

# A Vanya & Sonia

*Sonia sits. They both look out, staring into the distance.*

**Start** **SONIA** Has the blue heron been at the pond yet this morning?

**VANYA** Not yet. Or it was here before I was.

**SONIA** It'll probably come later. It's such a beautiful bird.

**VANYA** Yes, it is. (*sips the coffee*) I'm afraid the other cup tasted better.

**SONIA** Well it's the same coffee.

**VANYA** Well maybe I put in more milk than you did. Maybe that's why it tastes better.

**SONIA** Don't I usually put in the right amount of milk?

**VANYA** Well, yes. I don't usually think about it. It's just that I was drinking one coffee, and liking it, and then suddenly there's a different cup of coffee, and I'm liking it slightly less. It's no big deal. I'm just making pleasant conversation.

**SONIA** That's not making pleasant conversation. It's first thing in the morning, and you're implying I don't do anything right.

**VANYA** I didn't say that.

**SONIA** Yes, you did.

**VANYA** I didn't.

**SONIA** Well you implied it.

**VANYA** Forget it! The coffee's delicious, I love it!

**SONIA** Oh, for God's sake. Here, take the original cup back.

**VANYA** No, no, it's not that different. I'm sorry I said anything.

*Sonia forces him to take his original coffee cup back, the one he preferred. She takes the second cup back herself.*

**SONIA** I mean I have two pleasant moments every day in my fucking life, and one of them is bringing you coffee.

**VANYA** Sonia, I'm sorry I said anything. Really, the two cups are almost identical. I should have said nothing.

**SONIA** All right.

**VANYA** I'm sorry. Really.

**SONIA** That's all right.

*She suddenly takes the cup she's holding and smashes it on the floor, in the direction of the kitchen. Silence.*

**VANYA** Is this how you're going to be today?

**SONIA** I don't know what you mean.

**VANYA** YOU JUST THREW THE FUCKING COFFEE AGAINST THE WALL!

**SONIA** I DIDN'T!

**VANYA** You didn't??? What kind of idiot response is that?

**SONIA** I don't know. It's an angry "I hate my life and I hate you" response.

**VANYA** Well, it was effective then, good for you!

**SONIA** Thank you!

End

*Silence.*

**SONIA** I'm sorry. I shouldn't have thrown the cup.

**VANYA** That's all right.

**SONIA** It's just I had bad dreams last night.

**VANYA** Oh?

**SONIA** I dreamt I was 52 and I wasn't married.

**VANYA** Were you dreaming in the documentary form?

**SONIA** That's not funny.

## B Masha & Vanya

**SONIA** Really? You've had five husbands.

**SPIKE** I like older women.

**VANYA** I'm relieved to hear it.

**SPIKE** Hey, a spark is either there or it's not, right, Mashie?

**MASHA** Isn't he adorable?

**VANYA** He's attractive. I'm not sure if he's adorable.

**SONIA** Really. Every time I see you, Masha, you make me feel bad. First you don't notice me in the room somehow, and say hello to me as an afterthought. And now here you are nearing your dotage, and you've hooked up with some young stud. While I am forced to live through a succession of tedious days and tedious nights, and I never have fallen in love with anyone. Nor anyone with me. I'm sorry I was adopted into this family. I wish I had been left in the orphanage, and killed myself. Excuse me.

*Sonia exits upstairs.*

**SPIKE** Wow, intense.

**MASHA** Oh, she's always been jealous of me, I'm really sick of it. I can't help if I'm beautiful and intelligent and talented and successful, can I?

**VANYA** No, I guess you can't.

**SPIKE** But the unhappy orphanage lady thinks I'm a stud, that's nice. *(He walks over to Vanya, and says provocatively.)* What about you? Do you like how I look?

**VANYA** What?

**MASHA** Now, Spike, I'm sure Vanya thinks you're a perfectly nice-looking young man. Let's leave it at that. *(to Vanya)* He craves attention slightly. But all good actors do.

**SPIKE** I'm hot!

**VANYA** Oh yes? Shouldn't you leave that for others to say?

**SPIKE** *(laughs good naturedly)* No, I mean I'm warm. The air is warm, I'm hot! *(looking out the window)* That pond that's out there. Can you swim in it?

**VANYA** Swim in it? It's not very deep. You can wade in it.

**SPIKE** Yeah. Maybe I'll do that.

**MASHA** Really, darling, you want to wade in a pond?

**SPIKE** Yeah, it's a hot day.

**MASHA** I guess it is. There are frogs in the pond, you know.

**SPIKE** I like frogs.

**MASHA** Did you bring a swimsuit?

**SPIKE** No, I can just strip to my underwear. See you later, babe, I'm gonna go cool off in the pond.

**MASHA** Well, if that's what you want, darling. *(to Vanya)* He's so unpredictable.

*Very comfortable, but also liking people to watch him, Spike takes his shoes off, then takes his shirt off, then takes his pants off. With abandon, he throws his clothes onto a couch or chair. He puts his shoes back on. He is now only in his underwear. He looks very good. He starts toward the pond, but gives Masha a quick kiss on his way out.*

**SPIKE** See you later!

*He moves quickly out of the room, but oddly ruffles Vanya's hair on his way outside. It's a playful gesture but Vanya finds it strange. Spike happily exits onto the grass, looking forward to wading and frogs . . .*

Start

**MASHA** The younger generation is like that. They strip to their underwear right in front of everybody.

**VANYA** Did he do that because he knows I'm gay?

**MASHA** I rather think he did that because he knows I'm straight.

**VANYA** Well it's very peculiar. Did you tell him I'm gay?

**MASHA** No, why would I? And are you gay? I'm sorry, did we have some conversation I forgot?

**VANYA** No, I guess we didn't. I just . . . assumed you assumed.

**MASHA** Oh, I did. I just thought maybe you were still in denial. Or had become asexual from so many years of abstinence. Oh, I've been a bad sister. I'm sorry, darling. Where is Sonia? Oh that's right, I upset her. Well I'll apologize later.

**VANYA** I must say, I'm a trifle surprised to see you with this young, young man. How old is he?

**MASHA** (*takes his hand*) Oh, Vanya dear, I'm so happy I'm with Spike. He's so adventurous and free, he gives me energy. We've been together 3 months.

**VANYA** Well he's handsome. Is he a good idea?

**MASHA** Don't be judgmental. I've been very lonely for several years ever since Robert left me for Heidi Klum.

**VANYA** Heidi Klum?

**MASHA** I just say that to make myself feel better. He left me for someone who looked a little like Heidi Klum. So I comfort myself with saying it was she. Still I haven't been able to hold on to my husbands, I don't know why. I'm talented, charming, successful—and yet they leave me. They must be insane.

End

*Enter Sonia.*

**SONIA** Why is that young man naked in the pond?

**VANYA** He's naked? (*looks out the window, interested*) Sonia, he's wearing underpants. That's not naked.

**SONIA** Well, underpants, naked, it's the same to me.

**VANYA** You need glasses.

**SONIA** I need a life. I need a friend. I need a change. But nothing ever changes.

**MASHA** Now, now, please don't get down in the dumps.

**SONIA** That's easy for you to say. You have a life, you have a career.

**MASHA** Oh, I wish you wouldn't feel jealous of me. It just exhausts me. Even if you were an actress, God forbid, we wouldn't ever go up for the same parts. I'm a leading lady while you are much more of a . . .

**VANYA** Masha, I don't think you should finish that sentence.

**SONIA** Thank you, Vanya.

**VANYA** You're welcome, Sonia.

**MASHA** Well, it's not as if my career has been without disappointments, just like your life, Sonia. I've suffered too. I'm a movie star, but am I known as a classical actress on the stage?

**SONIA** No you're not.

**MASHA** Exactly! That's a path I didn't get to take. Remember when that famous acting teacher was going to cast me as Masha in *Three Sisters*. He said I was born to play that role. Imagine how wonderful I would've been. (*to Vanya and Sonia, suddenly acting the lines:*) "Oh my sisters, let us go to Moscow! To Moscow, let us go."

I would have said that with an ache in my voice and my soul, and it would have been heartbreaking. I feel the public doesn't know how heartbreaking I can be. (*genuinely*) Oh missed opportunities! Regret, regret, regret!

**SONIA** Regret, regret!

**MASHA** Please don't change the focus to yourself, Sonia. I'm talking now. You can talk later.

**SONIA** When?

# C Masha

**MASHA** 4:30. (*back to her story*) Oh that famous acting teacher said I was born to play the classics. And that once I did *Three Sisters*, he said I would have one classical triumph after another. I'd be the American Judi Dench. But I had to go do that movie about the nymphomaniac serial killer. It was a terrible script, but I was so good in it that it became this enormous hit and, of course, we made five of them eventually. Did you see all of them?

**VANYA** Oh yes, we certainly did. We liked you very much. They were extremely violent, though. Sonia had to look away from the screen a lot.

**SONIA** Yes, I did.

**MASHA** Oh darling, sensitive, tedious Sonia. You can't face life, can you?

*Sonia begins to respond, but Masha stops her.*

No, don't answer. You can talk at 4:30.

**SONIA** Why 4:30?

**MASHA** That's my nap time. (*when Sonia looks horrified*) I'm kidding, I'm kidding—4:30 is the cocktail hour, a half an hour early. I usually have a Black Russian. And a drink as well. Oh, I'm amusing myself, sorry. (*focuses back on her story*) Anyway, as I was saying that movie, *Sexy Killer*, really changed my life—it took me from being a respected actress to being a global celebrity. And there is a difference. "Fame, thou glittering bauble." Who said that?

**VANYA** Captain Hook.

**MASHA** The real Captain Hook?

**VANYA** There wasn't a real Captain Hook. He was just in *Peter Pan*.

**MASHA** "Fame, thou glittering bauble." Such an interesting thing for a pirate to say. And then they begged me to do a sequel, and it seemed inescapable to me. We made 5 of them. And those movies made me millions. But my point was the theater lost a great tragic

classical actress when I didn't play my namesake Masha in that famous acting teacher's production of *Three Sisters*. That's my point!

**SONIA** You keep talking about this famous acting teacher. Who are you referring to?

**MASHA** Derek Seretsky.

**SONIA** Who?

**MASHA** Derek Seretsky. Maybe he wasn't famous. He was famous to me.

**Start** **VANYA** When did you study with him?

**MASHA** Oh, many years ago, I can't remember dates or decades. I just live. I recall I had three fabulous sessions with him. He taught a combination of Stanislavskian sense memory mixed with Meisner repetition technique.

I'd say "Oh, Olga, let's go to Moscow" and he'd say back to me "Oh, Olga, let's go to Moscow?" And I'd say, "Oh Olga—let's GO to Moscow." And he'd say "Oh, oh, oh, Olga, let's go to MosCOW." And then I said, "Ho, ho, ho, let's go to Moscow, Olga. Moscow, Moscow, Olga. Oh, Oh, Olga, let's go!"

I'm sorry, this is sounding incredibly false as I'm saying it. It makes one think I would've been horrible in *Three Sisters*. Maybe I would have been. (*suddenly shouts emphatically*) No, no, I would've been great! Let's not talk about it anymore. Let's talk about something else.

**End** **Sonia**, what's new with you?

**SONIA** I'm not allowed to speak until 4:30.

**MASHA** Everyone's so touchy here. No, you can talk.

**SONIA** How old is Spike exactly?

**MASHA** Let's talk about something fun. We're going to a party tonight, and a costume one at that. I have costume parties.

**SONIA** We don't have any costumes to wear, Masha.

**MASHA** Yes, you do. I asked Hootie Pie to organize some costumes for both of you, and they're in the car.

# D Cassandra

**MASHA** Nothing. My unconscious was speaking, pay no mind. Happy name day. What is your name by the way?

**NINA** I'm Nina.

**MASHA** (*furious*) GOD DAMN IT!

**VANYA** What's the matter?

**MASHA** That crazy psychic in the kitchen told me to "Beware of Nina" and now her fucking name is Nina!!!

**NINA** What? I'm sorry, what?

**SONIA** Hello, Nina, I have a feeling no one is going to introduce me, I'm kind of like furniture in the room rather than a person. But I'm Sonia, Masha's sister. Although I'm adopted and don't really belong here. Or anywhere. And this is my brother Vanya.

**VANYA** Hello, Nina. Happy name day.

**NINA** How lovely to meet you. And what a funny joke about the furniture.

*Everyone looks confused.*

**SPIKE** I told Nina I'd introduce her to my manager. And I invited her to the costume party.

**MASHA** (*taking that in*) You invited her. How nice. I have an idea! Spike, why don't we skip the party and hop in the car and race back to New York City right this minute. I suddenly want to see a Broadway show. How late is the half-price ticket booth open, does anyone know?

**SPIKE** No, I wanna go to the party. And Nina is so excited to meet you. She just worships you. (*a bit flirtatiously*) As do I.

**MASHA** (*taking in what he said, a bit mollified*) Well, that's sweet of you to say, Spike. I . . . uh . . . am flattered. Nina looks up to me. Hello, Nina. Happy name day.

**NINA** Thank you.

*Enter Cassandra.*

**CASSANDRA** Lunch will be a little delayed. I dropped the omelettes on the floor. I'm going to have to start over. (*sees Nina, points at her*) What did I say? BEWARE OF NINA!

**MASHA** Cassandra, Nina is visiting from next door, and she's a lovely aspiring actress.

**Start**

**CASSANDRA** Well, I warned you, but the curse of Apollo keeps everyone from acting on my warnings. (*feels drawn to make a bit of a speech*)

Oh mystery and misery, descends upon me like a thundercloud,  
Pregnant with rain and Jupiter's arrows.  
The terrible burden of true prophecy, of my unwanted but  
unstoppable prelude.  
Look out, look out—all around us are lions and tigers and bears.  
Oh my, the omelette is a failure, I crush it beneath my foot.

The libation bearers bring guts and entrails  
And parents' children chopped up and served in a shepherd's pie.  
Something tastes wrong with it—little wonder!  
Next time you won't go killing Agamemnon, will you?  
He's already dead. My car needs to be inspected,  
How can I keep all these facts in my head when I see calamity and  
colossus  
Lumbering up the walkway?  
Oh wretches, oh misery, oh magical mystery tour.  
Beware the future. I know you will not abide me,  
You ignore because I am not tall.  
But I am right! I see disaster ahead for all of you!  
Lunch in about 20 minutes!

**End** *She strides out.*

**NINA** Oh she's a wonderful actress too. What was that from, what she just recited?

# E Spike

**SPIKE** Yeah, it's tough to audition. I was real lucky to have a pro like Masha coach me.

**Start** **MASHA** Yes, let's get to the audition now.

**SPIKE** So I was auditioning for the spin-off series *Entourage 2*. And it has a different setup because in this one there's an up-and-coming actor who's starting to make it big in the movies, but he's played by somebody else, so the implication is it's another character.

**MASHA** It's not an implication. He is another character.

**SPIKE** (*kind of laughs, realizes he got confused*) Right. I know that. His name is Bradley Wood, and he's the lead. And in *this* version, his entourage is this old dame who's his agent, and this young guy on coke who's his manager, and his best friend from high school who's a girl who has a crush on him but she has this disease that gives her convulsions so she can never kiss anybody, cause she gets convulsions. And I live next door to a rabbi who's played by Judd Hirsch. But he's not on every week.

**MASHA** Yes, yes. Let's move it along, pacing, pacing.

**SPIKE** Okay, and he's been having an affair with his older agent lady, but he's thinking of moving on to another agent. So the scene is between Bradley Wood and his lady agent.

**NINA** I see.

**SPIKE** Okay, he comes into the room, and the manager is there. "Hey, good-looking. How's tricks?" And Masha used to read the other lines. Do you remember them, Masha?

**MASHA** Kind of. But I think you should try to do it as a monologue . . . we'll all intuit what the other lines are.

**SPIKE** Oh, okay.

*He likes the challenge. He changes his body language, and begins the scene, maybe unbuttons his top three shirt buttons.*

Hey, good-looking. How's tricks? (*dutifully ad-libs listening to make it a monologue*) What? Who told you that? Hey, don't cry. Come on, give me a smile. Besides, it's not definite. (*pointedly listens*) Well . . . yeah, it's true, I did meet with some agents at CAA. I thought they were real impressive. I mean, they can call up Sandy Bullock, they can call up Julia Roberts. You gotta face it, you don't know that caliber of person. What? (*he listens*) What about loyalty? What about my career? What about my getting ahead? Yeah, I know you put in a lot of time with me. But I put a lot of time in with you too. And I don't know . . . I think I might like CAA better. What? (*listens*) Oh, that. Well, yeah, just cause I go to another agent doesn't mean we have to stop sleeping together occasionally. Well I think it's occasional. I mean I sleep with other people too. I want to be successful, I can't just sleep with one old broad all the time. Oh, I'm sorry, don't cry. I think of "old broad" as a term of affection. (*listens*) Oh yeah? Well fuck you!

**End** *He bows, smiles.*

**MASHA** Wasn't that good?

*Masha leads the applause. Nina is sincere and thinks it was good. Vanya and Sonia are a touch shell-shocked but applaud anyway.*

**NINA** Oh that was wonderful. I can sense great things in your future.

**SPIKE** Yeah, cool. Thanks.

*Enter Cassandra.*

**CASSANDRA** Luncheon is served. It's Campbell's soup and tuna fish sandwiches. I was only asked to make lunch for 4, but I did stretch it to 5, though the sandwiches are a little skimpy with the tuna fish. (*exits*)

**MASHA** Well, the lunch sounds repellent, but shall we go in?

**NINA** (*to Masha*) Oh you're so kind to invite me to lunch, but I mustn't impose any further. And you did invite me to the costume party, so I'll come back for that, shall I?

## F Vanya & Nina

**MASHA** What am I dressed as? You can't tell?

**NINA** I think so. Are you that silent screen actress from the old movie who lives in a mansion and says "I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille"? What's her name?

**MASHA** No, I'm not Norma Desmond. Although when I'm around you, I feel like her. You must be reading my aura.

**NINA** I never really saw the movie. I just saw the clip where she says "ready for my close-up." So who are you dressed as?

**MASHA** I'm dressed as Snow White. The Walt Disney version.

**NINA** I've never seen *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Is it like *The Little Mermaid*?

**MASHA** (*a touch annoyed*) No. One's about a mermaid, and the other's about dwarfs.

**NINA** I see.

**MASHA** Now since I'm Snow White, I feel all the other people going to the party with me must relate to Snow White.

*Enter Vanya dressed like one of the seven dwarfs. Big floppy knit cap, and a pumpkin-colored shirt with a belt around and brown pants.*

**MASHA** You see—like that. That's Grumpy, one of the seven dwarfs.

**VANYA** Doc.

**MASHA** Right, Doc. Another one of the seven dwarfs.

**VANYA** You look lovely, Nina.

**MASHA** No she doesn't. She looks like a child dressed for Halloween. I'm afraid I can't have it.

**NINA** (*sad but obedient*) Oh. Well maybe I can't go then. I'm sorry I didn't have the right costume.

**VANYA** Masha . . .

**MASHA** No, no, Nina. I'm not saying you can't go to the party. I'm so sorry. I'm really being a bully, but when you're my age—whatever that age is—you get used to having your way. I suppose I'm monstrous, but lovable monstrous, I hope. Besides, the good news is I have an extra costume that DOES relate to Snow White, and if you'll just put it on, then we'll all be very happy. Now wait here, I have to ask Spike where he put it.

**NINA** Oh I can't wait to see what he's wearing.

**MASHA** Really? Why?

**NINA** Well, I can't wait to see what everyone's wearing.

**MASHA** Okay.

**VANYA** What is he going as?

**MASHA** He's going as Prince Charming. It took a long time to convince him, so everyone tell him he looks sexy. Not you, Nina. Vanya, you tell him. I'll be right back. (*Masha suddenly takes both of Nina's hands*) Thank you, Nina, for being so cooperative. (*ends the moment, moves on, exits to the second floor*)

**NINA** I wonder what costume she has for me.

**VANYA** I'm afraid I know. I believe you're going to be a dwarf like me. Dopey.

**NINA** I'm just so happy to be included. I love to be around artistic people, who create things, who act, who value the arts.

**VANYA** Well Masha obviously fits that. I'm afraid Sonia and I are just . . . two lumps on a log.

**NINA** Oh I don't think so. I feel you both have hidden reservoirs that just haven't been tapped. Or maybe you're secretly creating things, and not telling anyone.

**VANYA** That's remarkable that you say that. I have been writing something . . . I haven't told anyone, not even Sonia.

**NINA** I thought so. I sensed it. Is it a TV pilot?

**VANYA** No, it's a play. In progress. And I was thinking of that play Konstantin writes in *The Seagull*. And it's very experimental and mysterious, and I can never tell if it's meant to be a play ahead of its time or just a play that's . . . rotten. And so I thought I might like to write my own version of that play, but relate it to now and see if it would . . . be good or not.

**NINA** Oh I'm so honored you told me this. I feel certain it's good. I always feel so sorry for Konstantin when I read that play, they were so mean to him.

**VANYA** Well, life is hard for everyone, I guess.

**NINA** You remind me of my uncle, only nicer and more artistic. He burps a lot and doesn't speak much. But you don't burp that I've noticed, and you're quiet but then you speak when spoken to. May I call you Uncle Vanya?

**VANYA** If you like.

**NINA** Why don't I do a reading of your play tomorrow for everyone?

**VANYA** Oh I don't know if I want the others to hear it. It may be terrible. I wrote something when I was little, and my father joked and said it was pathetic.

**NINA** How is that a joke?

**VANYA** Good question.

**NINA** Let me read it tomorrow. Either privately for you. Or, the braver choice, for everyone.

**VANYA** All right. I didn't expect to befriend you.

**NINA** I'm glad you did.

**VANYA** I thought you were going to be more Spike's friend.

**NINA** He is awfully handsome.

**VANYA** Yes, I imagine he is.

**NINA** Isn't it terrible that attractive people are so charismatic?

**End** **VANYA** Yes, terrible.

*Enter Masha with a box, followed by Spike. Spike is dressed as a romantic fairy-tale prince. Tights, a crown, a loose white shirt with a V-neck which laces up.*

**MASHA** We finally found it.

**SPIKE** You said she didn't have a costume. She's wearing a costume.

**MASHA** It doesn't go with Snow White. Nina understands.

**SPIKE** I think she looks pretty.

**MASHA** It doesn't matter if she looks pretty if it doesn't relate to Snow White. We all agreed Snow White was the theme.

**SPIKE** None of us agreed to it.

**MASHA** Shut up.

**NINA** It's all right, I want to make Miss Hardwicke happy. I'm willing to wear whatever costume she wants me to.

**MASHA** Thank you, dear. *(to Spike)* Go get the paper bag for her head, would you? *(to Nina)* No! I'm just kidding. Please call me Masha.

**NINA** Thank you.

**MASHA** Now why don't you go change in the bathroom off the kitchen.

**SPIKE** That's the size of a closet.

**MASHA** She's a small girl, I'm sure she'll fit fine.

**NINA** All right, I'll be back soon. *(she exits to the kitchen)*

**MASHA** Vanya, how do you think Spike looks as a prince?



## G Vanya & Sonia & Masha

**MASHA** No. Certainly not. And I'm not afraid of anything. Just don't be long.

**SPIKE** All right. I'll see you in a bit.

**MASHA** All right, darling.

**Start** **SPIKE** (*thrown away, bit hard to hear:*) Don't wait up. (*exits*)

**MASHA** (*to Vanya and Sonia*) I just don't see why he didn't drop her off first. You know what I mean?

**VANYA** None of us thought of it. I mean she left from here, so it seemed logical to bring her back here.

**MASHA** Wait a minute. Did he just say "don't wait up"?

**VANYA** Did he? I'm not sure.

**SONIA** Yes, he did say that. I was surprised you didn't fall to the ground and hold on to his foot.

**MASHA** What?

**SONIA** When he said "don't wait up." I thought you would say something.

**MASHA** No, he must have said something that sounded like that. I mean he's just taking her next door. It couldn't take longer than 5 minutes.

**SONIA** Maybe he'll go in and meet her family. Maybe she'll offer him a cup of tea. Or a brandy. And it can take a very long time to sip a brandy. And they'll have a long, long conversation.

**MASHA** What is the matter with you today? You're so hostile to me.

**VANYA** Don't fight, you two.

**MASHA** I just feel nervous about if he said "Don't wait up" or not.

**VANYA** Maybe he didn't say it. I don't know what he said.

**MASHA** Everything seems wrong today. And I'm going to give Hootie Pie a piece of my mind. The Snow White costume was a big bust. Nobody knows the Walt Disney version anymore, so they had no idea who I was supposed to be. And Nina, that nasty, grasping young girl, asked me if I was Norma Desmond. And someone else said Little Bo Peep. And several people thought I was a Hummel figurine.

**SONIA** People seemed to like my costume.

**MASHA** Well, Sonia, don't be so happy about it. You're happy at my expense.

**SONIA** Am I? Am I allowed to be happy ONLY when you're happy? Is that one of the rules of being around Masha?

**VANYA** Let's unwind and not argue. I'm going to go make tea for all of us. Stop talking about upsetting things. Think calming thoughts.

**SONIA** Can it be Sleepy Time tea?

**VANYA** Yes, it can.

*Vanya exits. Masha and Sonia sit down. They're quiet for a bit.*

**SONIA** I love Sleepy Time tea.

**MASHA** I prefer caffeinated tea.

**SONIA** I'm sorry what I said about Spike taking Nina home. Actually, he mumbled, I'm not sure what he said. And I hope he'll be back very soon. I don't want you to be unhappy.

**MASHA** Thank you.

*A moment of peace.*

**SONIA** Though you don't care whether I'm unhappy since you want to sell the house out from under us.

**MASHA** I PAY ALL THE BILLS AND IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE!

End

# H Sonia

**VANYA** Oh I don't know. Maybe. Let's hear it first, and see if we should . . . ask others to . . . you know . . .

*Vanya and Nina exit toward the pond.*

*Phone rings. Enter Cassandra from outside, carrying a few bags of groceries.*

**CASSANDRA** I'll get it! (*answers the phone*) Hello. Who wants to know? Agnes from Country Meadows Real Estate? **YOU GOT THE WRONG NUMBER, DON'T CALL HERE AGAIN!**

*Cassandra slams the phone down violently. Laughs and laughs. Maybe waves that Mardi Gras streamer thing around, joyously.*

*Sonia walks downstairs.*

**SONIA** Goodness, who did you call at?

**CASSANDRA** It was a wrong number. I got coffee and other stuff. (*Phone rings again. Cassandra looks angry, and picks up the phone.*)

**CASSANDRA** **I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL BACK!** (*listens*) Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else. Who did you want to talk to? Well, she's right here.

*Cassandra offers Sonia the phone.*

**SONIA** Who is it?

**CASSANDRA** (*to phone*) Who's calling please? (*to Sonia*) Joe.

**SONIA** I don't know who that is.

**CASSANDRA** (*to phone*) She doesn't know you. (*to Sonia*) Should I hang up angry or polite?

**SONIA** Wait, I'll take the call. (*answers the phone*) Hello, this is Sonia. Who is this, please?

*Cassandra exits with her bags off to the kitchen.*

Joe? I'm afraid I don't . . . Oh yes, Joe from last night! The party, yes. What? Yes, this is Sonia. My voice sounds different? Oh. Uh.

(*thinks quickly*) Wait a minute, I have a frog in my throat. (*pretends to cough, and then switches to using her Maggie Smith voice.*) Hello, Joe. How are you today? Oh your head hurts a little. I hope you're not an alcoholic. You're not. That's good! But you like to get drunk sometimes. Well, it's a good man's failing. I'm a crack addict. No, darling . . . I'm just teasing. It was very nice to meet you last night. Remind me, what was your costume? A raincoat. Uh-huh. Anything else? A fedora. Uh-huh. So you were pretending it was raining in 1946, is that right? Oh—you were Sam Spade. The detective. I'm sorry, I should have remembered that. And Maggie Smith was actually in a movie where Peter Falk played Sam Spade, and she played Nora Charles. From *The Thin Man*. (*frowning, kind of changing her mind, still in the Maggie Smith voice*) You know, Joe, I have to go back to my own voice for a little while, do you mind? (*switches back to her normal voice*) I'm sorry, I'm a little confused. Did you really think that was my voice last night? Oh I see. Well I must have forgotten to give you the proper explanation last night. I was telling everyone I was the Evil Queen as played by Maggie Smith. But I guess by the time I met you, I had gotten tired of explaining, and you just assumed that was my real voice.

But this is my real voice, actually. It's sort of boring compared to Maggie Smith. But nonetheless, I am who I am and I'm stuck with it. I'm remembering the person who was Sam Spade. You have a very nice face. Oh I'm remembering, you said you were a widower. Is that right? I'm sorry. Two years. No, I'm not a widow. I'm a . . . (*stops for a second, chooses not to say she's never been married*) . . . I've been picky. Uh-huh. Glamorous?? (*laughs*) Oh, I must be honest and assure you I'm NOT glamorous. I look a fright most of the time. Daily, in fact. And except for last night, I've never gotten all dolled up. All right, you think of me as glamorous, I guess I should just accept it. I admit it, I'm glamorous. Do your glasses need a new prescription, Joe? They don't, all right, that's good to know. Um . . . (*thinks a second*) . . . I'm a little confused. Why are you calling me today? (*listens*) Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Oh. Because you like me. How odd. What? I said, how nice.

Start

End

## Nina

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.*

## Start *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.*

## End

**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?

# J Vanya

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

~~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 a buzz with electrical communication. (*bring 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.*

Start

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 Masha 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 can watch the news report that matches what you already think. In the 50s there were only 3 or 4 channels, and it was all in black-and-white.

And there were no child stars who became drug 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!

End

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

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

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

*The Ed Sullivan Show* was on before *Bishop Sheen*, and he had opera singers on, And performers 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.