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SCRIPT SAMPLE

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**THE HOUSE WHERE NOBODY LIVES**  
**By Paul North**

CHARACTERS

Jim- an addict

Barnabus- a seaman

Marshall- an orphan

Lois- a librarian

Sarah- the caretaker

SETTING

A large room inside a House. An obtusely angled, overly large door is centered in the back wall. It has a presence. No windows. There is a small rowing boat, stage right. A chair, center stage. A typewriter on a small table with chair, stage left, with stacks of paper piled around it. A bench sits in front of the table.

ACT ONE

(MARSHALL sleeps, slouching in a chair, center. He looks worn, and is dressed entirely in white. LOIS sleeps on the typewriter in front of her. She is dressed formally; a pair of reading glasses hangs from her neck. An oar is outside the boat. SARAH enters carrying a box full of random household items, similar to what would appear at a garage sale. She walks upstage, drops the box, and begins *to* talk to the House with more than a slight attitude.)

SARAH: Begin with this, and end with that. Begin with this, and end with this. Begin with that and end with this! And in the meantime give them this? This is completely boring. Can't you just tell me what I'm supposed to do with all this stuff? We're running out of room. Every wall in this place has piles of junk on it. Everybody brings stuff in, but they never take it when they go. No, because that would make sense, wouldn't it? (*SARAH stands and busies herself. She puts the oar back in the boat.*) Couldn't you just make them take it with them? I really don't know what to do with it all. (*SARAH tries to fix MARSHALL's position in the chair. It doesn't work.*) Are you even listening to me? (*SARAH knocks at the door with a small defiance while making her way to LOIS. She fixes LOIS' hands on the typewriter.*) This is a real problem for me. I'm trying to do a good job here, and you're not helping. (*Pause.*) Am I doing a good job? I never know. You never tell me. I do everything by the book, and still you...wait, there isn't a book. I'm not making any sense, but that's your fault. I just get bored sometimes...

*(JIM charges in wearing a leather jacket and jeans. He appears as if he has been awake for far too many days. He is loud and slightly dangerous.)*

JIM: You think you can fool me? You think you can hide things, and I wouldn't know?

SARAH: *(to the House)* Look who's up. *(calmly, to JIM)* What's the matter, honey?

JIM: I can't find my keys!

*(JIM begins searching the room.)*

SARAH: Why do you need your keys?

JIM: Why do I need my keys? What sort of stupid question is that? Keys unlock. They turn things on.

SARAH: You mean your car keys.

JIM: Yes, my car keys! Where are they?

SARAH: Why do you need the car?

JIM: I already told you. Today's the day.

SARAH: But it's nighttime.

JIM: It's only half-night, and that means they're coming. I have to be ready. I can't just let them march in here and take me. I have to be prepared. Always ready, like that. *(JIM snaps his fingers.)* And I'm gone.

SARAH: Where are you going?

JIM: Why do you want to know?

SARAH: I like to know where you are.

JIM: Well, I don't know yet...nowhere special.

SARAH: Then why leave? This is as good of a nowhere as any place is.

JIM: That's what you think! But they know that I'm here.

SARAH: Who, the cops? They don't know you're here.

JIM: They'll come and take me!

SARAH: No, they won't.

JIM: Are you sure?

SARAH: It's just a hunch, but...I think you're safe.

JIM: Then I can stay?

SARAH: If you want to.

JIM: Do you want me to?

SARAH: I want what's best for you.

JIM: If I stay, can I see the kids?

SARAH: You know you can't ask that.

JIM: Why?

SARAH: For the same reasons you're hiding here.

JIM: No, no. The kids'll understand. They'll think the law is funny; that it's something that daddy plays with. It's a game that daddy plays, that's why I'm always running.

SARAH: It's not the law, Jim. It's the habit.

JIM: I've quit. I told you that.

SARAH: You're lying.

JIM: No, I'm not. I've stopped. Really.

SARAH: Then let me see your arm.

JIM: No!

SARAH: How about your legs or your toes? Where are you putting the needle these days?

JIM: I'm clean. I promise.

SARAH: Daddy loves his candy a little too much. He eats it until he gets sick, until he doesn't remember who he is, or who his wife is, or how many kids he actually has.

JIM: You're my wife.

SARAH: And you're children?

JIM: I miss them so much.

SARAH: Really? Then tell me their names.

JIM: Why are you asking me this?

SARAH: Your children's names, what are they?

JIM: I know them.

SARAH: Then tell me.

JIM: Um...well, first there was Michael.

SARAH: No.

JIM: Rachel?

SARAH: Wrong.

JIM: Ben?

SARAH: NO!

JIM: Samantha?

SARAH: Not even close.

JIM: But I miss them so much!

SARAH: Then you're going to have to change.

JIM: Let me love you.

*(JIM approaches her.)*

SARAH: No, we ended that a long time ago.

JIM: Please.

SARAH: What's my name?

JIM: Witch.

SARAH: Try again.

JIM: Wife.

SARAH: That's right, the mother of all your unnamed children.

JIM: Give them to me.

SARAH: I do, in all the stories I tell you about them, but you forget. You think they're only dreams, sweet memories of a calmer life. But dreams don't grow Jim. They don't age. They don't laugh or cry like your children do.

JIM: What do they think of me?

SARAH: Sometimes you're an important man, with many things to do. Sometimes you're far away and journeying towards them. Sometimes you're dead.

JIM: Do they love me?

SARAH: They love the idea of you.

*(JIM kicks the box full of 'junk'.)*

JIM: I want what I want!

SARAH: Do that again and you're in trouble.

JIM: Where are my keys?

SARAH: What would you do with them?

JIM: I would leave.

SARAH: How?

JIM: Through that door.

*(JIM motions towards the angled door in the background. SARAH presents a set of keys.)*

SARAH: Here you are then.

JIM: What?

SARAH: The keys, Jim. Here they are. Take them and you can go.

*(JIM pauses in fear.)*

JIM: No.

SARAH: What's the matter?

JIM: That ain't where I'm supposed to be.

SARAH: How do you know? Where's Jim's wild side, ready to do anything blindly, on the spot, just because it was there to do? If you keep being scared like this, you'll never get what you want.

JIM: I want you.

SARAH: Of course you do, because it's easy. I'm your domestic punching bag.

JIM: I love you.

SARAH: That's it! Go away. Go and hide in a corner somewhere. I don't want to see you.

JIM: NO!

*(BARNABUS stirs in the rowboat.)*

BARNABUS: What's all that noise?

MARSHALL: *(mumbling from the chair)* It wasn't planned or anything.

*(LOIS drowsily lifts her head and begins to type.)*

SARAH: You see! Now you woke everyone up.

JIM: I didn't mean to.

SARAH: Just go! Leave me alone.

JIM: I won't leave you. I'll just sit in a corner somewhere like you said and try...to change.

SARAH: Go away.

JIM: I'm...sorry.

*(JIM exits, slouching. SARAH hurries over to LOIS and gently touches her, which puts her back to 'sleep'. The typewriter makes one last 'ding'. SARAH then goes to where MARSHALL is sitting, and touches his shoulders.)*

MARSHALL: It was a little frightening.

*(MARSHALL falls back asleep. SARAH goes over to tend to BARNABUS, but he has fully sat up in his boat. She backs away letting him to himself. He is dressed like a fisherman, with cap and beard. An older man, wisdom through experience.)*

BARNABUS: Arghh, another day. No rain in the night, that's lovely. Sea looks calm. *(BARNABUS picks up the oars and begins to row.)* Last night a whale sang me to sleep with a pretty song. Told me that I'd never hit land again. So, I figure, I'll keep rowing until I become part of the blue. Did you hear that friends? Part of the blue. I've lost the will to be a man, which means I cannot stay on land. Ha. I'll have to write that one down. You'll have me as company. I won't be so old and tired. I'll be a swell, some foam on top of the water. *(SARAH approaches BARNABUS. He does not acknowledge her until she touches the boat.)* What was that? I heard something. Movement below me, and a smell of sweetness. My mermaid must be here.

SARAH: *(touching the boat)* She is.

BARNABUS: Lovely you.

SARAH: How is my Captain?

BARNABUS: My thoughts rest on the water.

SARAH: Have you cast your nets today?

BARNABUS: You know I've stopped that. I don't want to hurt my friends.

SARAH: But how will you eat?

BARNABUS: I don't need food any longer. My days as a man are retiring. I'll be able to go where you ask me to, very soon.

SARAH: You'll leave the boat?

BARNABUS: To follow you I will.

SARAH: But you can't swim?

BARNABUS: When it happens, that won't matter.

SARAH: You were always the sweetest.

BARNABUS: Was it you who made the whale sing?

SARAH: I only asked him. He was more than happy to help you sleep. You are well known in this ocean.

BARNABUS: And the rest? I see Seagull there, sleeping.

*(BARNABUS motions to MARSHALL.)*

SARAH: Yes. He's tired.

BARNABUS: And was it Shark making all the noise that woke me up?

SARAH: Yes, he's been misbehaving lately.

BARNABUS: Give him time; he'll listen to you just as I did.

SARAH: I doubt that.

BARNABUS: Will you come into my boat? I have something for you.

SARAH: I will. *(SARAH 'climbs' in, and leans her back against BARNABUS as he continues to row.)* What is the surprise?

BARNABUS: A poem.

SARAH: Ah, something sweetly memorized.

BARNABUS: No, my own.

SARAH: An original?

BARNABUS: Yes, the first. Translated in your own language, so that you can understand exactly what I mean to say.

SARAH: I'm honored.

*(BARNABUS pulls out a crumpled piece of paper and clears his throat.)*

BARNABUS: It is her, and the night. *(BARNABUS takes a swig out of his canteen and gargles the 'translation' then swallows.)* And I have tried to understand. *(Another swig of water, gurgling and swallow.)* Which I love more.

*(BARNABUS takes another swig, begins gurgling, but accidentally swallows, and begins to cough.)*

SARAH: Beautiful!

*(BARNABUS continues to cough.)*

SARAH: Are you all right?

BARNABUS: Yes. Excuse me for that.

SARAH: No, no. It was lovely.

BARNABUS: Did I pronounce everything correctly?

SARAH: You need some work, but it was very nice.

BARNABUS: Of course, I should have practiced more.

SARAH: No, you did very well.

BARNABUS: I think of you often.

SARAH: You do?

BARNABUS: Yes.

SARAH: And how do you think of me?

BARNABUS: I fear your beauty, and I wonder once I become a part of it...

SARAH: Don't worry about those things. Everything that you see here, you'll become a part of. Not an old man anymore but a part of nature. I don't allow others to have this chance, but with you, with your strength-

BARNABUS: I'll be with you, won't I?

SARAH: Always.

BARNABUS: Then that is enough.

SARAH: Barnabus, tell me about the land.

BARNABUS: You've asked me this before.

SARAH: I have, but you never answer.

BARNABUS: You must know that when a man gives his life to one thing, wholly, it's his only thought. The decision I made is to be here. The rest is my past, and not worth my mind.

SARAH: Are you sure it's not that you've forgotten?

BARNABUS: If I choose my own thoughts, and don't dwell on the things I wish were forgotten, is there a difference than not being able to remember?

SARAH: Hard to say...but I still want you to prove me wrong. Tell me one thing, only one, about the land.

BARNABUS: It's no place your sweet shape should ever touch.

*(MARSHALL begins to stir.)*

MARSHALL: Squawk.

BARNABUS: Someone's awake.

SARAH: May I go and see him?

BARNABUS: If it will relieve me of your questions.

SARAH: I'm waiting for you Barnabus.

**END SAMPLE.**