



## ESCAPE FROM TRALFAMADORE

A Radio Play

By

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
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## CHARACTERS

KATE – An academic. Woman. 70s.

MATT – A bureaucrat. Man. 70s.

ROBIN – An artist. Woman. Appears to be in 30s.

ANNEKE – Kate's doctoral student. Woman. 20s or 30s. Heavily pregnant.

TANNOY – [Pre-recorded] Can be played by any member of the cast.

### Scene 1

*FX: Exterior. A bleak desert. Ambient noise: slight wind. No birds or planes. An elderly woman walking with a stick along a track. She breathes with difficulty.*

KATE:     *(turned away, nervous)* They've sent someone.

*(back on mic)* I can't go much further. This sulphurous air... it's barely air.

*(chokes slightly)* There's a raw burning-metal acidity.

              And the particles sting like f...

              Sorry. How old should you be to hear this?

              Anyway you need to know...

*(raised voice)* Hey Cassandra, deliver this message in 15 years' time.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

KATE:     *(turned away)* I can still just about see the Dome.

*(back on mic)* I haven't got long.

*(coughs)* Hey Cassandra. Add this morning's supervision to the message.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

## Scene 2

*FX: Interior. A biodome. Fountain and gentle conversation far away.*

*KATE and ANNEKE are mid-conversation.*

ANNEKE: ... And also with Dr Vollmann's work, I'm a bit worried because she's coming from a more historico-sociological tradition than —

*FX: Male footsteps getting closer.*

KATE: Don't worry. Vollmann seems flexible enough. She'll deprecate Chowdhury's take on postmodernism though; so be prepared to balance that with Standish.

ANNEKE: *(deep breath)* OK.

KATE: What about Chang?

MATT: Professor! So good to meet you!

KATE: What?!

MATT: Big fan. I'm Matt. Matt Wilkerson. I'm on the Executive. I don't think we've yet had the pleasure of —

KATE: Go away.

MATT: I need to speak with you urgently about —

KATE: Go away!

ANNEKE: I think I've seen you on the announcements service.

MATT: That's right. I —

KATE: We're having a supervision.

MATT: Sorry to... Ah Anneke, nearly due?

ANNEKE: Yes. That's right! How do you know my name?!

MATT: I make it my business to get the gen on all our bloomers.

ANNEKE: Rather nervous!

MATT: Nonsense. Nonsense. You'll thrive, I'm sure.

TANNOY: Public alert. Increasing risk of poor air quality.

MATT: A girl, thank God.

KATE: Is there something with which we can help you, Mr Wilkerson?

MATT: Ah yes, sorry, Kate. May I call you Kate? I —

KATE: No.

MATT: Gosh, Professor. I haven't seen so many books in one place since... You know all this stuff is on-screen now.

KATE: *(sighs)* I am aware. What do you want?

MATT: Well I had an exciting call this morning. You'll never guess who! *(beat)* Robin!

ANNEKE: *(gasps)* *The* Robin?

MATT: *The* Robin.

KATE: *(sighs)*

MATT: A one-to-one from the Colorado Elite Dome!

ANNEKE: Wow!

MATT: She really needs to talk to you, Professor.

KATE: I don't care. Now if that's all...

MATT: She said – well her PA said – you've been rejecting her calls?

### **Scene 3**

*Desert setting, as Scene 1.*

KATE: *(interrupting Scene 2)* Have you read Vonnegut? Sometimes I think I'm a Tralfamadorian: perceiving time not linearly but in entirety, simultaneously. All moments – past, present and future – always have existed, always will exist. Lucy walks the Awash Valley of the Afar Triangle in Ethiopia. Rosa Parks rides a

bus. President Knowles flies in on Air Force One to announce the Dome Initiative. From an amniotic sac to a cave of rock, to a hut of wood, to a house of brick, to a tower of steel-and-glass. And our final cave is a thermoplastic mausoleum.

*(turned away)* They'll be here soon, whoever it is.

*(back on mic)* You don't care about this, do you? If you're old enough to see this, then these are the last meanderings of a long-dead stranger. You don't need a lecture from me.

What do you need from me?

You need... to know how you are where you are... what happened to your family... what happened to all of us. The truth, not Robin's version.

*(aside)* Hmm... You might think of her as your mother by now.

*(coughs)* Hey Cassandra. Continue replay.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

#### **Scene 4**

*FX: Biodome setting, as Scene 2.*

KATE: One tip I have is that if they have issues with the proposed title...

ANNEKE: "A Kleinian comparison of post-apocalyptic fiction and non-fiction".

KATE: ... and you find that —

MATT: Sorry. Professor.

KATE: *(angry)* Still here?!

MATT: This can't wait.

KATE: I have nothing to say to her.

MATT: *(laughing)* You're not one of those crazies who put all the blame on her, are you?

ANNEKE: I heard that her wife and children refused the Elite slots she'd bought for them.

MATT: I heard that! Why did they do that?! How could they turn down —?

KATE: This conversation is over.

ANNEKE: Sorry Professor.

MATT: With great respect, Professor, it isn't. Whatever your personal opinion of her, she's a VIP and her influence might be very useful in securing certain urgent resources.

KATE: *(loud sigh)*

MATT: Do you not care about our dome? Would you rather be *outside*?! The dust would kill you in minutes.

KATE: On occasions that's an appealing prospect.

MATT: We can't afford to lose anyone. You know that.

KATE: So Anneke, if you're arguing that it was postmodernism's ultimate failure to provide a fertile analysis of mushrooming apocalyptic dread that led to its overthrow by neo-existentialism, then —

MATT: Perhaps you could just explain why you're choosing not to take Robin's calls?

## **Scene 5**

*FX: Desert.*

KATE: It was over 50 years ago. Chris had just shown a prospective tenant the room and we were about to interview her in the sitting-room. I was in the green velvet

armchair, struggling to justify the subtext I was foisting on *Jane Eyre*. Michael was folding leaflets. Michael was always folding leaflets.

“Hi, I’m Robin.”

Honeyed. Ironic. Enveloping.

My cheeks must’ve been bright red...

But this isn’t about me. Or Robin.

*(beat)* Maybe it is. Maybe everything is.

*(turned away)* 20 minutes away, I reckon.

*(coughs, back on mic)* Hey Cassandra. Continue replay.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

## **Scene 6**

*FX: Biodome.*

ANNEKE: *(reading)* “... but Chowdhury (2039) argues that we are struggling in these times not with grand narratives but with a challenge...”

MATT: Professor.

ANNEKE: “... to determine how humans can be free and authentic in wholly artificial environments.”

MATT: Professor.

KATE: For f...!

MATT: Robin was only doing her job.

KATE: *(annoyed grunt)*

MATT: Even her wife said in that interview —

ANNEKE: Melissa.

MATT: "It's ludicrous to portray Robin as some kind of Angel of Death."

KATE: (*muttering*) How could you be with someone so wrong?

MATT: You know, whenever I'm making a crucial decision, I think of my great-granddaughter Sophie. (*laughs*) This morning she was trying to make a house out of green beans. Four years old. So cute! Never seen a house. But there she was, sitting by our plot —

KATE: Great-granddaughter? And what about your children? Your grandchildren? Did they all make it? Did Sophie's mother survive, now that antibiotic fucking resistant bacteria has made childbirth a mortal lottery again?

ANNEKE (*panicked*) Oh!

MATT: (*in emotional pain*) Oh don't.

KATE: No, I'm sorry. Sorry.

TANNOY: Public alert. Increasing risk of poor air quality.

KATE: But look around you. Look at the world.

MATT: Wow. You've got a bad case of dystopianism. It's not all like this. Still some forests out there.

ANNEKE: Pretty much is.

MATT: (*amiable*) What's the use in arguing now? Woulda, coulda, shoulda.

KATE: We could've —

MATT: I know...

KATE: You don't! You're like everyone else. You imagine we're "rational" creatures. Evidence. Logic. Plans. That's not how it works. The nanosecond accruing details overwhelm our animal brains, terror of appearing stupid compels us to grab at commonplace sound-bites closest to our in-group instincts. Brains straitjacketed by fear. The truth is that we are creatures stuck in behavioural



patterns no less rigid than foxes savaging chickens they don't eat. Our "reasoning" is not much above the birds in the Dawn Chorus yelling (*imitates a bird*) "Shag me please! Shag me please!"

MATT: Professor...

KATE: Tell me. Because I'm interested. How do you live with yourself, knowing we did this?

MATT: We didn't know. If the evidence had been made clearer, sooner... better explained...

KATE: How can you be in denial, even now?!

MATT: (*flash of anger*) How dare you! (*amiable again*) Sorry. I was *never* a denier though.

KATE: I don't mean denying the science. I mean denying our *guilt*.

MATT: I'm sure you did your best.

KATE: Patronising dick!

MATT: You and me, we could've somehow miraculously prevented a planet-wide phenomenon if only we'd taken the bus a bit more? Recycled the pizza boxes?!

KATE: No that's —

MATT: We did what we could: bought the right light bulbs, half-filled the kettle, unplugged the TV at night...

ANNEKE: Fascinating how reductive you all were. Consumer choices. Laws about dishwasher efficiency. Never questioning the political, economic and sociocultural forces that condition and constrain individuals. Never the big steps, like eliminating oil and gas.

MATT: We're not to blame for useless politicians. Or boffins with poor communication skills.

KATE: Ugh. The litany of ego-protection. *We* chose the politicians. And the scientists couldn't've been clearer.

MATT: If it'd been "clear", someone would've done something.

KATE: When you've been thriving for long enough, you struggle to imagine the good times won't continue... just as all civilisations in the past believed right up until the moment they died. So it goes.

MATT: It all happened much more quickly than anyone expected. There was nothing anyone could've done in time.

KATE: *(sighs)*

MATT: So Anneke... The Professor and I are out-of-touch old fogies. Do you blame our generation, or was it just one of those tragedies?

ANNEKE: *(without betraying emotion)* It's not really for me to say.

KATE: *(to ANNEKE)* You'd been making the case that the sense of an apocalypse isn't just about loss of diversity, place, or agency?

MATT: More academic weeds...

ANNEKE: Yes, in order to identify a given event as "apocalyptic"...

MATT: Couldn't she be doing something more productive, Professor? Less morbid?

ANNEKE: ... I argue that dread of irrevocability is —

MATT: If you don't mind me saying so, this all sounds a little bit self-indulgent.

ANNEKE: *(crushed)* Oh...

MATT: When the Black Death wiped out half of Europe, people didn't sit round arguing about how to conceptualise the word "apocalypse". They got on with burying the dead and regrowing the world.

KATE: *(irritable, to MATT)* Focus exclusively on Maslow's lower tiers, then? Nutrition, safety, and procreation?!

MATT: You know... 75 thousand years ago there was a supervolcanic eruption in Indonesia.

ANNEKE: Toba. The biggest eruption in the human era.

MATT: It caused a global volcanic winter lasting ten years, which destroyed most of our food sources and left just 3000 of us in the world!

KATE: And?

MATT: The ash in the atmosphere cooled the Earth for 1000 years, making it less hospitable for life.

KATE: AND?!

MATT: And we managed to regrow. 8 billion in 2025.

ANNEKE: And now we're millions instead of billions.

MATT: And so we are back at the start of all that. But we are hardy. We recover. And we already have the knowledge and technology to flourish again!

KATE: *(muttering)* These Pollyannas have killed us.

MATT: And you know what? Dome-life isn't so bad. We have food and water and shelter. And do you remember how lonely everyone was before the Tipping Point? Now everyone does a bit of everything for everyone. Sophie and the other children are looked after as part of a community. Elderly folk like us contribute fully and everyone looks out for us. Real community spirit. People are more rounded. Less selfish. Childcare, farming, cooking, art. And we respect what we have instead of always wanting more.

KATE: Go away.

MATT: *(decisive)* OK. Let's try this then.

*FX: Sounds of struggle.*

KATE: What is this?!

*FX: Something powering-up. A switch-on click. Then a park scene is heard, briefly distorted: children playing, birdsong and buzzing.*

ROBIN: Present from Bowie. *(calling)* Melissa! Alex! More champagne!

KATE: *(gasps)*

ANNEKE: *(in the biodome)* So much green!

*FX: Switch-off click. Park sounds disappear.*

KATE: *(outraged, fascinated)* What was that?!

MATT: So you *do* know Robin.

KATE: What was that?!

MATT: The past!

KATE: I know it's the past, you imbecile. How are you seeing my memories?

*FX: Something powering-up. A switch-on click. Then a TV studio interview is heard, briefly distorted.*

ROBIN: *(languid)* Of course I agree with the scientific consensus. But we can think something is "true" that later turns out to be completely wrong.

*FX: Switch-off click.*

ANNEKE: I've watched that interview in history class! Twenty O... eight, I think.

MATT: Robin seems to be in your thoughts a lot.

KATE: How dare you peer into my memories!

MATT: How old were you? Mid-twenties? 30?

KATE: It's some kind of torture... Remembering the grass, the trees, the fresh water...

MATT: You're the one in control here. It's experimental Elite tech. You choose what you remember.

ANNEKE: I think I need this for my thesis, Professor. I need to know about the seeds of what happened...

KATE: So we don't have the infrastructure to make the chips to repair our failing air scrubbing, but we've got the time and resources to develop some kind of gimmicky memory projector. Our species deserves to go extinct.

MATT: Can I ask you a simple question? *(beat)* Why won't you take her call? Why is this stuff from half a century ago consuming you?

KATE: *(furious)* OK! What the hell. See my memories for all I care.

*FX: Ringtone from MATT's mobile.*

MATT: Wait. This is her PA. I need to take this.

ANNEKE: *(screams from a contraction)*

KATE: Anneke!

MATT: *(shouts)* Braxton Hicks?

ANNEKE: *(in pain)* I'm not ready!

## **Scene 7**

*FX: Desert.*

KATE: That picnic at Primrose Hill. Lush waving trees. I wish you could've seen it.

Heard it. Birdsong. Bees. The smell of flowers blooming. The caress of a soft breeze on a balmy day. It was like nothing else.

For someone who's spent an entire lifetime in a bubble, can Primrose Hill make any sense? That "intricate rented world".

*(turned away)* Only about 15 minutes away. What's the point? To take my body back?!

*(gasps for breath)* Hey Cassandra. Continue replay.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

## **Scene 8**

*FX: Biodome.*

ANNEKE: Braxton Hicks.

MATT: It'll be fine.

KATE: Yeah.

ANNEKE: I want to know how it happened. How Robin became so committed to the wrong cause.

KATE: When she first moved in, late 90s, she wasn't famous. She'd recorded with Bowie in New York, but the album didn't come out for months. I was about to submit my thesis.

ANNEKE: "A comparison between representations of protofeminism in the works of each of the Brontës."

KATE: *(laughs)* A lifetime ago.

*(serious)* You'll think this mad now, but back then global warming just lurked. It just wasn't yet all-consuming.

ANNEKE: But ten years later...

*FX: Something powering-up. Switch-on click. Then a TV studio interview is heard, briefly distorted.*

ROBIN: Sure there's a consensus now, but exactly how should we – as non-experts – judge who's right?

ANNEKE: *(V.O. from 2050)* This is public record. Can we see more of the picnic?

ROBIN: The warmist believers or the equally plausible sceptics?

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* 2008. The high watermark for Science.

ROBIN: The warmists tell us proudly how all their warming conjectures are based on so many incredibly complex statistical models. That's not a virtue! Look at the stock market! At horse racing! We can't even predict election results!

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* We knew the Earth was heating up. We knew why. Three-quarters of Americans accepted the Science. And then...

ROBIN: And how much trust should we put in the infallible experts who fervently told us – not so long ago – that cigarettes are fine but homosexuality is a disease?! No amount of evidence or argument would've shaken their convictions back then. Luckily climates of opinion change!

ANNEKE: *(V.O. from 2050)* So what changed her?

ROBIN: And why should the scarier models be more trustworthy? So arrogant to imagine Man makes much of a difference to the might of Mother Nature.

MATT: *(V.O. from 2050)* Why single Robin out?

ROBIN: And the worst case scenario they're pushing is a few degrees by the end of the next century. For goodness sake! We'll just be a bit more like the Costa Del Sol. That's a good news story for British tourism! We can adapt!

*FX: Switch-off click.*

KATE: An unfair prize fight between quipping conmen and circumspect scientists. Refereed by audience-seeking journalists who thought impartiality meant treating sound-bites and science as epistemologically equivalent.

MATT: How could a few studio interviews have turned the tide?!

KATE: Enough shiny chaff to distract the bourgeoisie into ineffectual raging. Enough covering fire to enable governmental passivity.

ANNEKE: But what could be more important?

KATE: Nothing was more important. We just got *bored*. We longed for excitement, luxuries, celebrities. Life became a mall.

*FX: Alert from comms device.*

We trusted that someone responsible somewhere was somehow making it all alright for us to have internal combustion engines, gas boilers and billions of single-use, throwaway plastic items. We'd console ourselves that at least we were doing our bit, even if others were being irresponsible.

MATT: I've been ordered to put her through to you.

KATE: Meanwhile we chose leaders who stupefied us with circus acts of grievances, scapegoats, easy fixes and macho wars.

MATT: Will you speak to her?

KATE: Uninhibited economic growth at all costs. Business as usual.

MATT: That's not fair. Many people back then were on the breadline, just desperate to keep their families fed and warm. You can't blame them.

*FX: Alert from comms device.*

KATE: What... fucking... consolation is that now?

ROBIN: *(via a comms device)* Kate?

KATE: We've never been the Sapiens we aspire to be. We're just noisy beasts covered in a thin skin of rationality, herded by selfish short-term emotions.

MATT: The scientists got it wrong anyway.

KATE: Yes it was worse.

MATT: Yes. It was worse. How could we know that a cascade of —

ANNEKE: *(muttering angrily)* "How could we know?!"

ROBIN: *(via a comms device)* Kate?



MATT: ... mutually reinforcing feedback loops would amplify and accelerate the greenhouse effect and tip us into a hothouse Earth?

ROBIN: *(via a comms device)* Hello?

MATT: Even when we knew the truth, the leaders couldn't agree a plan.  
*(beat)* And even when they agreed a plan, how could we know it was inadequate? How could we know how much methane was trapped in the permafrost?!

ANNEKE: *(muttering angrily)* "How could we know?!"

MATT: Life is random. We do the best we can. Make the best of it.

KATE: Like sucking up to "VIPs".

MATT: *(furious)* You think I don't have regrets? You think I don't fight despair every single day? You want to know what happened to my children, Professor?!

*(beat) (kindly, softly)* I'm sorry.

But you're obsessed with trying to understand how we got here. And it's not healthy. It's pointless to water dead shrubs.

And our memories aren't perennial. They mulch. And that means we're not poisoned forever by sadness, shame, anger, grief and pain.

Instead, we can cultivate a wonderful new story. The organism you are now is not the one you were fifty years ago.

And look at my little Sophie. Her beaming little face. She doesn't know about The Dead. About a past of greed and cruelty. She just gets on with making her green bean house. Smiling up at me. "Look what I done grampa!" It's her future that's important.

## **Scene 9**

*FX: Desert.*

KATE: *(turned away)* They're only 10 minutes away, I reckon.

*(back on mic)* I wonder what you will think of us. Will you have been taught that "There was nothing anyone could've done"?

Maybe a species that fails to react when its lookouts frantically scream that the volcano is erupting is a Darwinian dead-end.

*(coughs)* Hey Cassandra. Continue replay.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

## **Scene 10**

*FX: Biodome.*

ANNEKE: *(screams from a contraction)*

MATT: She's... she's coming!

ANNEKE: I know, you wanker!

MATT: No, I mean Robin! Robin is coming here!

KATE: Here?! How?!

MATT: The Elite Domes have jets.

KATE: She's flying here?

ANNEKE: *(in pain)* I... I need to talk to the Professor alone.

*FX: Alert from MATT's mobile.*

MATT: What?

ANNEKE: Do you want the Professor to actually speak to Robin? Because she'll simply walk away if she doesn't want to.

MATT: OK. Back in 2 minutes. And I'm putting Maternity on standby.

*FX: MATT exits.*

ANNEKE: *(in pain)* I don't think I'm ready for this.

KATE: The viva or...?

ANNEKE: How can I be bringing a child into such a world?

KATE: That was a question for nine months ago!

ANNEKE: When I was 11, I became separated from my family on a walking holiday in Patagonia. I remember following a goat track round the edge of a mountain and suddenly... far below me... this verdant valley, a sparkling river, fields, tumbledown barns...

TANNOY: Public alert. Air quality is poor and at risk of worsening.

ANNEKE: Now my childhood wasn't great: Extreme weather, animals going extinct, failing farms, and wars over water... The constant anxiety...

But it was *outside*. We could run, and explore. Go places. The beach...

Forests... Ancient cities... Hear birds. Experience seasons. Give sugar lumps to horses. Meet new people, new creatures. See new sights.

But what future does my daughter have? None of that. Part of a dwindling species, an etiolated person trapped in a world of impoverished experience.

Have I done a terrible, cruel thing?

KATE: But I want to ask you something, because when Wilkerson asked you earlier, you parried the question. You *do* blame us, don't you?

ANNEKE: *(sighs)* Yes. *(with slow vehemence)* I hate Generation Stupid with every fibre of my being. We all do. They wrecked our beautiful planet, for nothing. *(more measured)* We just don't say it. What's the point? Hatred doesn't help. If we

gave it free reign, we'd end up murdering the lot of you, and, to be honest, we need everyone who's still here if we're going to regrow civilisation.

KATE: *(emotional)* I'm so sorry.

ANNEKE: Huh. There are no undo buttons.

## **Scene 11**

*FX: Desert.*

KATE: *(turned away)* Wait. Is that...? *(groans)*

*(back on mic)* How many years is it since we converted our home into a stuffy greenhouse? For now we see through plexiglass darkly, while the killer sun circles round us, a vulture above a wounded man. One day just another mound in this toxic desert.

*(coughs)* Hey Cassandra. Continue.

*FX: Mobile beeps an acknowledgement.*

## **Scene 12**

*FX: Biodome.*

ANNEKE: *(in labour)* It wasn't just "money", was it, for Robin?

KATE: No.

ANNEKE: Before she comes... the baby... Will you tell me what happened?

KATE: At the picnic? Nothing. Nothing happened. That's the point.

ANNEKE: Can I see?

KATE: *(sighs)*

*FX: Something powering-up. A switch-on click. Then: a park as before.*

ROBIN: *(close)* Come on Kate. Tell me more about Jane Eyre.

KATE: *(from 1997)* I'm not sure I'm entirely sober enough to run a tutorial.

ROBIN: *(laughing)*

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* Michael, Chris, Melissa and Alex were a short distance away, arguing about which bin teabags go in.

ROBIN: *(amused)* It's just a love story! OK a twisted love story. But still just a love story. Plain Jane falls for tall dark mysterious brute. Where's the "subtext" in that?!

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* Robin lying on the grass. Her head on my thigh.

ROBIN: *(dreamily)* I'm going to miss our whisky evenings talking about the Brontës...  
Mmm...

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* I was absent-mindedly stroking her temple.

*FX: Rumble of thunder.*

KATE: *(from 1997) (startled)* I'm sorry!

ROBIN: Kate. It's fine.

KATE: No! I... —

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* Difficult for people to understand these days.

ROBIN: It's OK.

KATE: *(from 1997)* I...

ROBIN: *(softly)* I'm with Melissa.

KATE: *(V.O. from 2050)* Shame at my shame.

KATE: *(from 1997)* Yes.

ROBIN: I don't cheat.

KATE: I understand.

ROBIN: *(haltingly)* I could... I could stop being with Melissa.

KATE: No.

ROBIN: No?

KATE: Don't stop being with Melissa.

ROBIN: Why?

KATE: You love her.

ROBIN: I... I might love you more.

ANNEKE: *(screaming in pain)* This is it!

*FX: Switch-off click. Noises from the past disappear.*

MATT: They're coming to take you to Maternity.

ANNEKE: What happened next? At the picnic.

TANNOY: Public alert. Air quality is very poor and at risk of worsening.

KATE: Not much.

ANNEKE: Tell me!

KATE: I wanted the chaos to stop. I fled across the grass to the others. Michael was in full-scale rant about the poorest countries in the world suffering most from the coming disaster. I was grateful for familiar certainties. I asked him about wind farms. That's it.

ANNEKE: *(screams in pain)*

KATE: It's OK.

ANNEKE: I'm so scared. I'm so scared.

KATE: Everything will be OK.

### **Scene 13**

*FX: Desert.*

KATE: *(turned away)* 5 minutes.

*(back on mic)* Michael said blaming apathetic or avaricious human nature was a cop-out. It was a particular capitalist oligarchy at a particular moment in time.

Or did my academic friends and I hasten humanity's fate simply by problematising the very notion of knowledge?

*(coughs)* Hey Cassandra. Continue replay.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

### **Scene 14**

*FX: Biodome.*

KATE: Well?

MATT: *(excited)* She's landed.

KATE: Not Robin! Anneke!

MATT: *(dejected)* Ah yes.

KATE: What?

*FX: Female footsteps approach.*

MATT: The baby's thriving, but... The infection... Anneke...

KATE: *(sobs)*

ROBIN: Hi Kate.

KATE: *(tearful)* My god! You look exactly the same as 50 years ago!

ROBIN: I *am* the same! Gene therapy. It's the Fountain of Youth.

KATE: *(moved)* Robin.

ROBIN: Yeah. Me too.

KATE: Robin.

ROBIN: Come back with me.

KATE: No.

ROBIN: You could be 25 again.

KATE: No.

ROBIN: You should see it. I'm a farmer again! There's a little plot in the Hydroponic Sector where I tend tomatoes, oranges and green beans.

1000 of us. So many musicians and artists and creative people. You'd love it. Beautiful air-conditioned nature, a peaceful society, and virtual immortality. It's like a New Eden.

KATE: An eternity of guilt, trapped in humanity's palatial final cave, tortured by memory... Might be a fitting punishment.

ROBIN: You've done nothing wrong.

KATE: And what about your children? Teddy? And Ben?

ROBIN: (*upset*) I offered them slots. Mel too. They wouldn't come.

TANNOY: Emergency alert: Catastrophic threat to air quality imminent.

ROBIN: What the hell! Kate! Haven't you heard the announcements?! You'll die here! How have you even been living with the air as it is?!

KATE: We know. We can't manufacture replacement parts. Everything held together with duct tape. The air scrubbers can't cope.

ROBIN: You're all slowly suffocating. How are you not panicking?! Have they been putting valium in the water?!

KATE: Why are you *absolutely* sure Teddy and Ben will continue to refuse the slots?



ROBIN: Because their dome – the Illinois Dome – went silent yesterday. I've just come from there. They're all... I remember when Teddy used to sing to me while playing with his toy fire trucks.

MATT: Your PA said you would give me the other two slots if I persuaded the Professor. I've been a fan for so many —

ROBIN: *(irritable)* Who are you?

MATT: Sorry. Matt. Matt Wilkerson. I'm on the Executive of this Dome. Pleased to meet you.

ROBIN: *(brusque)* There aren't three spare slots anymore. Just two. The Executive reclaimed one, to save some surgeon.

So Kate, you can bring one other person. This guy, if you're with him.

KATE: He's nothing to do with me.

ROBIN: We just need to go. It's your last chance to transport to safety.

*FX: Alert from comms device.*

Whatever you feel about me, there's no virtue in sacrificing yourself for nothing!

MATT: I'm so sorry. I've just received word. Anneke has died.

KATE: *(devastated)* What a waste.

ROBIN: I'm sorry for your loss.

MATT: I beg you. You can save my Sophie. Please. *(beat)* She's four years old! She isn't tainted by our guilt. Please. You should see her building her little green bean house. She says —

KATE: You'd take Matt's great-granddaughter Sophie?

ROBIN: Anyone!

KATE: Anyone?

ROBIN: I promise. Anyone you say. We just need to go to the plane now!

MATT: Thank you! Thank you! Oh my god. Thank you!

KATE: *(wistful)* Do you remember the tingle of gentle, slightly chilly rain on one's face?  
*(decisive)* I'll get my things.

*FX: Elderly female steps walking away.*

ROBIN: Oh thank god. I'll be waiting, my love.

## **Scene 15**

*FX: Desert.*

KATE: Lucy walks towards 8 billion people; I walk from 8 billion into dust.  
Cassandra, continue recording and begin message to Robin.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

KATE: You promised to take anyone. *(struggling for breath)* I want you to take Matt's great-granddaughter Sophie. And Anneke's baby.  
You can't take me. I'm already dead.  
Goodbye my love.  
Cassandra, send message to Robin.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

KATE: So that's how you're both alive, Sophie and... I'm sorry, I don't know your name... Anneke's baby.

*FX: Something powering-up. A switch-on click. Then a scene from the biodome is heard.*

ANNEKE: A Paleolithic cave-dweller in Borneo paints waving hands and a rotund horned cow on the walls of her home. Those pictures lasted 40,000 years. What will remain of us?

KATE: *(V.O. from the desert) (laughs)* Your green bean house didn't survive the day,  
Sophie.

ANNEKE: Pollutants? Ruined buildings and motorways... mine-workings?

What about our literature? Our works of art? Music?

With no-one to read, with no-one to look, with no-one to hear?

*FX: Switch-off click. Sounds from the biodome go off.*

*FX: MATT enters, stumbling and wheezing.*

KATE: "Our almost-instinct almost true"...

MATT: Thank you.

*FX: KATE collapses.*

KATE: Cassandra, send message to Sophie and Anneke's baby.

*FX: Mobile bleeps an acknowledgement.*

*FX: Dusty wind blows.*

**END**