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Dramatic Publishing

The Perfect Ending



Comedy
by
B. Dwayne Craft

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.*

*Cover: Bob Jones High School, Madison, Ala.
Photo: Lee Butgereit. Cover design: Susan Carle.*

ISBN: 978-1-61959-004-5



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311 Washington Street
Woodstock, IL 60098
800-448-7469

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The Perfect Ending

By

B. DWAYNE CRAFT



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(THE PERFECT ENDING)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-004-5

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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 Directors Kate 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 Agaloff, Rachel Harold,
Stephanie Lepper, Bobbie Hoskins
Projection Jake 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.

The Perfect Ending

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 ditz 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.

The Perfect Ending

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 to-night, 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 trunk 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 foooooorth and baaaaack and foooooorth, *(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!