

The Perfect Ending



Comedy
by
B. Dwayne Craft

B. Dwayne Craft has taught theatre at Bob Jones High School in Madison, Ala., for more than 20 years. He lives with his wife, Katie, his children, Barrett and Kennedy, a cat named Stella and a turtle named Sparkle. His plays have won multiple awards at both the state level and within the Southeastern Theatre Conference Secondary Play Festival. He holds a master's in theatre from Florida State University and a master's in educational leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

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Dedicated to my wife, Kate.
You are always my perfect beginning, middle and end.

The Perfect Ending was premiered by the Bob Jones High School Patriot Players Drama Troupe at the Bob Jones High School Edward Zompa Auditorium on Oct. 30, 2012.

Student DirectorsKate Laury, Abigail Pike
Student Technical Direction Jake McClellan, Rachel Harold,
Stephanie Lepper, Ethan Downs
Sound Exavier Ayers
Lights Rachel Quillen
Follow Spot.....Christy Rawls
Stage Managers.....Kellie Agalsoff, Rachel Harold,
Stephanie Lepper, Bobbie Hoskins
ProjectionJake McClellan, Ethan Downs
Senior Student Tech Commandos Josh Sheffield,
Derek Adkins, Alex Buchanan,
Set Wranglers Wesley Wolcott, Jimmy Boynton,
Abigail Nichols, Michael Cook,
Travis Craft, Pistol Craig, Kyle Pettengil,
Dustin Addleman, Noah Duke, Gabriel Griffin,
Aiden Crowe, Turner Henson, Ingrid Hickey,
Matt Bedard, Heidi Wallour, Sam Goodman,
Madison Harrold, Jack Judy, Anthony Twitty,
Kaitlin Duez, Rachel Fewell, Allison Jenkins,
Ashley Moore, Allison Bailley, Morgan Turbriner,
Abigail Nichols, Benjamin Smith, Nick Conklin,
Lydia Chappell, Micaela Porter, Maura Smith,
Arthur Heraud, Tristan Vinson, Sydni Meade,
Johnny Lerman, Wesley Wolcott
Student Costume Mistress.....Sariah Robertson
Costume Design.....Shari Kingsford
Costume Moms Suzi Ontiveros, Wendy Robertson

Cast:

Father Jordan Coats
Mother..... Lauren Payne
Son Micah Smith
Daughter..... Hannah Diamant
Civil Defense Warden Zach Koenig
Grandpa..... Jonny Smith
Nurse Jane..... Amanda Penney
Martha Olivia Skillern
George..... Nathan Daniel
Avon Lady..... Marissa Kennard
Suzie Smith Tori Weldon
Insurance Salesman..... Carter Palek
Political Activists Caroline Jackson, Holly Morgan,
Savannah Graner, Richard Brasseale, Xavier Horton
Dorothy Parker..... Elena Ontiveros
Dorothy Parker's Followers Devyn Guillebeaux,
Victoria Camille Comer,
Megan McDowell, Lindsey Solomon
Shriners Josh Koopman, Jesse Tollison, Chris Gunner
Understudy..... Cameron McLain

SETTING

Stylized 1950s living room or blank stage with furniture to suggest living room setting. The original production used a projection to announce the end of the world to great effect. An 8' x 8' stylized TV screen provided the projection surface by using an inexpensive rear projection material (Trapeze) that can be purchased from a variety of stage supply houses. These announcements can also be achieved by having an announcer from offstage voice this as if it were on the radio, or it can be staged downstage of the main action if the use of projection is not possible.

COSTUMES

As much as possible stereotypical 1950s dress is used. Stylized 1950s costumes would also be very effective.

NOTES

Because this is a stylized play, feel free to paint with broad brush strokes. The more extreme choice is usually better for the characters as well as the set, costumes and makeup.

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CHARACTERS

FATHER: The perfect 1950s father. He is determined to enjoy his paper and pipe despite the chaos around him. He should be played as a caricature of the 1950s ideal.

MOTHER: The perfect 1950s mother. She alternates between the perfection of June Cleaver and a raging lunatic. Her switches should be rapid, and when she catches herself, she should instantly revert to the image of wholesome perfection.

SON: He is the straight-laced junior varsity all-American kid without a flaw. Every corny stereotype of the '50s high-school football player should be embodied in him. Later, he is revealed as a whimpering, weak-kneed little boy.

LITTLE SISTER: She is dressed identical to Mother and is a carbon copy of her in every way. She oozes perfection, to the point where it verges on mania. She has outbursts that reveal just how scary she can be.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN: He is quite serious about his duties, probably because his regular job is less than desirable. He is finally someone of importance when he dons his CDW helmet. Earnest in his efforts, he obviously is holding on to order and discipline to fight off the panic of impending doom.

GRANDPA: He drools profusely and is incoherent, but only barely. Throughout the play, he will have incoherent outbursts translated, probably incorrectly, by Nurse Jane.

NURSE JANE: She is the prototypical ditzy blonde, obviously hired for her looks rather than her brain or nursing ability.

MARTHA: The nagging wife. Also, a stealth looter of neighbors during the end of the world.

GEORGE: Martha's beleaguered husband. Also, her co-conspirator.

AVON LADY: She is the penultimate Avon sales woman with a single-minded vision of beauty.

SUZIE SMITH: The 1950s good girl with a wild side bubbling just beneath her poodle-skirted perfection.

INSURANCE SALESMAN. He is a fast-talking and hard-closing slickster. Before they know it, they'll be signing papers.

POLITICAL ACTIVISTS 1-5 (2m., 3w.): These roles can be combined into as few as three characters by sharing lines. They are ready for political action but not sure of what action they should take.

DOROTHY MARTIN and her FOLLOWERS 1-4: Some of these roles can be combined as well. Dorothy Martin predicted the end of the world in the 1950s and convinced her UFO cult to join her in preparing for it. She was proven wrong when the world continued after her predicted date.

SHRINERS 1-3: They just want to protect the secrets of the order.

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FATHER. Honey, I'm home!

MOTHER. Right on time, Father!

FATHER. And it's so very nice to be home after such a long day at the office. You know, Mr. Smith from accounting said it perfectly this morning when he said just how lucky we are to have such perfect homes, with our perfect jobs and our perfect families.

MOTHER. You are so right, Father! Such a perfect day. And how was papa bear's day at work?

FATHER. Oh, you know, mama bear, the usual. A little bit of this, a little bit of that, and a whole lot of paperwork.

MOTHER. Well, isn't that perfect, dear. I just love it when you do important things like paperwork.

FATHER. Oh, and that project I've been working on is finally finished.

MOTHER. Oh, honey, I forgot to tell you why this is such a perfect evening.

FATHER. It looks like it's going to work perfectly. Everything just came together.

MOTHER. Tonight we are getting together with the Joneses and the Smiths and the Davises! That's my surprise, papa bear, we're going to have a dinner party!

FATHER. Of course, I was surprised to discover that my project will probably cause the inevitable destruction of the entire world and every living creature on it ...

MOTHER. Won't it be delightful?

FATHER. A complete and total apocalypse.

MOTHER. With the very best guests.

MOTHER & FATHER. Isn't that just perfect!

(Pops up his paper.)

MOTHER. Why don't we watch a little TV while we wait on our guests?

(By this time, FATHER has a newspaper whose headline reads: "END OF THE WORLD TODAY" in front of his face. He crosses to his favorite chair and sits with the paper blocking his face from the audience.)

TV ANNOUNCER. Ladies and gentlemen of the listening audience, we interrupt this program with an important announcement from the federal government. Fellow citizens, the eminent scientists at the Institute for Advanced Scientific Studies have discovered that the world as we know it and all living things on planet Earth will be completely and totally destroyed. Good night, and may the Lord ...

MOTHER. My dinner party! That is not perfect!

(SON enters. He enters tossing his football in the air.)

SON. Guess who has good news?!

MOTHER. Why, it's my perfect son! And what is this good news?

SON. Well, this is just about the most important news ever; more important than any news you've heard today!

MOTHER. Oh I doubt that.

SON. It looks like I am going to be the new quarterback for the school's football team. Isn't that grand?

MOTHER. Now, Junior, you know that we will have no playing ball in the house. That is NOT the perfect way a son should behave. You know Father doesn't like a lot of hulloaloo while he is relaxing after work. And since fathers are so good at working hard and giving us good things like radios and toaster ovens and apocalypses, we must give him a moment of peace.

SON. I'm sorry, Mother, I was just so excited about being quarterback that I had to tell you about it. Being quarterback is just about the most important thing that will ever happen to me, even if I live to be 100 years old!

MOTHER. Well, that's not likely! Now run along and get changed. Tonight the Joneses and the Smiths and the Davises are all coming over for dinner, and I want everything to be perfect! (*He shrugs her off; she is shocked and outraged.*) Father will have to discipline you if you keep up that behavior!

SON. All Dad will do is read his paper and smoke his smelly old pipe.

MOTHER. Because that's what fathers are good at, Junior. If you work real hard, you'll be a man like him someday and be able to read about important things and make your own special smells. Dinner will be ready soon, and we don't have very long—not long at all. But until then, go change.

SON. Gee wilikers, Mom.

MOTHER (*suddenly shifts into demon from hell mode*).
GO AND CHANGE RIGHT NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE! (*Big pause.*) Papa bear, I know there is nothing more important than relaxing after a hard day. Not even the end of the world could tear a workingman away from his entertainments. (*Spaces out momentarily.*) Not even the end of the world ...

(*LITTLE SISTER enters.*)

MOTHER (*cont'd*). Father, look, our daughter is home just in time to help Mommy get ready for our dinner party. And how was my little lady today?

LITTLE SISTER. Today, when I was on the playground, I pushed Timmy Smith off of the monkey bars.

MOTHER. That's nice, sweetie. Now go change into your pretty dress so that our guests will see how perfect our little house is and how we can have a perfect dinner party.

LITTLE SISTER. And when he fell, he cried a lot and I laughed, because boys aren't supposed to cry, even when you break your arm falling off the monkey bars. So I made him eat dirt for crying and teacher said ...

MOTHER. That's nice, but remember that we have guests on their way and there's not much time left—for anyone ...

LITTLE SISTER. And after he ate the dirt, I twisted his broken arm and he started to scream and I liked it!

MOTHER. MOTHER SAID GO TO YOUR ROOM OR THIS WILL INDEED BE YOUR LAST DAY ON EARTH. DO IT NOW BEFORE MOMMY GETS ANGRY. (*Big pause.*) Love, Father, love is why we are having a dinner party tonight. Because I love our perfect home, our perfect lives and our perfect children.

(Knock at the door.)

MOTHER. Well, here they are at last, and I thought they would never get here. Father dear, please stop reading your paper, we have guests at the door.

(She exits L and is backed onto the stage by the CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN.)

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Excuse me, ma'am, but I am a Civil Defense Warden, and I have an important announcement: The end of the world has been scheduled for 7:36 p.m. this evening. Please remain calm, do not panic, this is not a test. Ma'am, I am here to ensure the orderly behavior of citizens during this emergency. If we are to survive the end of the world, it will be because of our orderly behavior. Now, I know this is a frightening situation, but if you will allow me to—

MOTHER. Father, isn't it just perfect that a man in uniform has stopped by right before our dinner party? It's always nice to have someone in uniform come to a party. Such good conversation always comes from uniforms.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Ma'am, I appreciate your respect for the office of the Civil Defense Warden, but I couldn't help but notice that all your lights were burning, and I detected the smell of what could only be termed "meatloaf" from the street. Do you realize that having your lights on is an invitation to disorder and chaos? It's in the manual! If you go against the manual, you virtually guarantee the speedy destruction of everyone and everything. Now, we don't want that, do we?

MOTHER. Why, how else would I have a perfect dinner party without the lights on? And what is wrong with meatloaf? You don't think I should have made a casserole instead do you? *(She grabs him by the shirt as she becomes more frantic.)* Because I thought that meatloaf would be the perfect dish for a—*(Catches herself and regains composure.)* Oh my, I've wrinkled your uniform.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. As the Civil Defense Warden for Area B9, I have a duty to maintain order in the event of existence-threatening events. I am after all a highly trained professional, after my two-and-a-half hour orientation course. They gave me a certificate and everything. *(Proudly shows her his wrinkled and tattered certificate.)*

MOTHER. That is a perfectly nice certificate, but we'll need another chair if you are going to stay for dinner. I will get one from the kitchen, and you just make yourself comfortable until our guests get here. Isn't it perfect to have a surprise guest, Father?

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. There's no time for that, ma'am! As outlined in the manual, I am declaring a state of emergency for our area and cancelling all dinner parties. Now if we can turn off the lights and all assume our emergency preparedness positions: Duck! Cover! And remain calm!

MOTHER. You see, you don't seem to understand. I have been planning this dinner party for a very long time and nothing, not even the end of the world, is going to stop it from happening. So whether your little manual says so or not, those lights are staying on, and there will be a dinner party tonight.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. But I can't secure the rest of Area B9 until I turn off the lights here! If I could just—
(Goes to turn off lights.)

MOTHER. Touch that light switch and you will lose a hand! What you will do is STAY AND EAT MEATLOAF, OR YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE THE APOCALYPSE WITH EVERYONE ELSE! *(He is intimidated into sitting abruptly. She smiles brightly and continues.)* I'll go get that chair.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I guess I could stay for a minute, but we don't have long.

MOTHER. Remember, I'm watching you, little man.

(CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN realizes that she is gone and gets up to leave but is interrupted by LITTLE SISTER as she enters dressed exactly like MOTHER. She should be a carbon copy of MOTHER in miniature, right down to her hair.)

LITTLE SISTER. I like your uniform, it's just perfect. Mother says that men in uniforms are good to have at dinner parties because good conversations come from uniforms. I saw a man at the filling station that looks just like you, but his uniform was different.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN *(stands at attention)*. I am the Civil Defense Warden for Area B9. That is a very important job, especially in the event of the end of the world.

LITTLE SISTER. Father said that filling station workers are grease monkeys and that we shouldn't talk to them because they aren't important. You really look like the man at the filling station.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Well, I am NOT a grease monkey! I only work at the filling station on weekends and Wednesdays. My real job is important, very important, and you will refer to me as Mr. Civil Defense Warden!

(MOTHER returns carrying a chair and cuts him off.)

MOTHER. Well, there's my perfect daughter behaving like a little lady and talking to the nice man in the uniform. I hope she hasn't talked your ear off!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. She said I was a grease monkey! And I was telling her that I am the Civil Defense—

(Knock at the door. MOTHER once again cuts him off.)

MOTHER. Well, there are our expected guests. Maybe the Civil Defense Warden should sit down. *(Goes L to answer the door.)*

LITTLE SISTER. I'll still talk to you, even if you are a grease monkey.

(MOTHER is backed onto the stage by NURSE JANE pushing GRANDPA in a wheelchair.)

MOTHER. Why honey, look it's Grandpa coming to visit. Isn't that just a perfect surprise? And he's brought Nurse Jane along for a visit as well, aren't we so perfectly excited that they chose now to drop in? It's ever so good to see you, "Nurse" Jane. *(Ever the host, she is effusively welcoming and gracious.)* Grandpa, we are having a dinner party tonight, and I have made the perfect meatloaf. Wouldn't it be perfect if you stayed and joined our little party?

GRANDPA. I serd tat tis enderf der worlf, ENDERF DER WORLF! FLACKIN GEFFIN TERK!

(CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN goes into his duck, cover and remain calm routine, prompted by GRANDPA's outburst.)

NURSE JANE. He says thank you for the invitation and we would love to stay. *(Pushes him on past MOTHER's obvious protest.)*

GRANDPA *(looking at NURSE JANE like she's crazy, he gestures for her to come close with his remaining finger, which takes effort. When she is very close he yells)*. Parfin gliggle taruck parf, der wurlf it gerna ent, kaput, ta beeg changlee farth . . . tend if ter wirlt! Steeerffin beetle crastank! Maggle farf tankle donk, stipple trank neeeeeerrrrfff! Kaput?

(GRANDPA is so agitated that he seizes up in whatever position is appropriate and funny and stares off into space and drools.)

NURSE JANE. Now don't get yourself excited or your angina will act up and you'll have another spell.

MOTHER. Is he all right? It isn't because of the meatloaf is it? I knew I should have made a casserole!

NURSE JANE. Oh no, he loves meatloaf! He does this every time I vacuum the floor. There I am, pushing the vacuum baaaaack and fofooorth and baaaaack and fofooorth, *(She pantomimes vacuuming in a way that positions her derriere in front of GRANDPA and moves it in a suggestive fashion.)* and he just gets all upset. I think it's the sound of the vacuum cleaner that upsets him.

GRANDPA. TER FER DER FLIN POOK AH STU BLAS-TERFLUP.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN *(obviously enamored with NURSE JANE)*. Um, hello there, ma'am. Allow me to introduce myself. I am the Civil Defense Warden for Area B9.

NURSE JANE. Oh, I just love a man in uniform!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Well, what a coincidence. I just happen to be wearing one right now!

(CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN proudly displays his uniform while making eyes at NURSE JANE.)

GRANDPA *(the spell is broken)*. Fer blastic bell stran foop ...

Tuh enderve die wild! enderve die wild! Fangle dartin skeep!

MOTHER *(looking at NURSE JANE, who just shrugs)*.

Why thank you, Grandpa. That is the perfect thing to say!

Daughter dear, Grandpa is going to stay and visit. Oh, a smudge! *(She scrubs LITTLE SISTER's face until she is perfect once more.)*

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. What did he say?

NURSE JANE. He said thank you. I had better take him to the bathroom now.

(NURSE JANE wheels GRANDPA off UR. Knock at the door.)

MOTHER. That must be our guests! I'll just get the door.

LITTLE SISTER. We'll need more chairs. I like to do things around the house, just like my perfect mother!

MOTHER. What a darling daughter I have.

(MOTHER and LITTLE SISTER exit to their tasks. SON enters; he is still chipper, clean-cut, wholesome and all-American.)

SON. Well look who's here! Why, it's Freddy from the filling station. How's the gas pumping business?

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Well, the windshields always need wiping and the gas pumps are ... um, I mean, hello there, Son, just your Civil Defense Warden here to supervise this area during the end of the world.

SON. What do you mean the end of the world? Mother's meatloaf isn't that bad! At least it's not her casserole.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. We Civil Defense Wardens don't put on our helmets unless devastation is almost certain. To prevent the end of the world, I insist that everyone assumes the emergency preparedness position: Duck! Cover! And remain calm!

SON. Aww come on, Freddy, you're pulling my leg!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. It says right here in the OFFICIAL announcement that the end of the world has been scheduled for 7:36 p.m. this evening.

SON (*reasoning through it*). I guess that means that the game will be cancelled tomorrow ...

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Of course, they never send out official announcements unless it's serious ...

SON. And I won't get to play quarterback ...

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. And I would say that the possible END OF THE WORLD is serious.

SON. And Suzie Smith won't wear my letterman's sweater ... and I won't get to hold her hand at the bonfire ... and we'll never kiss! I've been waiting a long time to kiss Suzie Smith! No bonfire means NO kiss! Well isn't that just perfect! (*He stomps off.*)

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN (*calling off after him*). If it helps, you'll probably perish in a blistering, scorching ball of fire! That's kind of like a bonfire.

LITTLE SISTER (*enters with a chair, sets it in place, examines, moves it one inch then exclaims*). PEERRRRRFECT! Mother would be so proud of me. Isn't this just a perfect evening?

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I guess so, if you like apocalypses and Armageddons. Personally, I was hoping for a simple earthquake or alien attack for my first genuine civil emergency, but hey, we work with what we're given.

(MOTHER enters with the neighbors, MARTHA and GEORGE.)

MOTHER. Father, put down that paper, the neighbors have stopped by.

MARTHA. And so George says to me, “Martha,” he says, “Since the TV says it’s the end of the world, I’m sure the neighbors wouldn’t mind us borrowing a cup of sugar so you can make me a cake.” And I says, “A cake, right now, with everything about to end?” And he says, “I really would like a cake, Martha.” As if I didn’t have enough to worry about, not that he ever thought about me or what I wanted.

GEORGE. Now, Martha. *(Pushes her out of the way.)* What my wife is trying to say is that your lights are the only lights on in the neighborhood, and what with this whole end of the world business, we thought we would just hop on over—

MARTHA. Don’t interrupt me, George, it’s not polite. Anyway, since we saw your lights on, and since it is the end of the world—

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I told them that leaving the lights on was against regulations!

(MOTHER glares him back into silence.)

MARTHA. We thought we’d just hop right over and see if you might let us borrow a cup of sugar.

MOTHER. Is it just a cup you need? I can get that right now.

MARTHA. Well, actually, if you had a little more, then I could make a bigger cake for George, not that he needs any more cake considering how big around the middle he’s getting. *(She laughs in the most obnoxious manner possible.)* George says that the starvation following catastrophes like this one will be horrible, so one last cake—

GEORGE. Now, Martha, let’s not tell them everything.

MARTHA. I hope you don't mind, if it's a bother.
MOTHER. Of course. How much would you like?
MARTHA. Five or 10 cups— (*GEORGE nudges her.*) Five or 10 pounds would be enough.
LITTLE SISTER. That must be a big cake! I like big cakes! It takes a really big knife to cut big cakes.
MOTHER. Of course, if you'll just follow me. Being a perfect neighbor means loaning things whenever anyone asks.
MARTHA (*as they exit*). As long as it's not a bother. George can carry the sugar if he isn't too lazy to do that.
GEORGE. All right, Martha ...
CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Do they always talk so much?

(Enter GRANDPA and NURSE JANE.)

LITTLE SISTER. One time, when Mommy was making a cake for Grandpa's birthday, I accidentally spilled the rat poison into the batter. I didn't tell Mommy though. The cake still came out looking perfectly fine, isn't that right, Grandpa?
GRANDPA. Wehht? Ats wuh eee hud a struck? Fang arfin bar tarkenfarb! Blasten farp targif.
NURSE JANE. Um, he says he loves you too. There you go, Grandpa, you can sit right over here. (*Moves him away towards the corner.*)
LITTLE SISTER. I think I like your grease monkey uniform better than this uniform.
CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I am not a grease monkey ...
NURSE JANE (*sees CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN*). Oh, hello. I just love talking to men in uniform. They always have interesting things to say.
CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN (*fully aware of NURSE JANE and playing up his importance*). You know, in the event of complete and terminal catastrophes, I am the most important official in this four-block area.

NURSE JANE. Four blocks?!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Do you want to see my manual?

NURSE JANE. Oh yes!

(Knock at the door.)

LITTLE SISTER. That must be our dinner guests. I am so happy about our perfect little dinner party. I once had a dinner party with my teddy bear and my dolly, but then they wouldn't eat the meatloaf, so I had to rip their heads off! It was perfect! *(Exit to door.)*

MOTHER *(re-entering)*. Well, aren't they perfectly delightful neighbors to have, and all they took was 10 pounds of sugar, one gallon of milk and five pounds of flour. I do hope her cake comes out perfectly! I'll just check on the meatloaf ... because that's what mothers are for, checking on dinner, and dusting things, and darning socks ... *(Exit.)*

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Civil Defense Wardens are for ensuring that the manual is followed during the end of the world.

NURSE JANE *(reeling him back in)*. *Ooohhh*, I like a man who knows how to use a manual. Read me some more rules and stuff, they are so ... MANLY.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. OK!!

(They begin conferring. Enter LITTLE SISTER with AVON LADY. NOTE: The AVON LADY was played with a speech impediment in the premiere production. The director could look at Gilda Radner's caricature of Barbara Walters on Saturday Night Live for inspiration. It could be very funny to play her entering with, "Aaawon cawwing. Is the wady of the house in?" In all cases, consider the intended audience and choose appropriately for the situation.)

AVON LADY. AAAAVON calling! Is the lady of the house in?

LITTLE SISTER. Mother is in the kitchen checking on her meatloaf, and I am helping her get ready for our perfect dinner party! Brother is in his room crying like a little girl, and Grandpa's nurse and the grease monkey are reading about rules—

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I heard that!

AVON LADY. Well, I guess I could wait for a moment if that's OK. What with the world ending, I haven't had many women who want to buy our new product. (*Conspiratorially.*) Personally, I think that most of them don't really know how important it is to look your best right up until that last moment.

LITTLE SISTER. Mother says looking perfect is more important than being perfect.

AVON LADY. Well, your mother is especially right when the world is ending, because beautiful people don't die in apocalypses! They die in sports cars. If everyone is beautiful, then there couldn't possibly be an apocalypse. That's why blush is so important!

LITTLE SISTER. I know Mommy says that Nurse Jane wears too much blush, and that it makes her look like a tart.

NURSE JANE. I just love tarts, are we having those for dessert?

AVON LADY (*shocked*). Too much blush? Why dearie, there is no such thing. I believe a woman should always look her best, even when she is about to be completely vaporized.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I told them they were going to be vaporized if they didn't follow the rules, but they wouldn't listen to me.

LITTLE SISTER. I put blush on our doggy once, but it didn't look perfect, so I put the doggy in the washing machine with lots of soap. He didn't like the spin cycle. I think that's why our doggy walks funny now ... I guess we'll need more chairs if you are going to stay for dinner. (*Exits.*)

MOTHER (*entering*). And whom do we have here? Another guest for our perfect little dinner party? I am so glad I made an extra large meatloaf.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Even though the rules clearly forbid— (*He is shut down with a look from MOTHER.*)

AVON LADY. AAAAVON calling! Are you the lady of the house?

MOTHER. Why, yes I am. I am the lady of the house.

AVON LADY. Well let me introduce you to our new line of cosmetics for the end of the world. We have a whole new line of blushes that fit just this occasion!

NURSE JANE. Did you say blushes?! I have 36 different shades of blushes in my purse right now! (*She bends over to retrieve them.*)

GRANDPA. Wanga farpin carfun parta crank.

NURSE JANE. That's nice, Grandpa, I know it itches sometimes. Did I tell you that I just love blush!

MOTHER. And it shows perfectly well. And while I'm sure you have some perfectly nice blushes and lipsticks and eye shadows, I only use ...

AVON LADY. What you SHOULD be using are Avon products! And you are in luck today because I just happen to be the Avon lady, and I sell Avon products.

MOTHER. But I have guests on their w—

AVON LADY. Oh please let me at least show you something. I simply couldn't leave without someone buying Fiery Flirt blush #42. Remember, beautiful people don't die in apocalypses, they die in sports cars!

NURSE JANE (*to AVON LADY*). Can I try some of the blushes you have? I think mine has rubbed off! I just love blushes.

AVON LADY. Certainly, let's just go to the ladies room. We have several that match your skin tone. #67 Mushroom Cloud Chartreuse is very pretty when your skin is melting off in a blast of superheated gases. Or you could try Burnt to a Crisp Brown, our new base ...

(CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN and GRANDPA watch NURSE JANE exit with AVON LADY.)

GRANDPA. Carkle farp mastle tooook—

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Don't you know it, brother!

MOTHER. DID I SAY THAT YOU COULD SPEAK? Well, I just can't see what's keeping our guests; they should have been here hours ago. (*Doorbell rings.*) Come in!

(*Enter SUZIE SMITH.*)

MOTHER. Oh my, it's Suzie Smith, how unexpected:

SUZIE. Hello ma'am, my mother and father told me to bring over this cake on my way to the bonfire tonight. They said it was for the dinner party.

MOTHER. Oh my, I am so happy you came by, Suzie. And I so look forward to having a perfect dinner party with your parents. (*Walks to CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN and drops the cake in his lap.*)

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. What do you want me to—

MOTHER. Make yourself useful and take this to the kitchen ... NOW! (*To SUZIE.*) Would you like for Junior to come out and visit? I can call him if you want.

SUZIE. Oh, no ma'am, that would be too forward for a girl like me. Although, he did say that he wanted to go to the bonfire with me. But he never came by!

MOTHER. Well, we'll just have to find out why he didn't come calling. (*Calling offstage.*) Junior, oh Junior! Suzie Smith is here to see you!

SON (*entering, clutching a teddy bear and wearing footie pajamas*). Mother, that is not a funny joke when I am so upset ... Suzie??

SUZIE. Oh, hello

SON. Um, hello ... Suzie, I know I asked you about the bonfire ...

SUZIE (*hopeful*). I'm really am looking forward to it.

SON. Well, about that, you see, I don't think I can go tonight, what with the world ending and all ...

SUZIE. What do you mean, the world ending? I just knew you didn't want to go with me, but to come up with an excuse like that—

SON. No really, it's not an excuse, I really wanted to—

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN (*re-entering*). Oh, it's not an excuse! It says right here in my civil defense announcement that the world ends at 7:36 today!

MOTHER. LET THE LOVE BIRDS TALK, GREASE MONKEY!

SUZIE. You mean, the world is really ending? Really? Well, if the world is ending, then I guess I can drop the squaresville act, (*Rips of her costume to reveal hotpants and a tight top.*) and we can get out there and light some fires, maybe boost a car or two, lift some hubcaps, knock over a soda counter!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. That's called looting and that is strictly forbidden—

SUZIE. Maybe use my switchblade if I have to. (*Pops open a switchblade, menacing towards the CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN.*)

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Of course I could check the manual. (*Crosses upstage to the sofa.*)

SUZIE. C'mon, big daddy, we're gonna blow this pop stand. (*She plants a kiss on him.*)

SON. But I can't go out once I have my pajamas on ... OK! (*He never gets to finish as she drags him off after her.*)

MOTHER. Well, isn't young love just perfect? And she is such a nice girl. I'll just go ... clean these. (*She carries SUZIE's clothing offstage.*)

LITTLE SISTER (*enters and sets a chair down*). Peerrrrfect. My mommy says that being perfect is more important than being right. One time in school, Mrs. Finklestein marked a question wrong on my paper—

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. That's not so bad.

LITTLE SISTER. But I wanted my paper to be perfect! So I stabbed Mrs. Finklestein with my pencil!

(Knock at the door.)

LITTLE SISTER. I'll get that like a good little girl.

GRANDPA. Farpel ankel tankerf stirk ... enderve wirt!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. That's easy for you to say!

(Enter LITTLE SISTER with INSURANCE SALESMAN in tow.)

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Why, hello there friends! Carter Palek, Kingsford and Sons Insurance.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Finally! Sir, I am the Civil Defense Warden—

(SALESMAN silences him by whacking him with his briefcase.)

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Now I know what you are thinking. Tonight is not a good night to have an insurance salesman call on me, what with the world ending and all.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Well, actually—

(SALESMAN silences him again.)

INSURANCE SALESMAN. But since I saw your lights on, I thought I'd stop by and share with you a very special deal—one you're not likely to see again!

MOTHER *(entering)*. Oh, look, another unexpected guest on the same night I am having a dinner party. I am just so perfectly happy about how this is turning out.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I told you that lights should be off and that we should duck, cover and remain calm!

MOTHER. ONE MORE TIME!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Well, ducking and covering is one way to avoid risk, but as part of your end of the world, apocalyptic preparations, you really should consider insurance coverage.

MOTHER. Oh, I don't really think that would be nece—

(SALESMAN hushes her by covering her mouth.)

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Lucky for you, I am ready to offer you a whole life policy at deeeeeeely discounted rates. You see, our advanced actuarial tables demonstrate that, with the proper coverage, the end of the world need not be a catastrophe.

MOTHER. Oh come now, there will be no catastrophes during this dinner party! Whoops! I forgot to set the timer on the meatloaf! *(She runs out of the room.)*

INSURANCE SALESMAN *(to CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN)*. Friend, let me level with you. After tonight, the kinds of rates I am preparing to offer will cease to exist.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. And so will everything else.

(Knock at the door.)

LITTLE SISTER. I'll go get that!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Best of all, I have a policy for everyone that absolutely anyone can afford.

GRANDPA. Fergin poppa ferf ... da enderf ta wirt!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. What was that, young man? Do we have a policy that's perfect for you? You bet your britches we do. Let's go over some of your options. *(He goes to GRANDPA and starts shuffling papers.)*

(MARTHA and GEORGE enter with LITTLE SISTER.)

MARTHA. So I says to George, "George, dear, since our nice neighbors gave us that cup of sugar we needed, maybe we should ask them if we could borrow some canned goods?" You know, just to see us till the world ends. And do you know what George said? He said, "Martha, don't be a bother." As if I had ever been a bother to anyone! George can be such big lout sometimes.

GEORGE. Now, what Martha means is that everything will probably be closed during the apocalypse, and we don't want to run out of everything and have to resort to, say, cannibalism or something.

MARTHA. You wouldn't mind giving us all your canned goods, would you? Just until the world is finished ending.

LITTLE SISTER. Of course! That would be a perfectly neighborly thing to do. (*As they exit.*) One time, I tied a full can of beans to my kitty cat's tail and took him to the swimming pool. When I put him in the water, he didn't like it very much, I only took him out when the bubbles stopped coming up ...

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I think its time that I got back to headquarters. They probably need me there right now ... (*He starts towards door.*)

MOTHER (*as she enters*). SIT DOWN, GREASE MONKEY! Well, this is just turning into the perfect little gathering of friends, neighbors ... and grease monkeys.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. HEY! That's not nice!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. And that's why you need maximum coverage for the near future!

GRANDPA. Fetting farbin falkin fackle pastickle farp!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Of course that's a high deductible, but show me where else you can get a premium like that one with the world about to end and I'll eat my hat!

GRANDPA. Feeble toop!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Well, let's just see what the man of the house has to say. (*Wheels GRANDPA up beside FATHER.*)

MOTHER. Since everyone is getting along so well, I'll just take this opportunity to remind everyone that this is the perfect evening to have a perfect dinner party, because we all know that a woman who can't give a perfect dinner party isn't much of a woman at all! I'll just go tidy something ... because that's what I do.

(GEORGE and MARTHA return with arms laden with canned goods.)

MARTHA. So I says, "George, do you know what we don't have for the end of the world?" And that big lummoX just sits there and says, "Surprise me," just like that. So I says, "We do not have a radio, don't you think a radio is important when the world is ending, you big ox?"

GEORGE. Now what Martha means is that—

LITTLE SISTER. Mother says that the radio is to stay off during dinner parties.

MARTHA. Oh, isn't that nice. George, get the radio!

GEORGE. OK, Martha, but when we start looting the other neighbors, you have to carry—

MARTHA. SHHHH! When George makes little jokes like that, I just have to laugh. *(She laughs, LITTLE SISTER picks up a butcher knife.)* We'll just let ourselves out the back door!

(LITTLE SISTER follows the neighbors out with the knife. Knock at the door.)

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I guess I can get it, it's not like I'm going to get anyone to duck and cover with me ...

MOTHER *(enters just as he starts to the door)*. IF YOU TRY TO LEAVE NOW, I WILL HUNT YOU DOWN LIKE AN ANIMAL AND BRING YOU BACK TO THIS DINNER PARTY ... HOGTIED! I mean, it wouldn't be proper for a guest to answer the door, I'll get it!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Could I interest you in a personal dismemberment policy? *(He pulls out another policy.)*

(MOTHER returns with a group of men [2] and women [3]. They are earnest in their political activism. They genuinely believe in their mission but have no clue what it really is.)

POLITICAL WOMAN 3. As the only house with your lights on—

POLITICAL MAN 1. We, the citizens of this neighborhood, thought we should stop by—

POLITICAL WOMAN 2. To ask you to join us.

POLITICAL MAN 2. We are tired and fed up!

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. How can the government force an apocalypse on us without first having a debate?

POLITICAL WOMAN 2. Or a public hearing.

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. Or a referendum!

POLITICAL MAN 1. Join us as we march on city hall.

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. We demand an explanation from those frauds in office.

POLITICAL MAN 2. Who do they think they are?

POLITICAL MAN 1. Deciding things like this for everyone?

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. It's un-American!

POLITICAL MAN 1 & 2. Communistic!

POLITICAL WOMAN 2 & 3. Downright fascist!

POLITICAL WOMAN 2. There should be limits on when the government can announce things like apocalypses.

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. Yeah!

POLITICAL MAN 2. Armageddons!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. Yeah!

POLITICAL MAN 1. Ends of the world!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. Yeah!

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. We demand representation before annihilation.

POLITICAL MAN 2. That's right, no annihilation without representation.

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. Yeah!

POLITICAL WOMAN 2. Will you join us?

GRANDPA. PANKLE DANKLE SLURP PARFTUNG ISHTLE SNORK!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. YEAH! ... Huh?!

MOTHER. It is so nice of you to visit, but as you can see, WE HAVE A DINNER PARTY TONIGHT, AND IT IS GOING TO BE PERFECT! Besides, politics and religion aren't proper dinner conversation, so you'll just have to come visit another time ...

(AVON LADY enters and notices POLITICAL WOMEN 1-3. She rapidly sees the sales opportunity and begins her spiel.)

AVON LADY. Perhaps you ladies would be interested in a little eye shadow before political action? I have a wonderful color called Asteroid Impact Indigo ... *(Ushers them to the side where they form a huddle with backs turned to the audience.)*

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Gentlemen, I know you have important things to attend to, but can the safety and security of your family really afford to wait? Let's just look at some of the policies that might fit your needs. *(He moves POLITICAL MEN 1-2 off to the side to sell them insurance.)*

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Has everyone practiced their emergency preparedness drills? Duck, cover, remain calm!

MOTHER. If this dinner party isn't perfect, I don't know if I can live with myself ... OR LET ANYONE ELSE LIVE. It simply has to be perfect, PERFECT!

(Knock at the door.)

MOTHER *(cont'd)*. Oh, there are our guests. I'll get it!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Let's see what the ladies have to say about, uh ... toaster insurance! (*Goes to AVON LADY and POLITICAL WOMEN 1-3.*)

(*MOTHER enters with DOROTHY MARTIN and her FOLLOWERS 1-4. They are robed and awaiting the great mothership. They are as earnest in their actions as the CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN.*)

FOLLOWER 3. Because your lights are on, we know that the mothership holds favor with you.

FOLLOWER 4. We are here to warn you, sister!

FOLLOWER 1. Warn you about the doom that is about to be visited upon you.

FOLLOWER 2. We know that the end is near because we have been told.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Ommmmmmmm.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. I tried to tell her—

MOTHER. I WILL RIP YOUR HEART OUT AND EAT IT WITH THE MEATLOAF IF YOU INTERRUPT AGAIN, LITTLE MAN! (*Looks at POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, AVON LADY and SALESMAN.*) WHAT!?! (*Big pause.*) Although, it is nice to have visitors at this hour, especially when I have been so busy making a meatloaf and getting ready for our perfect little dinner party—

DOROTHY. The government has lied to you.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Lies!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Hey, the government never lies. They leave that to the newspapers!

DOROTHY. They know that the world isn't ending for everyone, just for those who refuse to see the truth, the truth about "the mothership."

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Ommmmmmmm.

DOROTHY. It was revealed to me by direct psychic connection that there is a rescue ship from the home planet.

FOLLOWER 1. It's on its way here right now to rescue the true believers.

FOLLOWER 2. The ones who listen to the psychic wisdom of the ancients as it has been revealed through the cosmic interfaces of the void.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Ommmmmmmm.

DOROTHY. Come, sisters, we must meditate!

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Yes, meditate.

LITTLE SISTER (*comes in with an oversized bloody knife*).

Oh look, more guests, we'll need more chairs. I'll get them, Mother.

MOTHER. That's OK, little lady, they won't be here long ...

None of us will. I simply must check on the meatloaf. We don't want it to burn do we? (*Exits.*)

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Burn! That's exactly what we are going to do if we don't duck, cover and remain calm!

LITTLE SISTER. I like fire. Once when I was playing with matches, I set the curtains on fire, but that was our old house. It was very pretty when it was all lit up! It's too bad we had to move.

(Knock at the door.)

LITTLE SISTER (*cont'd*). I'll get it.

INSURANCE SALESMAN. And our fire insurance ... well, it's to die for.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Aaaahhh ... (*Reaching toward LITTLE SISTER.*)

GRANDPA. TA ENDERF TA WIRLF!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Hey guys, I think he said that he needs to go to the bathroom again!

(NURSE JANE enters from UR. Her makeup is garish and overdone.)

NURSE JANE. I just love this color! Do you like it, Grandpa?
GRANDPA *(screams as if startled by her garish makeup and then mutters)*. Far kerbla stuffer blastic foop!!

AVON LADY. I told you it was perfect!

NURSE JANE. Do you think it suits me?

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Why yes, it does, you look very ... pretty. Let me check the manual and see what it says about looking pretty when the world is ending.

NURSE JANE. You're so nice ... and handsome in your uniform. It just puts the 'man' in manual when you read rules and stuff to me!

FOLLOWER 1. We have consulted with the overbeing.

DOROTHY. You should all prepare yourselves for communion with the great mystery!

AVON LADY. Ladies, I am trying to make enough beautiful people to stop this whole apocalypse thing. Don't you know beautiful people don't die in apocalypses? They die in sports cars.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Oooooooooo.

DOROTHY. Come sisters, we must be beautiful for the mothership.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Ahhhhhh

(SHRINERS 1-3 enter with LITTLE SISTER.)

LITTLE SISTER. Look, Mother ...

MOTHER. I know, more unexpected guests.

SHRINER 3. We were so glad to see your lights were on, since we need to talk to our lodge brother about important lodge business.

SHRINER 1. We are here for your husband.

SHRINER 2. As grand master of the lodge, he is the ultimate authority.

SHRINER 1. As imperial potentate for our fraternity—

SHRINER 3. He will decide whether the lodge will support or oppose—

SHRINER 2. This whole apocalypse thing.

SHRINER 1. Of course, all lodge business must remain secret.

SHRINER 2. Yes, secret.

SHRINER 3. Definitely secret.

SHRINER 1. Only those who know the secret hand shake—

SHRINER 3. Will be allowed to hear our discussion! (*SHRINER 2 demonstrates the secret handshake.*) Dang it, Ted, you showed them the secret handshake.

SHRINER 2. Oh, sorry.

SHRINER 1. May we speak with your husband?

MOTHER. I don't know. I mean, it's not like I was planning a DINNER PARTY TONIGHT!

SHRINER 1. We'll only be a moment.

SHRINER 2. The lodge business is important.

SHRINER 3. Forget about that whole handshake thing.

SHRINER 2 (*using the force*). You never saw anything.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. You know, I heard that they secretly control everything.

NURSE JANE. Their uniforms are cute too.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. For a secret organization that controls the entire world, I would have gone with a different hat.

MOTHER. DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU AGAIN?

Excuse me, everyone! Although it is perfectly nice having UNEXPECTED and UNINVITED guests on the night I am having a dinner party, I'm terribly worried about our proper guests. They should have been here by now. Does anyone have the time?

GRANDPA. Tank suckert skiety farple knock tick fert ... TA
ENDERF TA WIRLF!

NURSE JANE. Grandpa says that it's 7:35 p.m.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. 7:35?! Did you say 7:35?! It's
time to duck, cover and remain calm!

INSURANCE SALESMAN. Time to get that coverage you need!

DOROTHY. Time to prepare for the mothership!

AVON LADY. Time to be beautiful!

SHRINER 1. Time for the super-secret handshake and lodge
salute!

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. Time for political action!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. Yeah!

NURSE JANE. Time for Grandpa's enema!

GRANDPA. Aawwhh!

MOTHER. 7:35? Did you say 7:35? It's too late! It's too late
for everyone to see how perfect our house is, and our lives
are, and our dinner party is!!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. OK, OK! I have a plan! We
need to follow procedure!

MOTHER (*distraught*). Forget procedure! My world has al-
ready ended; it's not perfect anymore!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. In five, four, duck, cover, re-
main calm ...

*(Collective silence ... all hold their breaths for 20 seconds
... and then nothing happens.)*

GRANDPA. Farkin nottle pop ...

DOROTHY. Wait, I am getting a message from the cosmic
void ... yes, yes, I understand!

FOLLOWER 1. What is it sister?

FOLLOWER 2. Yes, enlighten us.

FOLLOWER 3. Did the mothership forget about us?

DOROTHY. No, the space fabric is out of sync! The end has been delayed—we must prepare for the NEW arrival of the mothership! Come, sisters, we must meditate.

FOLLOWERS 1-4. Yes, meditate. (*Exits.*)

INSURANCE SALESMAN. You mean, all of those policies I sold, they're all going to be ... valid?! I've got to get to the office! I've got to check the actuarial tables; I've got to call my mom!

AVON LADY. Well, I guess that means I made enough people beautiful. My work here is done! Remember, when Avon comes calling, beauty is right behind. (*Exits.*)

SHRINER 1. Now we have to come up with a new handshake and lodge salute since everyone here has seen ours!

SHRINER 3. Let's go. We've got lodge business to do.

SHRINER 2 (*as they exit*). Can we get new hats?

POLITICAL MAN 1. Well, it's about time the politicians listened.

POLITICAL WOMAN 1. Good thing they came to their senses.

POLITICAL MAN 2. I guess there's no need in marching on town hall now.

POLITICAL MAN 1. Unless we can find something else to protest!

POLITICAL WOMAN 2. Let's protest the lack of something to protest!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. YEAH!

POLITICAL MAN 1. Let's march!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. YEAH!

GRANDPA. PANKLE DANKLE SLURP PARFTUNG ISH-TLE SNORK!

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. Yeah!

NURSE JANE. What was that, Grandpa? You want to go home? But I was talking to the nice man in uniform.

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. It's OK, since the world didn't end after all, I have to take off the official helmet.

NURSE JANE. Too bad, I only go steady with men in uniform. Let's go, Grandpa!

GRANDPA. ISHTLE SNORK!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN. Wait, I do wear a uniform at work ... (*Embarrassed.*) at the filling station.

NURSE JANE. Ooooh, but grease monkeys are my favorite type of man in uniform!

CIVIL DEFENSE WARDEN (*as they exit*). Really?! Well, let me tell you about this one windshield I cleaned! It was so big ...

(Give it a beat, and then MOTHER proceeds to collect herself.)

MOTHER. Father, I am so terribly sorry the dinner party wasn't perfect. I'll do better next time, papa bear, when the world isn't ending.

LITTLE SISTER. Maybe if we watch TV, we can learn how to be perfect from the commercials. Everyone in commercials is always perfect!

MOTHER. What a lovely idea! We'll learn how to be perfect by watching commercials for things like gasoline and detergents and nylon stockings.

(They turn on the TV. Playing are TV commercials from the 50s in all their glorious cheesy goodness. [Resource this from The Prelinger Archive for royalty free movies.] The TV commercials are interrupted by static, and then as the lights fade, the images of mushroom clouds exploding, planets colliding, asteroids impacting Earth, etc., appear. Followspot on FATHER, who lowers his paper and delivers the ending line to the audience.)

FATHER. Just perfect!

THE END

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The Perfect Ending

Comedy. By B. Dwayne Craft. Cast: 9 to 11m., 12 to 16w., 2 either gender. Mother has a meatloaf in the oven and is well on her way to having the *perfect* dinner party, but one thing stands in her way—the end of the world as we know it! Is that going to stop her perfect party from happening? Not at all! Like moths to a flame, the house lights are attracting all types of unexpected guests. Join her in *The Perfect Ending* as she juggles a grease monkey, looting neighbors, an insurance salesman, her son's juvenile delinquent girlfriend and many other zany characters in an attempt to maintain a perfect house and to be the absolute *perfect* hostess, right up until the very last moment. Will the world come to an end, or will Mother get to have her perfect dinner party? *Simple set. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: PL8.*

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