

confused. Perhaps no one has ever asked her out before. She thinks it's maybe a joke, and she thinks it's real. She's sort of upset, and she's sort of delighted. She's afraid of expectations, and it's hard not to have some hopes. She sits in a chair and doesn't know what she feels, but it's a mix of lots of things.)

Scene 4

Later in the afternoon.

Vanya, Nina and Cassandra are in the morning room, preparing for the play reading. Cassandra is looking at a piece of paper, reading it.

Nina has changed to a costume: she is in a diaphanous white dress, floor-length, pretty, suitable for being in a Greek chorus. She may have a garland in her hair.

VANYA. (To Cassandra.) What do you think? Are you willing to read this part of it?

CASSANDRA. Sure! Now am I a molecule or a TV weather person?

VANYA. Well you're probably a hologram actually, but why don't you ignore that and just think of yourself as a TV weather person.

CASSANDRA. Alright.

VANYA. Would you turn on the music when I give you the cue?

CASSANDRA. Sure. (Masha enters, ready for the reading.)

MASHA. You said three-thirty. So is it time now?

VANYA. Yes, I guess it is.

MASHA. (Calls offstage.) Spike! Sonia! Hurry up, everyone. He's ready! (Spike and Sonia come in. Sonia maybe helps Vanya move a chair or two, if needed. Masha and Spike sit on a couch together. Cassandra, holding her paper, is also seated. Sonia now sits as well.)

VANYA. Thank you for coming. You're all looking at me. That's so odd. I told Nina I had written something somewhat based on the experimental play that Konstantin writes in *The Seagull*. And she read it for me today, and she wanted very much to read it aloud

for you. ~~Although I apologize. It's silly to take up your time with something that is probably no good at all.~~

NINA. Uncle Vanya, you mustn't tell the audience that what they're about to hear is no good.

VANYA. ~~Yes, I suppose that's taking self-effacement to an unnecessary extreme.~~

SONIA. Vanya, dear, we want to hear it.

SPIKE. Yeah, sounds interesting.

MASHA. I have a splitting headache, but I too wish to be supportive.

VANYA. Well thank you. Now I wrote it for one voice, but Nina and I conferred and we decided that certain sections should be read by other people. So just know that some of us may pop up from our seats from time to time. The setting is the universe once the earth no longer exists. Enter a molecule. (Vanya sits with the audience. A bit nervous, but serious about it all. Sonia is seated next to Vanya. Vanya gestures to Cassandra to push the button on the MP3 player; she does and mysterious music begins. Nina begins.)

NINA. People, lions, eagles, partridges, raccoons, porpoises, opossums, hedgehogs, woodchucks, geese, spiders, octopuses, foxes, wild turkeys, frogs, and blue herons.

All living creatures are dead. The earth is no more. It split apart into atoms, cells, tiny molecules.

I am one such molecule. And I am lonely.

I miss people, animals, books, oatmeal.

But they're all gone now.

The world ended sometime in the twenty-first century.

In the final days, it was frightening to turn on the morning weather report. (The mysterious music ends. Cassandra stands, and reads from her piece of paper.)

CASSANDRA. Good morning, welcome to the weather. Carol Erickson couldn't be here today, so I'm filling in.

This morning Berks County is getting a tornado.

This afternoon Bucks County will have an earthquake.

This evening Berks, Bucks and Montgomery Counties will have a thunderstorm and you may find you have survived the tornado and the earthquake, but after the insane record rainfall we had in July, all the trees are going to fall over and squash your house and your car and maybe you.

And now the national forecast. Chunks of Florida fell into the ocean yesterday. It was kind of funny, except people died.