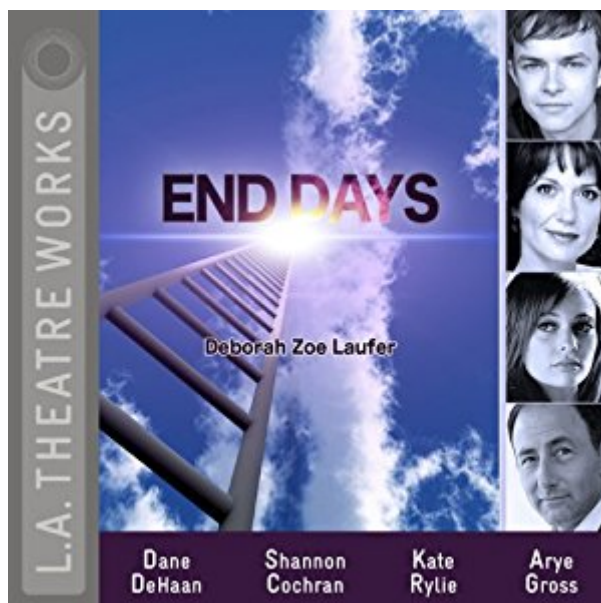


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End Days



Synopsis

In Deborah Zoe Laufer's *End Days*, a suburban family is undergoing a spiritual crisis following the September 11th attacks. Sylvia Stein has turned to Christianity to save her disaffected husband Arthur and her rebellious teenage daughter Rachel. But as Sylvia races around preparing for the Rapture, Rachel is learning that there are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in her philosophy. An L.A. Theatre Works full-cast performance featuring: Josh Clark as Jesus and Stephen Hawking Shannon Cochran as Sylvia Stein Dane DeHaan as Nelson Steinberg Arye Gross as Arthur Stein Kenneth Houston as the Bully Kate Rylie as Rachel Stein Directed by Michael Hackett. Recorded at The Invisible Studios, West Hollywood in 2010. *End Days* is part of L.A. Theatre Works' Relativity Series featuring science-themed plays. Major funding for the Relativity Series is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to enhance public understanding of science and technology in the modern world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

N I C E NICE

I was lucky enough to see this play after I read it, and it really enhanced the purpose of the story. Very highly recommended -- if you're considering putting on a play, this one is low-budget, minimal cast, and still very impressive.

What we have here is, I believe, a pretty typical dysfunctional American family, father, mother,

daughter, taken to the extreme. Arthur Stein was a manager at an office in the World Trade Center when the September 11 attacks occurred. Arthur was not at work that day, obviously, but all 65 of the people who worked under him were killed. The story takes place about a year later and Arthur has almost completely shut himself off from the world: rarely leaving the house, not dressing or showering or even eating regularly anymore. His life and his family are slowly leaving him behind. Sylvia Stein was affected by the tragedy in a much different way. She believes that the end times are near and has turned to God in order to save herself and her family. But during the previous year her religion has begun to edge past fanaticism into something more like cultism. She is now hearing the voice of Jesus, not just in her heart or in her head, but actually out loud, and Jesus has some rather funny conversations with her. Sylvia grows more and more frantic when she believes that Jesus has revealed to her what day the Rapture will occur. Rachel Stein actually seems to be the most normal member of the family; normal for a teenager that is. That's right, she's a foul-mouthed, pot-smoking goth-girl who is fairly smart but doesn't apply herself. She seems to have ruled her father out as any kind of influence in her life, and she has completely rejected the religion that her mother is trying to force on her. After a friend lends her a book written by Stephen Hawking she begins to hear him just like her mother hears Jesus. Their conversations are downright funny sometimes. It's a family of three all searching desperately for some kind of sense and meaning in a world that continues to have less of both. Instead of pulling together in the crisis they all try their own thing without paying much attention to the others. Then comes Nelson Steinberg who is new at Rachel's school. Nelson is searching for meaning as well but has no direction. He is simultaneously preparing for his bar mitzvah and attending Christian services with the Stein family, soaking up both doctrines eagerly. Add to this the voice of Jesus and the voice of Stephen Hawking, the ultimate atheist, and you've got quite a dynamic going on. In the end, it doesn't seem like Deborah Zoe Laufer is really trying to say that any member of this group is right or wrong: Christian, atheist, fanatic, shut-in, rebel, or directionless wanderer. Rather, I think she is speaking about the kind of world we live in today: people searching for something whether they know what it is or not and finding it in different places. I won't reveal how this turns out because I want you to give it a listen for yourself, but it was fascinating to see how these people all interacted with each other. As with all L A Theatre Works productions, End Days features a brilliant and talented cast. Each performer was entirely convincing in his or her role and played well off one another. The full cast includes: Josh Clark as Jesus and Stephen Hawking, Shannon Cochran as Sylvia Stein, Dane DeHaan as Nelson Steinberg, Arye Gross as Arthur Stein, Kenneth Houston as the Bully, Kate Rylie as Rachel Stein. Directed by Michael Hackett.

I've seen and read it dozens of times. It's just that good. The only thing better than reading it is seeing it. So I recommend doing both. Immediately if not sooner.

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