

PEPPERONI APOCALYPSE

One-Act Dark Comedy

by
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(A room with minimal furniture and windows covered with black cloth. Late afternoon. TERRY, JONAH, FRITZ, and MCHALE, anywhere from mid twenties to forties, sit around.)

TERRY: The women and children...

FRITZ: Have gone into the river of fire.

TERRY: How much did you spend?

FRITZ: Four full-fare adult tickets and six children's seats to Cleveland at thirty-eight and twenty-two comes out to...

(does the math) two hundred eighty-four.

TERRY: Which leaves us with a grand total of... somebody? McHale, you're the disciple in charge of finances.

MCHALE: I'd say our worldly goods are pretty well accounted for.

JONAH: So now...

TERRY: We wait. The end of the world should be here in *(checks his watch)* five minutes, give or take.

FRITZ: *(long pause)* Question, Terry.

TERRY: Shoot.

FRITZ: Why did we send the women and children to Cleveland? Why didn't we poison them at breakfast or keep them here so we could die surrounded by the ones we love?

TERRY: I'm not sure. I guess we didn't think of it.

FRITZ: They should be getting off the bus right now. Taking their last few breaths.

TERRY: Unless they hit traffic.

JONAH: God, I hope they don't die in traffic. Jonah Junior gets claustrophobic in slow-moving vehicles.

MCHALE: I'm sure they didn't hit traffic going to Cleveland. During Armageddon, people flee urban areas, so it's always easier to get into cities than out.

FRITZ: Should we pray?

TERRY: Too late now.

FRITZ: Then what should we do?

MCHALE: *(beat)* We could list all the ways the world could end.

JONAH: I could do that.

TERRY: Me too. Fritz?

FRITZ: How much time?

TERRY: Around three. A little over.

FRITZ: Okay, but could you give us a one-minute warning? *(TERRY nods.)* Who's first?

TERRY: It was McHale's idea.

(Nods of agreement from the others.)

MCHALE: Flood.

TERRY: Original.

MCHALE: You didn't say it had to be original.

TERRY: *(gives in)* Might as well get all the old chestnuts out of the way: fire and brimstone.

JONAH: Hail.

FRITZ: Comet. *(others groan)* You said get the usual ones out of the way.

MCHALE: Plague of bugs.

TERRY: What about the bugs? Once they've eaten everything else, what destroys them?

MCHALE: I thought we were doing the end of man... the bugs explode from overeating.

TERRY: The earth plunges into the sun.

JONAH: Moon plunges into the earth.

FRITZ: Asteroids plunge into the earth.

MCHALE: Extraterrestrials.

TERRY: Sun explodes.

MCHALE: Isn't that fire and brimstone?

TERRY: Not necessarily.

(Beat. The others nod acceptance.)

JONAH: Ozone layer goes.

FRITZ: Nuclear catastrophe.

MCHALE: Meltdown or war?

FRITZ: Meltdown.

MCHALE: Nuclear war.

TERRY: Locusts.

MCHALE: Falls under bugs.

TERRY: Frogs, then.

JONAH: We turn to salt.

FRITZ: Earthquake.

MCHALE: Another ice age.

TERRY: Plague.

JONAH: Drought.

FRITZ: Poisoned waters.

MCHALE: **(beat)** Chaos.

TERRY: What?

MCHALE: Chaos. Chaos starts with uncertainty, which leads to unrest, anarchy, rioting, wholesale bloodshed and mass destruction: the end of civilization as we know it.

JONAH: I don't know.

MCHALE: What do you mean? What's wrong with chaos?

JONAH: It's... vague.

FRITZ: The other dooms were a little more tangible.

TERRY: It's pretty darned odd if you ask me. Chaos - it's like saying the world'll drop dead of hysteria.

MCHALE: Well?

TERRY: It's a feeling. Doom isn't a feeling. It's doom. **(looks at his watch)** We had a pretty good run. There's about a minute left, so this is probably a good time to sit here quietly and contemplate the end. **(beat)** Is everyone wearing clean underwear? **(MCHALE nods, while JONAH and FRITZ try to check. They eventually nod and go back to contemplating. Long pause.)** Ten seconds.

FRITZ: Are you sure that's Eastern Standard Time?

(Beat. A knock at the door. Beat.)

TERRY: This must be it.

JONAH: A knock?

TERRY: The calm before the storm. The little click of the land mine before it blows everyone to kingdom come.

FRITZ: Do we answer it?

(A second knock.)

TERRY: It will come whether we answer or not.

MCHALE: So what are you saying in terms of answering the door?

PIZZA GUY: **(off)** Hello?

FRITZ: It's getting insistent.

MCHALE: Not exactly insistent...

JONAH: Inquisitive.

(Another knock.)

PIZZA GUY: **(off)** Anybody in there?

TERRY: Fritz, I'd like to give you this honor.

FRITZ: **(hesitates)** You're our leader, Terry.

TERRY: And it's up to me to give unselfishly right 'til the end.

MCHALE: Big honor, Fritz.

JONAH: **(lies)** Wish it was me.

(Beat. FRITZ opens the door. PIZZA DELIVERY GUY, a twentysomething slacker, half-turned around ready to leave and wearing a shirt with his employer's logo, holds a large box of pizza.)

PIZZA GUY: Hi. I thought we got cranked. **(FRITZ, TERRY, MCHALE and JONAH stare at the box.)** Who ordered the large pepperoni?

FRITZ: **(beat; to TERRY)** It's in the box, isn't it?

TERRY: I'm thinkin' it is.

MCHALE: Kinda small for the apocalypse.

TERRY: Finger of God's just one little finger.

JONAH: Yeah, but is it the same size as a regular finger?
PIZZA GUY: **(to whomever)** That's, uh... eleven sixty-three. Plus tip.
MCHALE: Are we sure about this?
TERRY: Sure?
MCHALE: That this is it?
TERRY: What else could it be?
MCHALE: Coincidence.
TERRY: At the exact moment - the exact second that the end is predicted?
JONAH: Yeah, he arrived -
TERRY: He may only appear to be a "he."
JONAH: He, she, or it arrived too exactly on time to be coincidence.
MCHALE: But nothing has actually happened.
TERRY: It's a process. The process begins at that time. The signs don't specify when it ends.
FRITZ: And the end of the process would be...
TERRY: The end.
FRITZ: **(beat)** So what do we do?
PIZZA GUY: **(waves the bill)** Excuse me - who gets this?
FRITZ: You're the leader, Terry.
TERRY: **(holds out his hand)** Give it to me.
PIZZA GUY: Thanks.

(HE hands TERRY the bill. The other three men gather around TERRY to stare at the bill.)

TERRY: Eleven sixty-three. Significance?
JONAH: **(picks up a Bible)** Gimme a minute.
PIZZA GUY: It's nine forty-seven for the plain, plus one-fifty for one topping on the large, plus tax. You got free delivery, 'cause it's over ten dollars, but that doesn't include a tip.
JONAH: Nothing in Revelations.

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