

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 (intones initially) People, lions, eagles, partridges, raccoons, porpoises, opossums. (faster) Hedgehogs, woodchucks, geese, spiders, octopuses. (intoned again, or at least slower) 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 21st 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. Tomorrow more chunks are gonna fall into the ocean. So move to the center of the state if you can. Or hover above it all in a helicopter if you can do that.

Arizona and Texas have finished their 320th day without rain, and the entire two states are now on fire. And that's the weather.

NINA It was a horror. Horror, horror, horror. The world was like a patient who desperately needed the intensive care unit. And yet there was no intensive care to be had. Those who had pills, any pills, took them all at once and hoped to die.

Spike, who started out finding the play a pleasant distraction, is losing interest and is getting fidgety. Masha tries to get him to stop acting so antsy.

Luckily, 3 simultaneous meteorites came crashing out of the sky and put everybody out of their misery.

And just like that the earth was no more.

And what of a brother and sister who used to sit in a morning room and watch a pond out the window?

Nina motions for Vanya and Sonia to come up. They stand side by side and have typed pages with them.

VANYA Good morning, Sonia.

SONIA Good morning, Vanya.

VANYA Did you sleep well?

SONIA I don't know. Are we alive or are we dead?

VANYA We are molecules but we're remembering the past, and mourning its end.

SPIKE I don't understand this play!!!

MASHA Sssssssh.

The people reading the play are aware of the interruption but ignore it, move on.

SONIA I remember looking out the window at the pond for years and years. Sometimes it was boring, but I miss it.

NINA I miss washing my hair.

CASSANDRA I miss ice tea. I don't like that line. I miss *Law and Order:SVU*.

SONIA I miss my self-pity. It was fun. *(gives Vanya a look, not entirely liking this line)*

NINA I miss . . . having plans for the future.

VANYA I miss boring chores which in retrospect seem wonderful. Putting the dishes away. Making a list of things to do. Licking the mail, and driving to town to . . .

SPIKE "Licking the male"! *(laughs)* That's kind of raurchy, old man.

VANYA *(a bit thrown, annoyed)* Licking the mail one is about to bring to the post office. Letters one has written. Licking the stamp that goes on the letter.

SPIKE Licking the stamp? *(doesn't understand)*

VANYA Forget it, I'll rewrite it. Maybe we should stop.

MASHA No, I like it. Keep going. *(crosses to Vanya to encourage him)* It's much better than Konstantin's play. It's more varied.

VANYA Okay. Whose line is it?

Masha is nearer to a chair by Sonia, so she sits there. She doesn't return to her seat on the couch.

NINA Mine. I miss baby powder.

VANYA I'm sorry, the "I miss" section is going on too long. Let's jump to the top of the next page.

Vanya can't return to his seat by Sonia, since Masha is in it. He is forced to sit next to Spike on the couch.

NINA All right. *(intones)* How sad to be a molecule! How sad to be a speck.

Spike's cell phone makes a small tinkle sound—a "you have a text message" sound, brief. Spike without hesitation reads the message, smiles, and starts to type a text back. He is truly unaware that it might be inappropriate to do this now. His texting goes on for a while . . . Masha gives him a signal to stop, but he holds up his finger indicating "give me a sec." Nina feels a good actress should just carry on, so she continues, and mostly pretends not to notice.

NINA How did the world come to end? Were there Cassandras we didn't listen to? Did we keep an oil burner too long?

MASHA Spike, stop that.

Spike again gestures "give me a minute," and goes back to texting.

NINA Why didn't we switch to solar panels? Why didn't we buy an electric car? Why didn't we. . .

Vanya has had enough.

VANYA Excuse me. What are you doing? It's very rude.

END SPIKE I'm still listening. I can multitask. I can drive and text, or watch a movie and tweet.

VANYA You can multitask, how wonderful. You can tweet. You twitter and tweet, you email and text, your life is abuzz with electrical communication. *(brief breath)* I know older people always think the past was better, but really—instead of a text with all these lower case letters, and no punctuation, what about a nicely crafted letter, sent through the post office? Or a thank-you note.

SPIKE Yeah, yeah, it was real elegant back then, I get it. You had to wait 5 days for a letter, but it was real nice. Time marches on, dude.

Vanya is fed up with Spike, but he's also upset about the weather, about losing the house, about his life, and about so many awful changes in the world and country. He explodes, his thoughts are almost ahead of him.

VANYA WE USED TO LICK POSTAGE STAMPS BACK THEN. Obviously you've never heard of that. They didn't just peel off ready-made with sticky stuff on the back—the sticky stuff had to be triggered by your wet tongue. It took time. If you were sending out many letters, you could be licking postage stamps for 10 minutes or so.

We used typewriters back then. And Wite-Out for corrections. And carbon paper for copies.

We had telephones and we had to dial the number by putting our index finger in a round hole representing 2 to zero. If the number was 909-9999, it could take *hours* just to dial the number. We had to have PATIENCE then. And we used to lick postage stamps. It was unpleasant, but it had to be done.

We didn't multitask. Doing one thing at a time seemed appropriate. But I guess *you* can *sort* of listen to a play and *sort* of send a message and *sort* of play a video game . . . all at once. It must be wonderful . . .

Spike is starting to get uncomfortable with Vanya's upset, and he gets up from the couch to walk away, but Vanya steps in front of him.

I know I sound like a crank, but I don't like change. My play is about scary change in the weather. But there are other changes too that have happened.

Vanya is starting to address everyone in the room, not always specifically, but sometimes. Sonia and Max are interested by what he's saying, but also a bit concerned that he is having an outburst. Cassandra and Nina both like Vanya and pay attention, but worry a bit for him too.

There are 785 television channels. You watch the news report that matches what you already think. In the past there were only 3 or 4 channels, and it was all in black-and-white.

And there were no child stars who became addicts like Lindsay Lohan. I mean, Hayley Mills was in the original *Parent Trap*, and she grew up to be a sensible, nice woman.

There was no *South Park*. We saw *Howdy Doody* starring a puppet. Then there was *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*—starring two more puppets, and a sweet lady named Fran. We watched puppets back then!

Sonia crosses to Vanya sympathetically and tries to get him to sit down. He is on a rant and barely senses her; and gently urges her to sit down instead. She doesn't stop talking, he keeps going.

There was the *Perry Como Show*. He was singing. *The Dinah Shore Show*. She was charming.

The Bishop Sheen Show was on every evening. A Catholic bishop had his own TV show. And SERMONS. On TV. We weren't Catholic, but we watched anyway. He said sensible things. On television.

The Ed Sullivan Show was on before *Bishop Sheen*, and he had opera singers on, and comedians from current Broadway shows. Richard Burton and Julie Andrews would sing songs from *Camelot*. It was wonderful. It helped theater be part of the national consciousness, which it isn't anymore.

And he had Señor Wences on, who had a Spanish accent and was a ventriloquist. And he painted a mouth on his fist, and he would make it speak.