the soup kitchen. She said we needed to provide them with the same kind of dignity and respect that they'd get if they were at a fine-dining restaurant. They were our guests and we were not to make them uncomfortable or feel unwelcome. So, I didn't grab any of the silverware off the tables or take any of their plates, but I did reach down to pick up a fork that'd dropped on the floor. When I stood back up, I noticed that my dad wasn't where he'd been sitting. His place at the table was empty. (*Pause.*) I exhaled for what seemed like the first time since I'd seen him. It was like I'd been holding my breath the whole time, not sure what was going to happen. I turned to head back into the kitchen and there was my dad – standing so close to me that I, if I'd taken a step, I would have bumped into him. We just looked at each other for what felt like an hour, but was probably ten seconds – which can still be a long time, when you're just looking at somebody. And, then, my dad said something. He asked me a question. "Do you miss me?" (*A quick beat.*) I wanted to say, "Yes." I opened my mouth, like I was going to say, "Yes," but no words came out. I made a sound: "Oh,"

and I think my dad thought I said, “No.” But it was definitely, “Oh,” like, “Oh, you do know who I am. You remember me. You still feel connected to me in some way that all the alcohol and drugs couldn’t take away.” But none of that thought process got conveyed to him. He just heard, “Oh” and thought it was, “No,” and he said, “I’m sorry.” He was crying and he didn’t wipe away the tears. He just let them run down his face. I felt so bad that he was crying – that he was crying because of what he thought I said. At the same time, I was ticked off. Why does he get to make me feel guilty? (*Getting angrier.*) Why does he get to be the one who cries? Anybody who’s watching would think I said something to make him cry – which I didn’t. (*Furious.*) So I said, “You *should* be sorry.” Because he’s the one who made a mess of his life – and mine – and then just stopped coming home. And if I hadn’t been in the soup kitchen, I wouldn’t even know he was still alive – because, really, it was easier to just imagine that he’d died somehow. It was easier when he was gone and not coming back. (*Pause; softening.*) He held my hand and said, “I know. That’s why I said I’m sorry. Because you and your mom deserve the best, and I couldn’t be anywhere close to that.” And he let go of my hand and I closed my eyes for a second – and, when I opened them, he was gone. I thought maybe I’d dreamed it. Like I’d had one of those day dreams that feel so real you think it actually happened. I was still holding the fork I’d pick up off the floor. I don’t know why, but I jabbed into the palm of my left hand. Jabbed it hard enough to make blood come running out all over my hand and down onto the floor. Tripp ran over with a towel and wrapped it around my hand. He pressed against my palm to try to stop the bleeding. “What was that guy saying to you?” he asked, as he squeezed my hand. I told him, “He was just talking... I guess I reminded him of somebody.” Tripp brushed the hair off my face. “It looked intense. Seriously intense. He was crying. You had to have seen him crying.” (*Pause.*) I fainted. Into Tripp’s arms. I didn’t really faint. But he didn’t figure that out. He carried me over to a chair. And he stopped asking me questions about my dad – which was the intention behind pretending to faint. I wanted to sit in the chair for a minute and have him be quiet – have everyone be quiet. So I could think about whether I was going to tell my mom that I’d seen

my dad and that I'd talked to him – though he did most of the talking. I didn't want to upset her. She's been kind of dating another guy and he seems nice and has a job and doesn't do drugs – which are the most important stuff adults are supposed to do and not do. I'm pretty sure my mom has forgotten all about my dad. But, if I don't tell her, then, every time I look at her I'll feel like I'm keeping a secret from her and, eventually, she'll sense that and she'll make me tell her what's going on. Though, I haven't told her about Tripp and she hasn't caught on to that secret, yet, so maybe she's lost her ability to sense when I have a secret. Maybe mothers who're very involved with their own social lives lose the ability to sense when their daughters are telling secrets. And then the lady in charge of the soup kitchen cracked some kind of capsule thing and put it under my nose and – even if I had actually fainted, I'd have woken up right away from that. “Are you okay?” Tripp was asking, over and over. “Did that sketchy guy scare you? Did he say something inappropriate? *(With increasing speed and intensity.)* People say inappropriate things in the city, sometimes. My dad says it's because there are too many people living too closely together and people lose their awareness of boundaries and appropriate behavior. Not everybody knows that it's not appropriate to say inappropriate things.” Tripp kept tapping me on the cheek like he was trying to wake up a baby, except I was already completely awake. And I said *(Shouting at the top of her lungs.)*, “Shut up!” I yelled it. I screamed it so loud there was an echo in the soup kitchen. And I shoved him so he'd stop tapping my face. He fell backwards. Everybody took a step back. *(She begins to cry.)* They looked at me like I was a crazy person. And I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do. *(Sobbing.)* I wanted to disappear. I wanted to make the whole day disappear. *(The sobbing is overwhelming; she struggles to make herself understood.)* But you can't do that. Nobody can do that... Nobody gets the easy way out... Nobody.

THE END

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NOTES

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