



# Now Entering: Shrine of the Internet Goddess

A Play by Elizabeth Ung

**CHARACTERS---**

*THE WOMAN* – also plays the *CHILD*, the *MOTHER*, the *JUDGE*, the *BOY*, and the *GODDESS*  
Must be of East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian, or Pasifika heritage/descent.

**SETTING---**

A physical embodiment of an internet shrine where memories/flashbacks can take place.

Written for Truepenny Project's *IMmortal*: A Collection of Plays that premiered Fall 2021 in Baltimore, Maryland.

*(In the beginning, there is silence, darkness.*

*Then, a sound. Another sound. A flicker of light.*

*The SPIRIT wanders in, performing a slow, ritualistic march. They hum a tune that is meditative.*

*They dance and move. It evolves into rhythm. Then into music.*

*And it's beauty.*

*The lights and sound flow with the SPIRIT's movement.*

*Water. Wind. Trees. Fire.*

*The SPIRIT slows down and becomes...*

*The CHILD sits and kneels. She holds something invisible. The CHILD smells it, takes a piece of it, kisses it, breathes into it.*

*Plays with the invisible thing like a ball. She bounces it, throws it. She can even play catch with an audience member or another existence in the space.*

*Then, the invisible thing sings a familiar folktune in her ear. She echoes it. It does it again and she does it again. She may even invite the audience to echo the song.*

*The invisible thing is now a bicycle. She rides it with fear at first, but it changes into pure joy. She rides up and down hills, forests, bumpy roads.*

*And then, she crashes.*

*And the CHILD cries for the first time. The crying is silent, but the movements still suggests that she scraped her knee.*

*Then, the invisible thing becomes something...unknown to her. She stops crying. Now she is curious.*

*The CHILD grasps the invisible thing. She embraces it, hearing it speak. She leans in closer. The invisible thing apologizes. She's confused as to how to take this. But with all her childhood innocence, she smiles and speaks her first words.)*

## **THE CHILD**

It's okay.

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*(The CHILD then moves with the invisible thing, creating a circular dance. As the CHILD spirals around the circle, she becomes...*

*The WOMAN. She is swimming. At first, it's casual smooth sailing. Then, the tide gradually turns against her. She starts sinking. A distorted voiceover is heard.)*

#### **A VOICE**

A tsunami hit the shore at about 3AM on the second Sunday---

*The WOMAN shoots a hand up, as if emerging from the depths of the ocean. She holds the invisible thing like a weapon. It is a spear that she throws.*

#### **A VOICE**

It seemed nearby waters began to darken and the once sapphire skies were clouded grey---

*(She throws it again, targeting something. Then, the invisible thing becomes a bow and arrow. She readies the arrow, scanning the audience until she sees her target. Then, she releases it.*

*The invisible thing is now a tidal wave. The WOMAN performs a few gestures as sounds of a tsunami crash.)*

#### **A VOICE**

The entire population were submerged in a tidal wave---there were no survivors except---  
This act of divinely betrayal---  
Will go down in history---  
Forever remembered---

*(The WOMAN cuts off the voice with a gesture. A change in lights shift into the present environment.*

*The WOMAN turns to the audience of spirit confidants.)*

#### **THE WOMAN**

From this day on, I am a stranger to myself. To my *former* self.  
What is there to remember, after all?  
My reputation exceeded my need for belonging. The isolation this existence brings is pointless.  
Utterings of my name in a thousand different languages over a thousand different lifetime *kept* me here. Day after day of prayer, offerings, gifts, sacrifices. Imprisoned forever as long as spoken and written word exists.  
I am ever-lasting so long as people are ever-lasting.  
Who'd want *that*?

...

And so, I did such a terrible thing.  
If I couldn't just simply die, oblivion's the next best thing.

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Sleep is the next *next* best thing but then you just keep waking up every day. Once I'm settled into a new name, a new face, a new prayer, a new vessel, a new life...I can be free from the eons of suffering and torment and old memories. I...I don't regret what I did. In fact, I'll just forget about it eventually! No regrets now, no regrets later. Right?

*(The WOMAN seeks assurance from the audience. After a moment, she gets an idea and goes to her screen, typing.)*

#### THE WOMAN

"...and I believe that there is a way to erase myself from the world. Wipe the slate clean. Become a new 'person.' And then maybe, I can feel what it's like to die and be reborn. My name is---"

...

"---my old name is of no importance anymore."

*(beat)*

"I mean, how hard can changing one's identity be? You *humans* do this magic trick called 'doxing' and instantly, you are someone else for a few moments. You can take their birthright and assigned numbers---I believe you call it 'socials securities'---to obtain material wealth. Blegh.

I get it though. Modern society and modern gods are completely dependent on such superficial conceptual currencies. In fact, it'd be completely impossible to separate oneself from the wiles of capitalism."

*(The WOMAN opens a tab on her laptop to research something along the lines of bank accounts or money or if it's possible to live without money. After a few moments, her results seem to provide a certain hint at what may come.)*

#### THE WOMAN

I have burned every scroll, book, account, witness, and Wikipedia page attached to my former name. I drowned everything of my former life into the depths of the ocean. To be forgotten. Cannot be reached. Never to resurface.

And it took *a long time* to do so. Like, I know I was a minor god or something, but I had no idea I was *that* well-known. I discovered that I had at least a *hundred* variations of my name---I can't even remember the original dialect. And there have been a lot more languages and dialects than there were centuries ago...

You know, I wonder what was the origin of my---

...

I digress.

"It's time to open up my new shrine as a brand spankin' new goddess! This 'shrine' is free to everyone and anyone who has access to the 'internet' and has a good 'Wi-Fi' hotspot."

Ooh, I hope these "hotspots" won't burn them. Humans are delicate.

"Feel free to leave a comment. Get to know the new me!"

*(The WOMAN waits. At first, she is excited and fantasizes about the prospect of being a new...being.)*

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*After a moment, she starts fidgeting from the boredom. Checking the desk.  
Checking the laptop. Humming a tune.*

*She summons a mirror and looks at herself.)*

**THE WOMAN**

“My name is...of no importance anymore.”

...

But how will they know that it’s a different me than the me before?

*(The WOMAN contemplates. She opens up a search engine on one of the  
keyboards.)*

**THE WOMAN**

“Popular...names...for goddesses---”

...

“Popular...names...for humans---”

Huh? No, wait...

“Popular names.”

...

“Ava.”

“Emily.”

“Olivia.”

Eh.

Why would I want a *popular* name, though? That would just be confusing. And unoriginal.

A name has to have

meaning, you know?

Like, “Hey, I’m leaving my mark in this lifetime!”

A name tells you where you were born or what kind of personality your parents want you to have.

A name is supposed to be cherished anyway.

And changing my name is a cherishing thing.

*If I do it the right way.*

...

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And it's all the same with prayers, too. Ooh, I almost forgot.

What will they pray to me for now?

*(beat)*

I mean, it's not uncommon for humans to pray to other humans for small things, right? Humans have prayed to Emperors, Kings, Presidents, "Kanyes" for measly attention. And wealth. Sometimes food and sex and rain.

Rain. Rain and water just wasn't for me anymore.

Sure, the world literally depends on it.

But I'm gonna leave all that to the *major* gods of the oceans or seas or whatever.

*(There is distant rumbling of thunderstorms in the background. She realizes this and makes a motion in the air. She waits for a few seconds. She sighs.)*

#### THE WOMAN

...It'll be fine. Yeah.

It's fine.

I can just...leave my "old job."

Yeah.

...

There are plenty of other Gods to take care of it. They got this!

But anyway, I need a new power. Something that is... more "humanly." You know? I think I want to go more subtle in this next life. Something that isn't having control over oceans, rivers, tsunami's, whirlpools or low tides.

A subtle prayer. Like...

The power to put a smile on your face.

...

Is that too cheesy?

*(A sound from the computer dings. At first, the WOMAN doesn't know how to react. Silence. Maybe looking at the audience for support, in confusion.)*

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*The computer dings again.*

*The WOMAN musters courage and cautiously tip-toes up to a screen. She suddenly releases her breath, almost embarrassed.)*

*(She sits down casually and checks it.)*

**THE WOMAN**

Oh! It's a... "subscriber?"

...

Subscriber!

Like...a worshipper.

Yeah.

Cool.

*(The WOMAN opens the email.)*

**THE WOMAN**

Ooooh, this one's from... "XXXKaiserShin074XXX." Huh.

"Hello, XXXKaiserShin074XXX! A beautiful name. Did your parents give it to you? Is it a local name? A popular one? Thank you for offering your sacrifice to my temple! Or as modern folks say nowadays, subscribe to my e-newsletter! I assure you, as soon as I figure out my new name and powers, I will live to serve humanity and your wishes! In the meantime, feel free to leave a prayer at the shrine-button!"

...

It's always so fun to learn of a new worshipper. Well, I mean...when I just came into existence, it was exciting. I was happy to get two or three worshippers at a time.

The number of worshippers I would get each day would multiply. Soon, I would be talking with hundreds, then thousands of people.

Ensuring what I was doing was enough for them to stay.

I feared they would leave.

When people don't visit your temple, when they leave for another...

I would be forgotten about. I would be alone.

...

Mother told me "loneliness is death." I felt this loneliness before, time after time, as humans grow old, and they forget and die. But it wasn't *death*. Because either one or two or three humans would still utter my name. Humans pass their names down to their children. Their children created a community of names and stories and memories.

And that community stayed.

And then... I stayed.

*(A notification is heard again. The WOMAN stops herself and checks another screen, re-centering herself.)*

**THE WOMAN**

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Excuse me.

...

Oh! Another subscriber. Yay.

...

“Sexy\_Timez\_<3.”

...

Okay, is that really a name?

...

“IF YOU WANT A GOOD TIME CLICK ON THIS BUTTON TO SHOW LOCAL MILFS IN YOUR AREA CALL THIS NUMBER TO HOOK UP WITH OUR LOVELY LADIES AND---”

*(The WOMAN screams after seeing a rather lewd photo following the paragraph of the spam email.)*

### **THE WOMAN**

THIS IS NOT A BROTHEL.

Oh God!

*(The WOMAN deletes the email frantically.)*

*(She sighs and slumps in her chair. The WOMAN closes her eyes.*

*After a few moments of exhaustion, a notification rings. Then another. Then another. The notifications become a cacophony of dings until it becomes a drone.*

*The WOMAN is in a dream. She now wears a more goddess-like robe. She holds relics of shamanism and is performing a rite with movement and dance that is different than the sequence before.*

*A voiceover speaks over this dream, the voice of The MOTHER, also voiced by the actor playing the WOMAN.)*

### **THE MOTHER (v.o.)**

What have I always told you?

Your birth was neither an accident nor planned. It happened because it was so.

For your worshippers, they help you live. Your given name is decided by them. And it is so.

Until the end of time, you exist in their hearts. Their dreams. Their projections about their feeble lives and worries. It is your duty to cherish them, crush them a few times, but mostly cherish and execute them in your own power and wisdom.

...

Your father and I were worried you'd be buried into oblivion. I mean, you were so small and clumsy! It was quite cute. Adorable. Like a baby beach turtle ready to ride out on the waves of the vast Ocean. The currents could've caught you under their terrible oppressions. But you survived through memory.

*I'm even impressed.*

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...

Although, if I had to say one thing about you that I find a little irksome---just a little---I'd say it was your kindness.

You take on so much for so little in return.

You've allowed the Ocean's waves to carry you across, but if you don't pay attention to your direction, to preserving your strength to swim, it will drown you.

You have so much compassion for even the lowliest follower. The woman who is widowed. The old man on the verge of death. The child with a limp.

...

Yes, I'm saying I'm a little disappointed you aren't finding a middle ground. Your purpose is lost. Take each prayer and decide with kindness. But also sternness.

This is the life you were born into.

...

I didn't decide it. And neither did you---

**THANK YOU FOR READING!**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST THE REST OF MY SCRIPT, PLEASE CONTACT ME VIA  
EMAIL OR MY WEBSITE!**

(C)ELIZABETH UNG