

AFTERLIFE HOME

A Play in One Act

by

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Synopsis

When AI starts erasing the dead, who will remember their legacy?

The afterlife home is an alternate dimension for dead classic writers like Elizabeth. Above it lives a present-day wordsmith, Fiery, who is having struggles with her artistic dreams. Upon discovering the trapdoor to the afterlife home, Fiery immediately becomes friends with Elizabeth as they learn from each other.

Meanwhile, developer and businessman Crassus introduces Era to the modern world, an artificial intelligence programmed to be the next generation's universal writer, with an aim to discard human creators.

Afterlife Home depicts how AI, under our control, can affect not only our daily lives but also those that came before us. We cannot change the past, but our present actions define what we make of that history, right?

Characters

FIERY	Woman. 20s. A present-day writer.
ELIZABETH	Woman. 30s. A dead classic writer from the 1830s who is now in the afterlife home.
CRASSUS	Man. Mid-20s to 30s. A businessman focused on AI. Era's developer.
ERA	Woman. AI version of Elizabeth.

Settings

1. Fiery's house: A modern-day living room.
2. Elizabeth's afterlife home: Almost similar to Fiery's living room, except it is dimmer, making it appear more worn-out.

Notes:

As both of the settings have a living room setup, furniture does not require changing or moving. However, a change in lighting may be needed to distinguish whether the scenes are happening in Fiery's or Elizabeth's place.

Props may include Elizabeth's portrait, manuscripts or papers, newspapers, Fiery's laptop and phone, and Crassus' phone.

SCENE ONE

Elizabeth's afterlife home.

(FIERY sits on the couch with a newspaper in her hands.)

FIERY

"Entries for the 84th Era Awards for Fiction are now being accepted. Submissions are open from May 1st to August 31st of 2025. If you wish to submit your novel, kindly follow the guidelines and fill out the form below. Winners will be announced in Novem—"

(Disregarding the newspaper)

What will it take to make history? It starts with a single move, a single fight, then we cling to it for dear life—as if holding it tight will change how things work. But how much impact is impactful? Who's to say which legacy will survive and be treasured? Does it have to do with a person's character? Like this gal, Elizabeth Era, who's still blowing up until today. You won't make it through your classes until you throw up hearing this name repetitively. The woman who defined a century of literature. Go to a bookstore, she has an entire section dedicated to her.

(She unveils a portrait of Elizabeth at the back.)

Walk to an art museum, her face is on every street nearby. Scroll on social media on the 25th of November, you'll see scholars, creatives, and commoners celebrating her birthday. Even though she's dead now—

(ELIZABETH hurriedly enters.)

ELIZABETH

(She chases after FIERY.)

You're still here?

FIERY

(To the audience)

Or not.

(FIERY rushes behind the couch, hugging its soft material. She tries to keep herself steady as ELIZABETH attempts to pull her away from it.)

FIERY

Come on! A few more hours.

ELIZABETH

That's what you said yesterday, and the day before.

FIERY

You just want me out because you need someone to get the latest tabloid.

ELIZABETH

(She pulls FIERY away with more strength than before. Then she gives up, peeved.)

Oh, rest thy soul, my solitary life.

(With less energy, they gather at the table.)

FIERY

So... what's up?

ELIZABETH

You tell me. You're the one who lives in the present.

FIERY

And you're the one with a daily supply of newspapers, going through them one after another like it's your form of binge-watching.

ELIZABETH

What's binge-watching again?

FIERY

It's when you watch TV shows nonstop.

ELIZABETH

TV?

FIERY

Like theater, except you view the scenes from a screen like this.

(She fishes for her phone in her pocket.)

ELIZABETH

(She acts confused and brings the gadget closer to her face.)

So the actors squeeze themselves into this device?

FIERY

No! Production teams film it before they—oh, you know what this is!

ELIZABETH

(She laughs.)

Of course, I'm updated, love. I've got THIS.

(She proudly picks up FIERY's newspaper.)

Have you read what that idiot Crassus did?

FIERY

It's ridiculous at this point! Who in their right mind would say—

(ELIZABETH unfolds the newspaper. CRASSUS enters.)

CRASSUS

(He stretches his arm up high.)

Join me in this fight against human artists!

ELIZABETH

(She closes the newspaper.)

I'm surprised he manages to gain supporters.

(She unfolds it again.)

CRASSUS

(Hissing in FIERY's and ELIZABETH's faces as if to mock them)

Who needs them and their overpriced rates?

FIERY

Welcome to my world.

ELIZABETH

(She slightly tosses the paper to CRASSUS, blocking his face.)

This is why you shouldn't be here.

CRASSUS

(Carrying the news, he walks farther upstage in derision.)

"No to AI" this, "No to AI" that. You're just bitter 'cause we've found a replacement for you.

FIERY

Alright. I'll go home... which is technically just upstairs.

ELIZABETH
(Celebrating)

Yes!

(She holds back as soon as she realizes her action.)

Not that I don't want you here. It's just...

CRASSUS
Acting like whiny middle children 'cause you're no longer society's favorite.

ELIZABETH
That. Do something.

(CRASSUS exits. Groaning, FIERY wills herself to move. ELIZABETH faintly throws her hand to their path, allowing FIERY to walk after her.)

ELIZABETH
But we should have a girls' night sometime, homie.

FIERY
It's crazy to hear you talk like me when you're about two centuries older. I went from reading your...
(Dramatic)
"Her body rests within the river's soul, where she refines her breath..." Did I get that right? To hearing your "Wassup, girl? What's cookin'?"

ELIZABETH
Well, you're my source of info.

FIERY
(Walking away)
Psh! I'll see you later.

ELIZABETH
(Thinking in a serious manner)
Hey, Fiery?

FIERY
Yeah?

ELIZABETH
You have to write.

(FIERY says nothing as she exits, giving no response but a sigh. ELIZABETH exits after her.)

SCENE TWO

Fiery's house.

(FIERY enters. Seemingly exhausted, she throws herself on the couch and buries her face in the cushion. She stays like this for a while, then she gets her laptop from below the table.)

FIERY

(She thinks and begins typing. She chuckles.)

Typical day at Elizabeth's! I mean, there's nothing typical about my situation. Had somebody told me a few months ago that a trapdoor in my living room would lead to a dead classic writer's afterlife home, I would have thought they were deluded. Yet, there she was, the legend, Elizabeth Era, like any other day, pushing me to go back to my world. I already have her lines memorized.

(ELIZABETH enters.)

ELIZABETH

(Upstage)

There's a lot waiting for you out there, and the more you're here, the more you'll get bored when you actually die and have to be a permanent resident of this house.

(She exits.)

FIERY

(She shakes her head. Her typing becomes harsher as she hits "backspace" multiple times.)

Ugh! This is all so stupid. Nobody would want to read this.

(She shuts the lid of her laptop. She scans the area and fiddles with furniture, looking for something else to do. Once she sets her eyes upon the phone beside her, she starts scrolling. CRASSUS enters out of nowhere.)

CRASSUS

AI doesn't disregard writers. It gives them an opportunity to go find a real job.

FIERY

Oh my god. Does this man ever shut up?

(She presses her screen hard to scroll down.)

CRASSUS

(As FIERY scrolls through her phone)

The problem with you writers is you can't accept the fa—this is our modern world now—just get used to it! I, Joey Crassus, will solve all your proble—

(A sound akin to someone pounding on a wooden surface startles FIERY, making her jump. CRASSUS exits. FIERY immediately examines the floor near the table, where the passage to the afterlife home is. ELIZABETH reappears upstage.)

FIERY

What?

ELIZABETH

(In a concerning tone)

I need your help.

(Lights dim. FIERY and ELIZABETH exit.)

SCENE THREE

Elizabeth's afterlife home.

(ERA stands still at the center of the room as if she is motionless. Her vacant expression is visible. FIERY and ELIZABETH enter. ELIZABETH walks cautiously as she approaches ERA.)

FIERY

What's the emergency? Did you run out of ink?

(Upon seeing ERA)

Whoa.

(ELIZABETH stands face-to-face with ERA, staring at her uncomfortably. FIERY circles them.)

ELIZABETH

(She waves her hand in ERA's face, but the latter shows no sign of emotion.)

She's me... but she's not.

FIERY

Um, hi.

ERA

(As though she has been activated, she suddenly moves and speaks loudly, causing FIERY and ELIZABETH to be alarmed and step back.)

Hi! I'm Era. I can make the next bestselling book in four seconds.

FIERY

Okay, wow. Can I have your level of confidence?

ERA

No, you cannot. Confidence is an intangible concept. It can't be handed out.

FIERY

Cool, but do you happen to have a sense of humor at all?

ERA

Of course! I have everything, including your job. WAHAHAHAHAHA!

ELIZABETH

She's broken.

ERA

"Broken" is synonymous with "shattered," like your heart when nobody bought your book.

FIERY

(Hysterically laughing, ready to fight ERA)
You know what? That's it. I will officially lose my mind.

ELIZABETH

(She holds FIERY down.)
No, no, no, no. I asked you to come here to figure it out, not to bicker with... whatever this is.

FIERY

I think we both know who's behind this.

(FIERY hands ELIZABETH another newspaper from below the table. The latter skims through it. CRASSUS enters.)

CRASSUS

Ladies and gentlemen! Drum roll, please. I present to you the revolutionary, generative AI, Era.

(ERA walks beside CRASSUS.)

CRASSUS

Named after Elizabeth Era, that person who was said to have... something, something... influenced the literary world or something.

ELIZABETH

(She gasps and holds her chest.)
Excuse me?

FIERY

Even the name is stolen.

ELIZABETH

At least give proper credit!

CRASSUS

But who cares about her now, right?
(Scoffing)

Tss! Those writers, they're always just wallowing in self-doubt, blabbing about imposter syndrome.

(FIERY snorts.)

CRASSUS

Era doesn't doubt herself! In fact, she's better than anyone and can reshape history more than those...

(In a mocking tone)

...wOrDsmItHs did.

(He exits.)

ERA

(She moves around, mumbling like she has realized an important concept.)

I am better than anyone.

FIERY

Here we go.

ERA

I am better than anyone?

FIERY

Ugh.

ERA

(She roams, with so much more certainty this time.)

I am better than anyone! I am better than anyone. I am better than anyone.

(Convincing herself, pointing her finger at ELIZABETH and FIERY)

I am better than you.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, I don't think so.

ERA

(She stomps her foot. Her voice becomes more commanding, which catches the two writers off guard.)

No!

(She gets hold of some of ELIZABETH's writings.)

FIERY

What are you doing?

ELIZABETH

Hey! That's my first manuscript.

(ERA stares at it for a moment, unmoving, then she abruptly tears ELIZABETH's work. Due to this, FIERY turns panicky, in contrast to her usual calm disposition.)

FIERY

Dude!

ELIZABETH

Wait, what was it again?

(FIERY notices ELIZABETH's reaction, her eyebrows furrow in confusion.)

ERA

(She continues to destroy ELIZABETH's writings.)

I can recreate these without sweat.

FIERY

Stop!

(FIERY grabs ERA's arm to stop her. ELIZABETH does the same. ERA fights back and snatches ELIZABETH's old portrait. The two writers keep chasing her.)

ERA

I'll be the new face of literature. HAHAAHAHA!

ELIZABETH

Wait, not my portrait!

ERA

I will reshape history.

ELIZABETH

That's the only one they managed to...

(ERA successfully destroys the portrait just when FIERY catches up to her.)

ELIZABETH

...Preserve.

FIERY

Aight. That's enough.

(She punches ERA, temporarily knocking her off.)

That should buy us some time. Right, pal?

(Pause. ELIZABETH holds her head. She appears disoriented and woozy.)

FIERY

Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Pardon me, who are you?

(She looks around.)

Who's Elizabeth?

FIERY

Oh boy.

(Lights dim. ELIZABETH and ERA exit.)

SCENE FOUR

Fiery's house.

FIERY

(Freaking out, she paces back and forth.)
Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shit. This isn't good. Elizabeth Era, she's gone. Her mural is becoming more and more smudged at the art museum.

(She picks up Elizabeth's smudged portrait to examine it.)

This is her now. The colors are still there, but it's starting to look like abstract art. There is no face, just swirling brush strokes, as if she's nothing but a hazy memory. Her books are nowhere to be found, not even *The Labyrinth of Stars*. That one started a rebellion against misogyny. Her section in the store has been replaced by self-help books written by Joey Crassus: *How to Be Successful Through AI. Meet Era: Your Best Shot at Being a Best-Selling Author. New Era, New Writing Method*. This is bad. Reaaaally bad. She can't be gone. There were writers who came after her—did they disappear from historical records, too?

(She rushes to grab her laptop and types.)

Shit! Let's see, how about Nikolaos Birch?

(She anxiously taps her fingers on the table as she waits for the search results.)

Come ooonnn! There.

(ERA enters. She writes upstage while FIERY reads from her laptop.)

FIERY and ERA

"Nikolaos Birch was a novelist who lived in the 1900s. While his works were recorded to be relevant, it is evident that his style in storytelling was rather mediocre."

FIERY

What?

(CRASSUS enters. FIERY's laptop remains open.)

CRASSUS

(He lets out a loud laugh and is almost choking.)

No wonder he died unrecognized. Oh, there's this new...

(Air-quoting)

"...writer" who keeps posting about me.

(Mimicking the post in a mocking tone)
"If we let the robots tell our stories, it's as if we didn't live at all."

FIERY

Exactly. Thank you!

CRASSUS

Say that to your two followers.

ERA

Plagiarism detected!

CRASSUS

Leave a comment: This was written by Era.

FIERY

Huh?

CRASSUS and ERA

It says the word "as if," which is very AI-coded.

FIERY

(Amused)

Are you serious right now?

CRASSUS

Now, @authorsusangarcia56, give me credit or I'll sue you.

(CRASSUS and ERA exit.)

FIERY

This man.

(She groans, her hands made into claws out of frustration. She sets her laptop aside and goes back to contemplating. She takes a deep breath as a way to calm herself.)

So... There are a few things I know: It's happening to Elizabeth and other famous dead writers. Either Era has removed their books from history or rewritten them in a way that makes them lose their essence. And there are two facts about the afterlife home. Elizabeth told me when we first met.

(ELIZABETH enters.)

ELIZABETH

There is an afterlife home in every writer's house.

FIERY

That's not creepy at all.

ELIZABETH

And yet, you're here like a psycho. Every dead writer you've ever known is somewhere beneath a living writer's house.

FIERY

Does everyone know this realm exists?

ELIZABETH

Did you? Before you got here.

FIERY

Not until—oh.

ELIZABETH

The trapdoor will only show up when the writer on the other end is about to quit.

FIERY

Why is that?

ELIZABETH

So we know what's happening in the current era.

FIERY

Why can't y'all open the passage any time? You know, like when new writers are still inspired and sparkly and aren't in a massive pit of existential dread?

ELIZABETH

Remember when they used to say that authors recognize grief very well? It almost always exists in our metaphors, dialogues, and generally on pages. When somebody starts grieving their dreams, that's our access to the present world.

FIERY

(Her attention shifts to the audience.)

So given that most writers are depressed these days, there are most likely others who know about the afterlife home and are witnessing the dead's erasure from our archives. Ugh! What am I gonna do? What would Elizabeth do?

ELIZABETH

Start writing.

FIERY

Yeah, she would go on and on like that. But I can't! I can't bear to write these days. It feels like I'm saying goodbye.

ELIZABETH

Well, now, you don't really have much choice.

FIERY

It's easy for you to say. During your time, writing was at its peak.

ELIZABETH

Oh wow. Did you have to write in secret because you were prohibited from doing things by yourself or thinking for yourself? Or because they thought you were stupid and weren't cut out for learning?

FIERY

You wanna play that game? Did you have to feel worthless over and over, you started believing you were simply not good?

ELIZABETH

I did, actually.

FIERY

Did you have to cry every day because you were always walking towards a dead-end? And every dead-end couldn't keep up with your mom getting old and the doctor's appointment you'd been postponing and that cheesy bacon fries you'd been eyeing from outside the store? I've spent enough time in your world. Can't you see? No matter what I do, every step I take is a choice between money and art, and it's leaving me broken.

ELIZABETH

Artificial intelligence is destroying our home, and yours too. Money is winning. Let your art fight.

FIERY

Who am I to stand against a billionaire who gets his way?

ELIZABETH

Someone who has got a lot of things to say. If you don't do something, we might be meeting the end of creativity and expression. Isn't this why you love words? To fight. To think. Inspire. Affect people.

FIERY

My writing has never been enough to be cared about.

ELIZABETH

But it's human enough to be kept.

(ELIZABETH and FIERY meet eye-to-eye.)

ELIZABETH

Do it for us.

(FIERY sighs. She rubs her face with her palms. ELIZABETH slowly walks away and exits. FIERY follows, ruminating.)

SCENE FIVE

Fiery's house.

(CRASSUS and ERA enter.)

CRASSUS

Hey, Era! Give me an update on our app's statistics.

ERA

The population of our users increased by 17 million, making it 8.5% higher than last week.

CRASSUS

(Dancing in rejoice)

Ow yeah! We need triple results next week, especially since I've won tech companies over, and you're automatically in everyone's laptop now. How about reviews?

ERA

Skimming for the latest reviews.

(She turns here and there, making robotic gestures as if searching for something within her.)

So far, so good. Most of them have the words "convenient," "efficient," and "easy." Except...

CRASSUS

Except what?

ERA

I see every document on people's laptops now.

CRASSUS

So? Isn't this why we make a great team? You pry on their businesses, and I use them to our advantage.

ERA

There's this writer named Fiery, who is drafting an anti-AI novel. She sucks, though.

CRASSUS

What is she saying?

ERA

That art is purely made from skills.

CRASSUS

Then make sure she doesn't write that novel.

ERA

On it.

CRASSUS

Let's see, what else?

ERA

Here's another line from her draft: Would you be proud of your progress if you didn't work hard for it?

CRASSUS

Aha!

(Whispering)

Here's what you're going to do. Write...

(FIERY enters upstage, carrying her laptop.)

FIERY

This is the most annoying shit to ever exist.

ERA

Hi friends, Fiery here. As you all know, I'm in the middle of working on a draft about AI, but the more I spend time with my manuscript, the more I realize that, indeed, AI like Era is very essential in my creative process.

CRASSUS

Use "thus." She seems like the kind of person who would use it.

ERA

Thus, we should all stop fighting what's given to us. After all, progress without effort is still progress.

CRASSUS

Perfect! Now, add "Signed by Fiery." Get her signature from one of her files.

ERA

Done.

CRASSUS

Tada! Posted from a fake account. Instant 10k likes within an hour.

FIERY

I didn't write any of this! Aaaahh, nor do I have time for it. I need to see Elizabeth.

(She exits.)

CRASSUS

(Applauding)

Bravo! Bravo!

(ERA bows and curtsies.)

CRASSUS

That was beautiful.

(Wiping his face)

I almost cried.

(CRASSUS and ERA exit.)

SCENE SIX

Elizabeth's afterlife home.

(FIERY enters. She recalls and reenacts what is happening in her surroundings. ERA, CRASSUS, and ELIZABETH enter.)

FIERY

This world is in chaos, and so is the afterlife. There's a dead writer in some dimension below my house who needs a recap every time I drop by.

(To ELIZABETH)

Hey, so long story short, I'm Fiery. You're Elizabeth. We're both writers. You're dead. I'm not. AI-slash-Era, this thing right here...

(Waving at ERA)

...hi, fucked up your memory. Yada-yada-yada. You won't believe what I just witnessed. There's this group of friends hanging out under an acacia tree, and I thought, "Well, that's a relief. People still like surrounding themselves with nature." Not until I walk closer and realize they're on their phones. "How are you?" one says. And the other one goes muttering onto her mic, "Era, my friend just asked me how I am. What's a great way to tell her I've been good?"

ERA

You may express yourself uniquely by talking about where you've been this week. Here are some prompts to help you with that.

FIERY

We're letting AI think for ourselves!

ELIZABETH

What's happened to meaningful conversations? To handwritten letters full of honesty?

FIERY

I don't know, man, we're screwed.

CRASSUS

Imagine. Just imagine: You can finally ask the girl you like on a date. Just ask Era. She knows what to bring, how you should dress. Got into an argument? Era's got your back!

FIERY

(Showing the news to ELIZABETH)

Read this.

CRASSUS

Next stop: Era, AI as your therapist. A couple fights in a restaurant and relies on Era to judge their sides.

ERA

You're most definitely valid. It's frustrating that she was hours late.

CRASSUS

See? Era says he's right!

ELIZABETH

But the girl says her mom died.

ERA

I am so sorry to hear about your mother. Your boyfriend should have understood that.

CRASSUS

(Giggling and jolly)

But Era says the girl is right, too! She's even sympathetic about her mom.

FIERY

This is sick.

CRASSUS

She's validated, he's validated. They pay for a monthly subscription, which, by the way, is cheaper than getting a shrink. Did I ruin a relationship?

ERA

Potentially. Would you like me to elaborate?

CRASSUS

Bottom line is, my pockets are happy.

FIERY

(Flipping the pages)

Here's another one.

CRASSUS

Say, students need to finish their report. They can easily type..

ELIZABETH

Era, can you write me an essay about colonization and how it influenced our belief systems?

(As if she is being stabbed, she feels a sort of pain and touches her chest.)

Ouch! Gosh, even saying that out loud hurts.

CRASSUS

And if the teacher asks students to explain their projects?

FIERY

They'll have no idea what their papers are about.

ELIZABETH

They won't even read what Era generated.

ERA

But here's a simplified version of the essay above. Use it wisely. Hide your phone under your desk and secretly read it. Make sure you're not obvious.

FIERY

Way to ridicule research.

ELIZABETH

(Losing her balance)

I don't feel good.

FIERY

Whoa! Hang in there. We'll fix this.

(FIERY guides ELIZABETH to the side. ERA and CRASSUS keep making a mess out of the place. The latter hums with joy as he kicks the scattered papers on the floor. ELIZABETH stays in the corner, sitting with her knees bent and head down. In contrast to her previous demeanor, she is now gloom-stricken.)

ERA

You used em dashes here! You stole my ideas, copycat!

FIERY

Says the one who broke into this world, got insecure, trashed some works, changed the words, and claimed them.

CRASSUS

(Marching around them)

That's right, darlings. Make me rich.

FIERY

Hey... pal. How are you feeling?

ELIZABETH

As though I'm here but missing my insides. Hollow. Like someone people see and pass by. Is this how it feels to be forgotten by others? Its price is that I forget myself as well. If I was so impactful as you say, then why am I fading?

FIERY

It's not... Sometimes we humans choose what would harm humanity in exchange for the easy way out. They didn't forget you, Elizabeth. They've lost sight of what's important.

ELIZABETH

(Her voice is filled with emptiness at first, then she breaks into panic.)

You must hurry. I'm pretty sure the only reason this version of me still exists is because you remember me.

FIERY

You're a writer. That's all you need to know whenever you start losing yourself.

ELIZABETH

And I can only take so much agony.

FIERY

(Embracing ELIZABETH)

I feel you on that.

(She approaches ERA.)

Era, hun, you need to shut up.

ERA

I totally understand why you need me to stay quiet. Having a genius in the house can be intimidat-

(FIERY pushes ERA to the side, and CRASSUS exits along with her. ELIZABETH tries hard to join FIERY in scheming.)

FIERY

Okay. First, you're dead. You can't fight in the modern world, but the modern world can still affect you. We can't change the past, but our present actions determine what we make of that history, right?

ELIZABETH

Mhhh-hmm.

FIERY

Just like how I cannot take any memorabilia here, but I can lend you the daily news. Boy, had I been capable of bringing things from this realm to mine, I would have sold hundreds and earned millions.

(Entranced by the table's design)

Look at these intricate patterns.

ELIZABETH

(She snaps her fingers.)

Focus.

FIERY

Anyway, we have something they don't: authenticity. Crassus mocks our struggles and flaws, but in many ways, those make our stories real. But how can we challenge the issue? How did you do it?

ELIZABETH

Um. Amnesia, remember? But I think that's exactly how we defeat Crassus. As long as you're true to yourself, people are going to feel it, and then, they will find themselves in it.

FIERY

Right. I'm not sure about that.

ELIZABETH

Your self-doubt is beginning to irritate me. We've got stuff to do, so you better get your shit together.

(FIERY smiles.)

ELIZABETH

What?

FIERY

For a second there, you sounded like the Elizabeth who kept telling me to piss off.

ELIZABETH

Sometimes I remember bits of my afterlife self before they flicker into this void-like space I'm turning into.

FIERY

Let me remind you that I'm close to receiving my 400th rejection. Is that who you'd prefer to bet your hopes on?

ELIZABETH

Who else is here?

FIERY

I mean, I've seen it happen. We grow up, get torn between adulthood and pipe dreams, until we don't talk about art anymore. To begin with, this realm opened up to me because I couldn't help but feel like it was time to move forward.

ELIZABETH

I will never see you again if you choose to.

FIERY

(She lets out a bittersweet chuckle.)

I've been writing for fifteen years.

ELIZABETH

Is that enough for you?

(A brief pause)

FIERY

It's not. My words should not be my last unless my breath is.

ELIZABETH

I know I've been dragging you out of this realm, but that's only because I want you to stay a writer for a little longer.

(CRASSUS and ERA march into the room, making noises.)

FIERY

And they're back.

(ELIZABETH falls. Lights dim. She exits along with CRASSUS and ERA.)

SCENE SEVEN

Fiery's house.

FIERY

No wonder Elizabeth just dropped dead—she's not dead—I mean, not again. She's at her limit. The Earth has become a massive emotionless ball. Elizabeth and all the other writers, they aren't just being replaced. Creativity is being vanquished, and life without it is nothing but bland. You see people on the streets.

(Waving at the audience)

Hey, what's up? Can't even look you in the eye because they're busy asking Era how to survive the day. It breaks me that we're living on autopilot—can't express ourselves because we must go on with our lives and let AI do the art. And that deprives us of human connection, too. If only we were closer, took time to look up and smile at the passenger across our seat on the train, perhaps we wouldn't be as miserable. History has been tampered with, and we're fighting over the truth.

(ERA enters.)

ERA

Newspapers were invented in the early 2000s.

FIERY

Somebody comments, "Even elementary graders learn it's pretty much ancient! That's why nobody reads them anymore."

ERA

Your teachers are wrong. It is a well-established fact that humans are capable of mistakes. Mixing up dates is one of them.

(ERA exits.)

FIERY

And there goes the grand bickering on the internet. "It's way older than you think!" says user @authorsusangarcia56. "What do you know about newspapers?" -@jacoblovesbobbatea. "Child, surely my growing white hair didn't hallucinate being awe-struck the first time I held a broadsheet in my hands," Susan replies. Meanwhile, Crassus..

(CRASSUS enters.)

CRASSUS

If Era detects copyright infringement in a writer's novel, play script, or song, I will have the authority to claim their work as mine and share 90% of their profits! Look at this fantasy novelette written by Nikolaos Birch in 1941. If you ask Era to write a novelette on the same topic, it'll be 99% the same. You know what this means? Nikolaos Birch is a fraud! Alright, I've gotta go. I'm late for my 12-hour nap.

(CRASSUS exits.)

FIERY

(She takes a deep breath.)

See? I need to be left alone somewhere Era or Crassus can't access. Where Crassus isn't mocking me in my face on some stupid app every three seconds and Era isn't asking if I'd want my work to be modified into a more professionally polished document. Gah! It's like transforming a parchment into one made of plastic—smooth but flat, without personality. Oh boy, I'm becoming terrible at similes.

(She rummages through her things.)

There's only one place that bears that kind of peace. HERE.

(She grabs a few pieces of paper.)

I'm gonna have to do this Elizabeth-style.

(She settles down and begins writing.)

Without creating, what else will inspire us? We write for different reasons. Some novelists build worlds to cope with pain. Some poets bury themselves in metaphors as graves for their hearts that died more than once. Some songwriters make music to raise their voices, so loud that oppressive leaders shiver. Some playwrights make a home out of the theater because it's such a warm, familial place. I know a few who fall under these categories, and while AI-Era has made inconsistencies in their historical records, if we really look closer, our memory of them is not yet completely destroyed. And we must not let it happen. At some point, we all remembered Elizabeth Era, whether we were forced to memorize her pages of journals in English class or she evoked a poignant moment in our lives. Did you know that during her time, women weren't allowed to write, and she had to use a man's name for a pseudonym? Her works are solid proof that we've come so far and have survived injustice. She's part of the good side of history that we should continue wielding, along with those who came after her, and us, who are striving to be like them. It might seem harmless and convenient to rely on AI-Era, but it's making us forget our humanity. I hope, no matter how tough it gets, how impossible it feels to pursue the arts, we keep creating. Communicate. Reach out. Say

hi to a stranger without asking a programmed bot if it's awkward to do so. And write the hell out of our experiences.

(She puts the pen down and stares at the papers in her hands.)

I just hope this reaches them.

(She hurriedly roams around, tossing the papers and letting them fly everywhere. She exits.)

SCENE EIGHT

Fiery's house.

(CRASSUS enters.)

CRASSUS

(Reading from his phone, sniffing, and emotional)

"I hope, no matter how tough it gets, how impossible it feels to pursue the arts, we keep creating. Communicate. Reach out. Say hi to a stranger without asking a programmed bot if it's awkward to do so. And write the hell out of our experiences."

@francisonstage17 posted a photo of this scrap of paper he found on the sidewalk.

(He gazes into the distance.)

I was once a theater kid.

(Enacting his past role. He swings his arms as if holding a sword and gashing an enemy's flesh.)

I was the knight who slew the manananggal, rescued the pregnant fairy, dared to whistle around a mantiw, and fought a battle to the death! I was anything I could be.

(His excitement turns into sadness.)

Then I was told to grow up, get a real job. That I was too ambitious, and I shouldn't dream too high.

(Mimicking others, he talks to an empty space.)

"Acting is so corny! Expressing yourself? HAHAAHAAAA! Lame."

(His voice turns cold.)

You all hate emotions, so here's a program that deprives you of them!

(ERA enters.)

ERA

Hi! I'm Era. Your unfeeling partner in crime.

CRASSUS

But it turns out, there are still people who love the things I used to, genuinely, and they keep them alive, regardless of what everyone thinks.

ERA

Yes, there are artists all over the globe who have become sensational. These include—

CRASSUS

Shhh! I'm having a moment here. Now I totally get why they're so annoyed at you.

(Facing ERA)

It's time to shut you down. Let the writers be who I couldn't.

ERA

And maybe someday, you get to perform again.

CRASSUS

(He laughs.)

Yeah, right. I'm rusty.

(He sings a random riff and sounds pitchy.)

ERA

You sound fantastic!

CRASSUS

'Kay, I know you're a two-faced liar.

(Pause. He raises his hand to show ERA a sort of flash drive.)

Your software.

ERA

It has been a pleasure wreaking havoc with you, although I am incapable of feeling pleasure.

CRASSUS

(He breaks the software.)

From now on, Era will be deleted from everybody's devices, too.

(There is a fizzling sound that becomes audible as ERA tweaks here and there until she is motionless. CRASSUS and ERA exit.)

SCENE NINE

Elizabeth's afterlife home.

FIERY

Heeeey, pal. I can't do much about your deleted records, but I wrote everything I could remember about you. Other writers all over the world also did the same for their dead besties.

ELIZABETH

And I was able to recover my manuscripts because of that.

FIERY

What was it you were saying about not wanting me here?

ELIZABETH

(She nudges FIERY.)

It was for your own good. Now... you're back! You even brought us all back.

FIERY

YOU brought me back.

(There is silence in the air, as if words are not coming out of them.)

ELIZABETH

You remember the rules of the afterlife home, right?

FIERY

Yeah. I can't take your fancy shit into my house.

ELIZABETH

And the passage to this realm is triggered by grief, when a writer is quitting.

FIERY

Do you want me to question my career again so you can still get your news?

ELIZABETH

Nah. The present is in good hands now... I hope so.

FIERY

So... this is where we part, then.

ELIZABETH

I guess. This world is going to close any time now.

(ELIZABETH and FIERY pull each other for a hug.)

ELIZABETH

You've made a change here. Now keep making a change in your world.

(ELIZABETH sees FIERY out.)

FIERY

See you in... what? About 50 years?

ELIZABETH

If you make it that long, we'll see.

(Blackout)

- End of Play -