## Standby Stand-In

## By Editha Rosario-Moore

## Characters

Noymie Latine woman, mid-40s

May Chinese-American woman, mid-40s

## <u>Time</u>

December 24, 2022. Latenight in River North, Chicago. Living room of Noymie's home. A beautiful, modern living room. NOYMIE sits on her couch, bent over, reading a file in a manilla folder, waiting. She looks at her Apple Watch, sips whiskey, stares off. The bell rings. A moment. She answers door. MAY Noy! **NOYMIE** May. They embrace. It is stiff, awkward, and longer than it should be. Come in, come in. It's cold. Do you have a coat? *Grabs MAY's carry-on bag*. MAY Thank God I do. We do wear coats in San Francisco, you know. She laughs. It's coooooold. NOYMIE Yeah. I remember when you said you'd never live here. **MAY** When? **NOYMIE** Freshman Formal. You took some jagoff named Matt, he said that California was the greatest place in the world, and Chicago was only good for layovers. You both died laughing. MAY That's a really specific memory. *Chuckles*. **NOYMIE** She does not laugh. **MAY** Hanging up her coat. Uh, I was in New York for work. Thanks for responding. It's been so long...but you look the same. You look exactly the same. **NOYMIE** Plus 25 years.

MAY

Nope.

#### **NOYMIE**

Well. I think we look the same to people at the time we made an...impression.

### **MAY**

Forever 21. They both chuckle. All the hotels were booked. All the flights canceled. And I couldn't remember if I still knew anyone in Chicago, but then. I do. **NOYMIE** It's all good. My husband's working tonight, so it's nice to have...Christmas Eve company. MAY No kids? **NOYMIE** No kids. He's a doctor. MAY Nice! **NOYMIE** An ER doctor. MAY Oh, that's sweet. **NOYMIE** Sure. And I'm doing some work tonight, too. I'm a public defender. MAY Wow, that's—really weird. Awkward. **NOYMIE** How's that? **MAY** I was a prosecutor. Funny, huh?

**NOYMIE** 

Makes total sense to me.

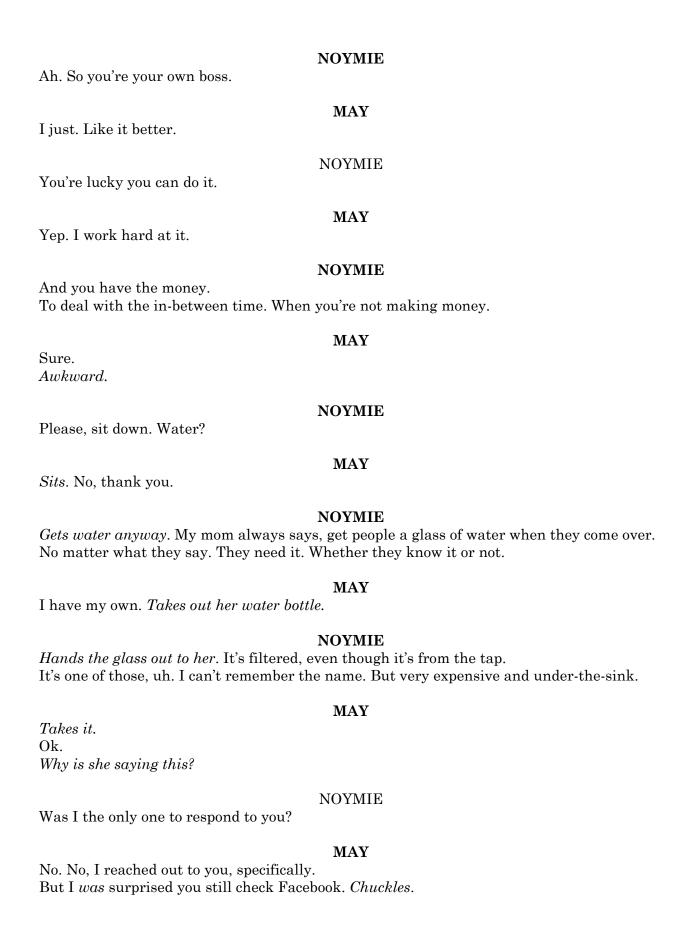
Awkward.

Why'd you stop doing it?

MAY

Ugh, too stressful.

I went back to freelance journalism.

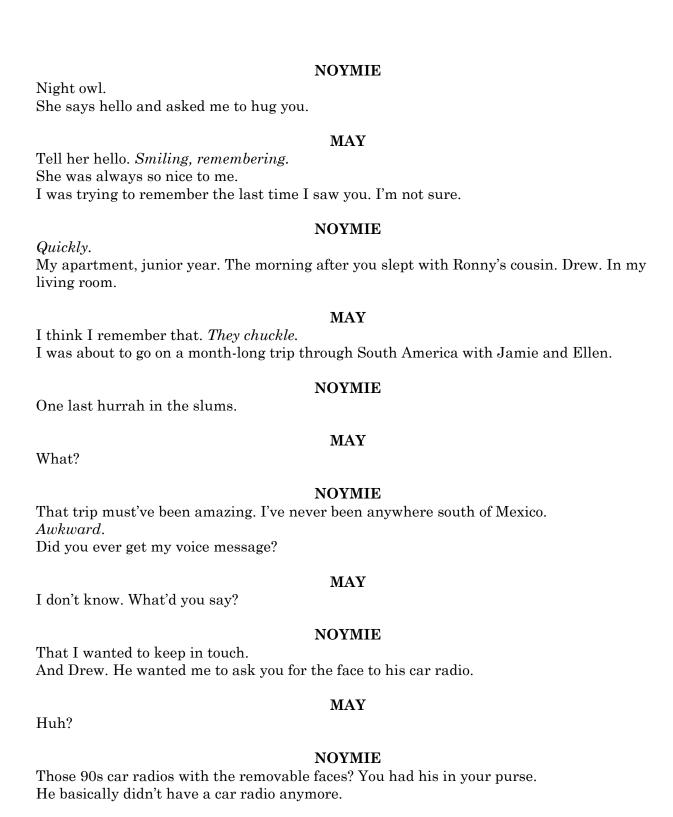


**NOYMIE** So you didn't expect me to respond. **MAY** No, I just. I hoped. I just haven't been on social media in forever. **NOYMIE** I bet the airport was hell. MAY Putting her feet up on the couch. Pure hell. A Delta worker was singing Christmas carols. People were trying to sleep on the floor. Loud phone calls, the food was stale. Too many sneezes and coughs—do you want me to wear a mask? **NOYMIE** No. I live with an ER doctor, so. I'm fine. Different times now. I don't know if I ever want to get on a plane again. MAY That's too extreme— **NOYMIE** So where's your family? MAY Sips her water. San Francisco. **NOYMIE** Ah. You went back home. And you named your daughter after your mom. I saw on Facebook. So beautiful. MAY Thank you. After she passed in college...it was fated. Silence. How's your mom? **NOYMIE** 

 $\mathbf{MAY}$ 

You called her this late?

Good. Happy, old. Smiles. I told her you were coming.

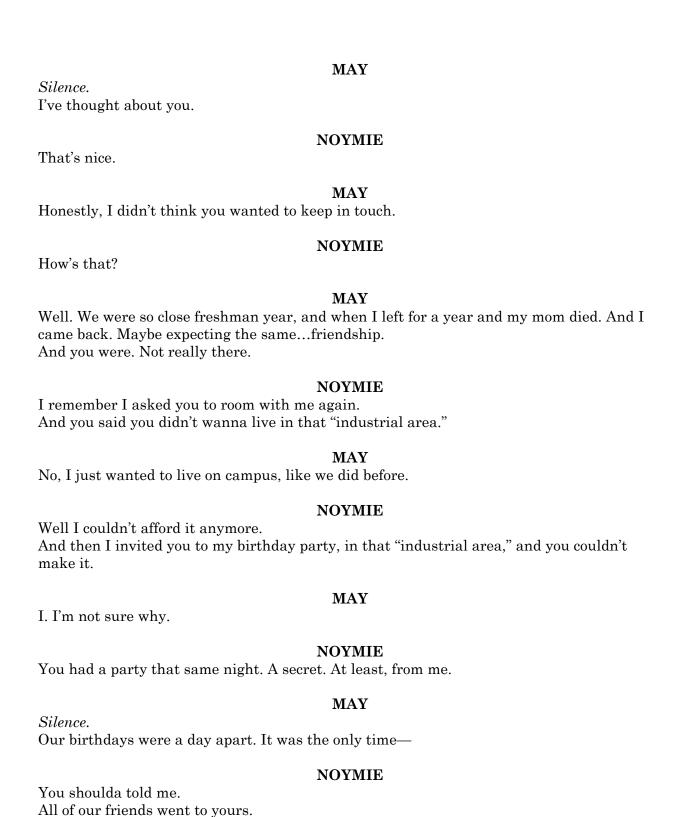


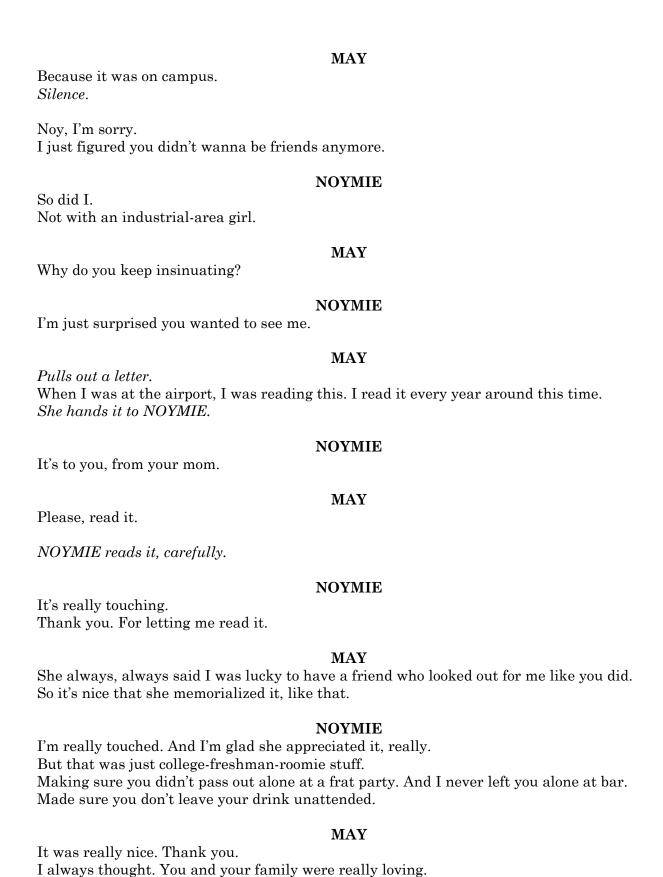
MAY

Well. Oops.

**NOYMIE** 

They were expensive.





# **NOYMIE** We are. **MAY** I think that's why. Why you became a public defender. NOYMIE. Shrugs. I don't know. I read that choosing to be a public defender is a trauma response. Oof. MAY I wasn't trying to say... **NOYMIE** I know. But. I don't think you know how...uncomfortable I was. Being poor, in college. MAY We were all poor students. **NOYMIE** No. No. You were torn up because your dad bought a Mac for you instead of a PC. I had a broken word processor. MAY That's not my fault. **NOYMIE** That's it. That's it. You had no empathy. One day. I came home from my work-study job, and I was crying because I was exhausted,

and I said, it's not fair, I shouldn't have to work and go to school full time. And you had this

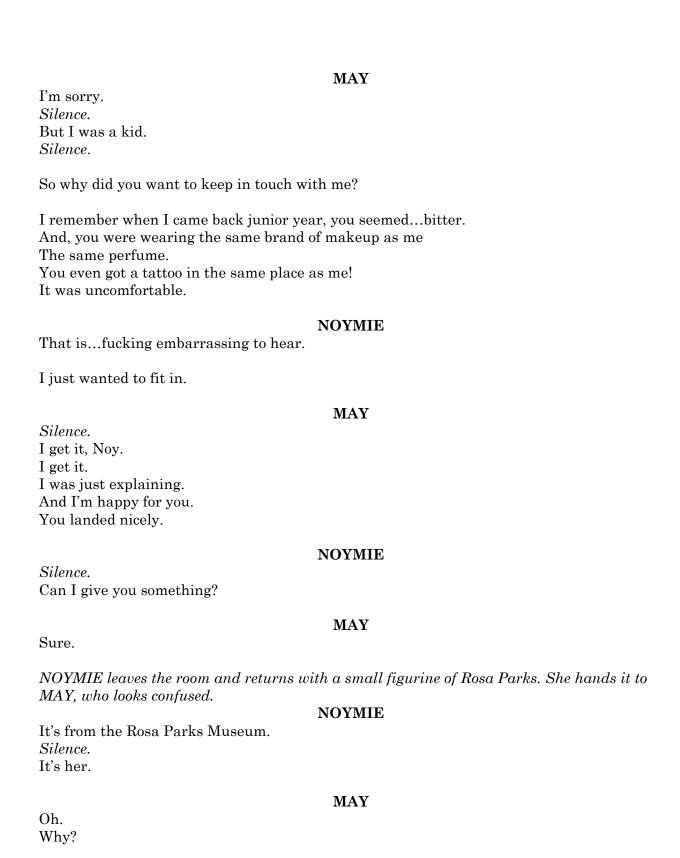
look on your face. *She does the face*. You said. Well, *I* have to pay full tuition.

I didn't even understand what you *meant* by that last line.

It's different when you pay for it.

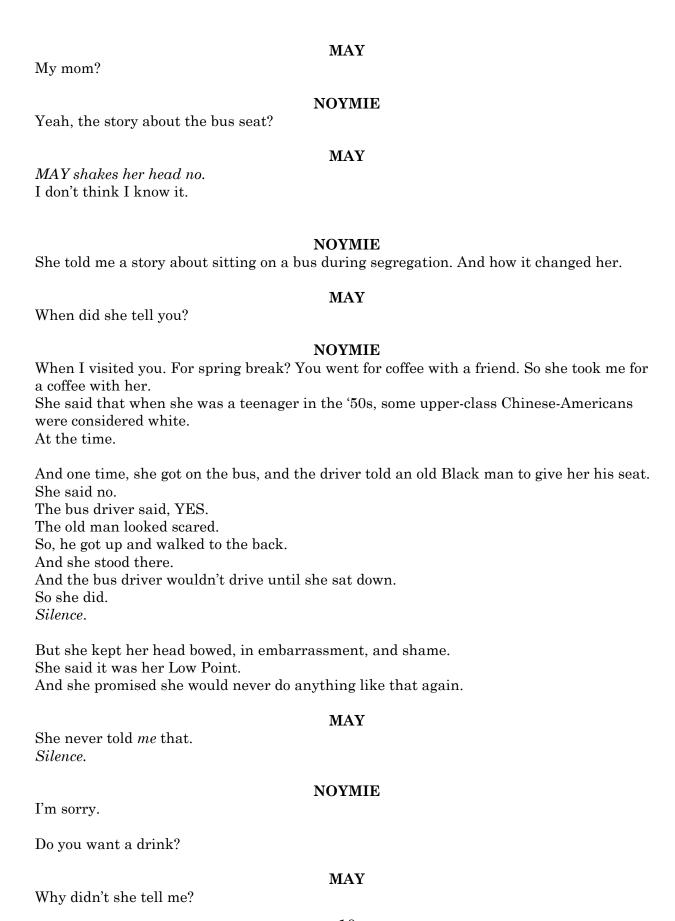
But it wasn't helpful.

Silence.



**NOYMIE** 

I thought you'd like it, because of your mom's story.



#### **NOYMIE**

I don't know.

I think she told me, maybe, because she wanted to make me feel comfortable. With her.

I was poor, May.

And visiting your family's fucking mansion.

I didn't know how to act.

I remember. She served artichokes at dinner and asked me if I liked butter with mine, and I said yes, like a lyin' fool.

Then she gave me drawn butter and quietly said, like this.

She showed me how to pull the leaves, dip them.

And the last night I was there, we went to her favorite restaurant.

She ordered skate wing and lobster ravioli for me.

It was amazing.

MAY

Holds the figurine close. Thank you, for this.

NOYMIE

I'm so sorry you lost her so young, May.

MAY

Just too soon.

Silence.

Looks at her watch. My flight leaves so early.

Flying standby.

Fingers crossed.

**NOYMIE** 

No problem.

The guest room is yours. Gestures.

You just leave when you need.

And let me know if you need anything.

MAY

I'm sorry I didn't hold on to you.

Lessons from the grave.

**NOYMIE** 

I'm just glad we met, yeah?

**MAY** 

Yeah.

They hug again. It's the last time, and they know it.

**END**