

## NOBODY'S NEWS

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A few blocks from here, there lived a man named Nobody. He used to have a normal first, middle, and last name, but he officially changed all three to just one word, Nobody. When anyone asked him why, he said "I'm a nobody, like billions of other people in the world, but they're afraid to admit it."

When anyone referred to him by his previous name—"Excuse me, but aren't you Jebediah Zoysia Winston?"—he'd reply "Nope, I'm Nobody." He felt like Diogenes, who looked for an honest man but couldn't find any until he saw his own reflection in the water. Nobody was happy. He had achieved something that few people achieve in their lifetime. Truth. At least he believed he did.

He worked at a factory whose slogan was "Everybody needs one of these." When his boss heard about Jebediah Zoysia Winston changing his name to Nobody, he fired him asap. Nobody laughed and said "You can't fire me. I'm Nobody." His boss said "That's why I fired you."

Still the word got out. Nobody was out of work. Nobody! CNN and other news media swooped down on the company. Since the economy was so bad in the city, it was big news that one company still had all of its employees. "Nobody Fired At The Factory!" blared the local newspaper.

In spite of what the newspaper said, Nobody really was out of work, and he had to face real problems. He tried to get food stamps, he tried to get unemployment compensation, and he tried to get an apartment (because his old landlord wouldn't accept rental checks signed 'Nobody'). He wound up living in the neighborhood library in the N section.

With what little cash he had, he decided to start a photocopy periodical called *Nobody's News*. He typed it up on a computer at the library, and then he went to a nearby copy center to have 500 copies printed. The first issue was only one page long, printed on only one side of the paper. It had only one story, titled "The Truth About Nobody." He charged only one dollar a copy, which was expensive.

"This isn't going to sell," he mumbled to himself in a mournful tone. He was certain his life was going in a downward spiral, but he was wrong, so wrong, for fate works in many strange ways, even for a nobody.

He walked down the street, shouting "One dollar for *Nobody's News*!" To his surprise, many other nobodies bought his paper. Within two days, he sold all but one copy, which he kept for himself.

At last he could afford to buy dinner, so he went to the Bigger Burger Diner and pigged out on three burgers, a double order of fries, and a large root beer. While sitting at the counter, he took out a pencil and started writing a story for the second issue of *Nobody's News*. It was called, "Where Nobody Goes to Eat."

Satisfied with what he ate and wrote, he returned to his home in the N's at the Library, curled up with a book on Nudist Colonies, and fell asleep. The next morning, he woke bright and early and went to the copy center.

"Hey, Joe!" said the copy center guy, who always called every man Joe and every woman Frieda.

“My name isn’t Joe,” he replied. “I’m Nobody.”

“In this life, pal, most of us are nobodies. It doesn’t matter what your name is. What can I do you fer?”

“I’d like to get 500 copies made of this.”

“Hey!” he said, looking at the paper, “you were in here a couple of days ago. My wife Frieda bought a copy of *Nobody’s News*.”

“Did she like it?” Nobody asked.

“Like it? She loved it! She read it from cover to cover. Now she knows I’m a nobody. It was proof! And I read it and found out that she’s a nobody, too. We figure that’s why we’re such a perfect couple.”

The copy center guy ran off the new issue. When he handed the copies to Nobody, he said “You know, Joe, your rag tells the truth. Not like them rags at the supermarket—the Star, the Enquirer, the New York Times. Truth is becoming popular again, except in politics, crime, and romance.”

Nobody thanked him and left. Walking down the street, he hawked his second issue of *Nobody’s News*. People bought it like hotcakes. In just one day, 499 copies were winding their way down different streets to different homes where 499 nobodies set them on their coffee tables for their families and friends to read over and over. Nobody kept the 500th copy for himself.

That evening Nobody was sitting in a bowling alley writing an article for the third issue of *Nobody’s News*. It was called “Nobody Likes You.” About midnight, he finished. He returned to the N-section at the Library, found a book called *Naked Lunch*, and used it for a pillow.

Next morning, he went to the copy center to have 500 copies run off. The copy center guy said “Joe, I got some advice to help increase your circulation. Try printing 1000 copies and see what happens.”

Nobody took the copy center guy’s advice. Carrying a double-sized stack of *Nobody’s News* No. 3, he walked down the street shouting out “Nobody Likes You! Read all about it!”

This time it sold like wildfire. People swamped him at seven street corners, and by the time he’d crossed eight streets, he’d sold 999 copies. He pocketed one copy for himself, and then he went to a restaurant called The Posh Shop, which charged posh prices for posh meals. Sipping French wine and munching filet mignon stuffed with frog legs, he wrote his next article, titled “When Good Things Happen to Nobody.” After he finished, he walked back to the Library.

“Hmm, people like *Nobody’s News*,” he mumbled to himself as he fell asleep on a copy of *The Naked and the Dead*.

So it went for the next few weeks. *Nobody’s News* became more and more popular. When the print run reached 5,000 copies, Nobody bought a wheelbarrow to carry them down the street. Then he realized that he would soon need help with distribution.

Over the next month, circulation climbed steadily. By the time it reached 50,000 copies per day, he’d hired ten helpers and bought ten more wheelbarrows. Nine of the helpers were happy simply to do their jobs, but one young man had ideas. He was a brilliant student majoring in business administration through a correspondence college that advertised on classy-looking matchbook covers.

“Mr. Nobody, sir,” he said, “My name is Ludwig Ludlow. You can call me Luddy.”

“You can call me Nobody.”

“Yes, sir. Nobody, your business needs to expand.”

“Business has been expanding, Luddy, and soon we’ll buy two more wheelbarrows and hire two more helpers.”

“But you’ve sold more than one million copies of *Nobody’s News* since I started working for you. According to my calculations, you’ve made a big profit. You can afford to rent an office.”

Nobody nodded and said “Hmm.... You’re absolutely right. You seem to understand the business, Luddy. Would you like to be my personal assistant? I’ll double your pay.”

“Yes, sir!” said Luddy beaming like a lighthouse.

The next day, Nobody told his helpers to take the day off.

“We need a break from our grueling schedule,” he said. “I’m going to find a large office for the newspaper.”

“How will we know where it is?” a new guy asked.

“I’ll call Luddy later, and he’ll call all of you tonight. We’ll meet there tomorrow morning.”

Nobody spent the afternoon looking for a place to rent for the headquarters of *Nobody’s News*. He found just the spot in the middle of the highest-priced part of the business district. He still had lots of money left over, so he decided to rent a penthouse to live in. He was getting tired of the Library. He phoned Luddy and gave him the address of the new headquarters, and Luddy relayed the message to the rest of the crew.

To celebrate his move up the publishing ladder, Nobody went to the most expensive eatery in town and ordered the most expensive meal with the most expensive wine. After wining and dining, he ordered the most expensive coffee on the menu and took out his paper and pencil to write his next article.

Then it happened. A Local TV News reporter at a nearby table recognized him from a brief encounter at the copy center a few days ago. The reporter was sitting with five other Local TV News reporters.

“Hey, guys! That’s Nobody! The editor of *Nobody’s News*.”

They flocked around his table and asked him all kinds of questions. He felt like he was on the witness stand.

“What’s your real name?”

“Nobody.”

“Who writes your articles?”

“Nobody.”

“Who owns your newspaper?”

“Nobody.”

Finally, one reporter asked the all-important question “What’s the secret of your success, Mr. Nobody?”

“You can call me Nobody,” he said. “The secret of my success is Truth. *Nobody’s News* tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! That’s what you, I, and all of the other nobodies want—the plain, unvarnished truth.”

“If that’s correct,” said one reporter playing the devil’s advocate, “then why do all of the other nobodies tell lies all the time?”

“Because they know there *is* truth,” said Nobody, delivering the biggest pearl of wisdom he had. “If there were no truth, there could be no lies. Truth makes it possible for people to lie.”

The chief chef of the restaurant called CNN. Within minutes, a CNN reporter with a satellite dish and camera crew arrived. They’d been in the neighborhood covering a cesspool explosion that killed several monstrous creatures that called the cesspool home.

“Where is Nobody?” the CNN reporter asked.

“Over there with that crowd of Local TV News reporters,” said the chief chef, tossing a salad back and forth.

The CNN reporter waded through the crowd, saying "Excuse me! CNN here. Excuse me! CNN here."

The crowd parted like the Red Sea, mainly because of the cesspool smell that lingered on the CNN reporter's clothes. When the reporter came face to face with Nobody, his first question was, "Do you have any plans for starting new publications?"

"Hmm. Good question. Yes, I do," he replied. "I've been thinking of doing a one-page newspaper like *The Wall Street Journal* called *Nobody's Business*. Then I might venture into doing a one-pager similar to *Architectural Digest* called *Nobody's Home*."

"Why one page for *Nobody's News*?"

"Because without that page there would be no publication."

After the hour-long interview, which was broadcast live to ninety-seven countries and thousands of cities, the CNN reporter and his entourage left. But as he walked out the door, he pointed to Nobody, winked, clicked his tongue, and said "You're somebody now!"

Nobody returned to his penthouse to write his next story, but for the first time he had a mental block. So he went to sleep on his champagne-filled waterbed.

Next morning, he woke up early and took a stretch limo to the courthouse. He was a man with a mission, and that mission was to change his name again.

"You're the famous Nobody," said the lady who officially changed names. "I saw you on CNN last night. It's a pleasure to meet you, sir. Can I help you?"

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "I want to change my name to Somebody."

"That's a lovely choice," she said. "Here are the papers."

He filled them out, paid the fee, and left. Then he went downtown to the new *Nobody's News* Headquarters. His loyal crew was waiting for him.

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," he said.

"Good morning, Nobody," they replied.

"Not any more," he said. "This morning I officially changed my name to Somebody. From now on, this newspaper is *Somebody's News*. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll write the article for the first issue with the new name."

He went into his office and typed a piece called "Somebody Just Got Famous." Then he made a print-out.

"Here, Luddy," he said. "Rush this to the copy center! It's the first issue under our new masthead." He took the article and raced like the wind.

"Hey, Joe!" said the copy center guy when Luddy came darting in. "The usual 100,000 copies?"

"Yes," said Luddy out of breath, "for our usual deadline."

At 4:30, Somebody and his sales crew arrived with the full fleet of wheelbarrows to pick up the copies well in time for rush hour sales.

"Somebody Just Got Famous!" they shouted to the madding crowd on the streets. "Read all about it in *Somebody's News*!"

People didn't pay any attention to them, except for a few nobodies who whined, "What happened to *Nobody's News*?"

"This is the new *Nobody's News*," Somebody replied. "Yesterday I became Somebody, and I changed the name of the paper to reflect the truth of ownership."

Still, not one single copy sold. Nor did any of the next issue, or the next, or the next, or the next, or the next, or the next. Within a week, *Somebody's News* went belly up. Its demise sent shock-waves rippling through Wall Street, where hundreds of nobodies sold off their stocks and wandered aimlessly through the streets dreaming of the good old days when Somebody was Nobody. They were too distressed to even jump off skyscrapers. The mayor ordered the stock

exchange closed, but that wasn't possible since everyone had already left, including the guy with the keys.

Somebody was puzzled. He had to lay off his workers and sell the wheelbarrows. He moved back to the N-section in the Library. He was almost broke. He wandered the streets aimlessly, wondering what happened. A few days later, he noticed he was wandering past the copy center, and he decided to go in.

"How's sales going, Joe?" the copy center guy asked. "You ain't been in here for awhile. You doing business elsewhere?"

"The paper went bankrupt," he said in a sad voice. "It was in all the newspapers."

"I didn't know. The only newspaper I read, or used to read, was *Nobody's News*, until it became *Somebody's News*."

"But why did it fail? People want the truth, and I gave them the truth. All I did was change the paper's name."

"People want the truth?" the copy center guy said. "Yeah, they want the truth alright—when it's about nobodies like themselves. But you're Somebody now. They don't want your truth."

"So that's it? Well that's easy enough to fix," said Somebody. "Tomorrow I'll change my name back to Jebediah Zoysia Winston and rename the paper *Jebediah's News*."

"No, no, no," said the copy center guy shaking his head vigorously. "You do that, and only the one or two other Jebediahs that live in the city will buy it. Think big, Joe! That's what you gotta do. Think real, real big."

Somebody spent the rest of the day thinking big. Late that night, he had a flash of inspiration bigger than the Empire State Building. He decided to change his name to Everybody and start all over with *Everybody's News*...

... and it worked! Circulation soared, and every citizen and every visitor to the city bought a copy. Within a few weeks, Everybody rebuilt his publishing empire, and the stock market climbed to undreamed of heights. The economy flourished. Everybody was a hero, and not just a local hero. His fame spread across the country and around the world, even to the South Pole.

Two years later he ran for President of the United States. His campaign slogan was, "Everybody Tells the Truth." For his Vice President, he picked a nobody in order to have a balanced ticket.

The incumbent president, in a bold but foolish campaign strategy, changed his name to Anybody. His slogan was "Anybody Can Be President," but since he already was president, his slogan was pointless.

Everybody countered with "Can Anybody run the country? Does Anybody know what is important for every citizen? Will Anybody tell the truth? No! Everybody tells the truth. Vote for Everybody!"

Everybody was elected by all the voters! The vote was more than a total landslide! It was an earthquake measuring a perfect 10 on the Richter scale! That night, at the victory party, he wrote an article for the morning issue of his newspaper. The headline spoke volumes: "Everybody Beats Anybody!"

And for the first time in the history of America, Everybody won.