The New Next-Door Neighbor

A play by Suzan Zeder
With a song by Jenn Hartmann Luck
Based on a poem by Helen M. Pursley

CHARACTERS

The Earth: A Health Care Worker
Any age, Any gender
Will survive but barely

The New Next-Door Neighbor
All ages, All genders
Invisible but Deadly

The Family
Mom
Dad
Girl
Boy

Note: Where you see ******* in the script make up your own dialogue.
The New Next-Door Neighbor

THE EARTH

Up where the sky grows dark
And the moon glows its misty beams of night
Up where the earth is silent
Where the people light the candles in their brains
It began!

(Lights up on THE FAMILY sitting around the dinner table.)

MOTHER
If you were a letter of the alphabet, what letter would you be?

BOY

FATHER
If you were a food, what food would you be?

GIRL

BOY
If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

MOTHER

GIRL
If you were a shape, what shape would you be?

FATHER

EARTH
Up in the world they call their home they look to their left and see....

(They all look to the left.)

They look to their right and see...

(They all look to the right.)

THE FAMILY

OUR NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR!

(Lights up on the NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR. He is smaller than he will be and uglier than you can imagine.)

And he is very, very, very scary!!!!
I have seen you before and I remember…

Spanish Flu.
And I remember...
Typhoid Fever.
And I remember...
Ebola.
And I remember...
SARS!

Not one of these pandemics has been very friendly!

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR opens his huge mouth.)

You have pinched my China…
... and devoured:

Italy
France
New York

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR opens his huge mouth.)

You have swallowed:

Jobs
Savings
Security

(He grows bigger.)

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR opens his huge mouth.)

You have gobbled up:

Kissing
Hugging
Touching

(... and bigger.)

And sucked into your evil self:

Dreams
Hopes
Plans.

(... and bigger.)
THE EARTH
Each time someone gets sick with your horrible virus, you grow 100 yards or so.
Soon you will be bigger even than I am!
You will wrap yourself around the Earth like a scarf!
You are getting EVERYTHING you want!

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR burps.)
The ONLY way to stop you is to help people help the Earth themselves
And to help each other!

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR sneers).
But the Family stayed safe in their house
And held each other’s hands
And listened to each other’s heartbeats
And wondered
What should we do?
What CAN we do?

MOTHER
We can sing!

THE EARTH
And so they do.

(The air is filled with music.)

MOTHER
(Sings)
Somedays I want to cry
Somedays I want to pray
Somedays I just want to run away
with the circus
And somedays I’m really afraid

BOY AND GIRL
Somedays we wake and make muffins
Pretend like we’re all football stars
We watch cat videos for hours
And dig for bugs in the back yard.

MOTHER AND FATHER
And sometimes it’s dark and stormy
Sometimes it’s just too hard
Sometimes it’s really lonely
Even though you’re right here with me.

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR makes the sounds of a storm by banging on pots and breaking china.)
But the New Next-door Neighbor was making such a racket that they could not hear any other sounds, have any other thought, feel any other feeling but their fear. And they wondered:

What should we do?
What CAN we do?

FATHER
We can dance!

THE EARTH
And so they do!

MOM
(Sings and dances)

Sometimes we dance in the kitchen

BOY
Sometimes we dance on our own

GIRL
And sometimes my Daddy just dances right with me
Sometimes I practice my handstands alone

FATHER
Sometimes we play the Beatles (Bump Bu duh duh AND…)
…sometimes it’s something brand new.

GIRL
And they spin me and dip me and twirl me all fancy
But they can’t lift me, cause I’m almost seven and I’m HUGE!

MOTHER AND FATHER
And somedays the days are just perfect
Sometimes we somehow forget
Sometimes we actually love this
And we really don’t want it to end.

THE EARTH
Until they do….

BOY
MOM! She’s hogging the computer AGAIN!

GIRL
DAD! He’s drawing on the carpet with MARKERS!
MOTHER

If you two don’t stop...

FATHER

If you two don’t start....

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR gets bigger.)

THE FAMILY

I miss my friends
I miss my school
I miss the gym
I miss my life!

( and bigger.)

( and bigger.)

ALL

WHEN IS THIS GOING TO BE OVER???????

(NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR is enormous.)

THE EARTH

And just when nobody can stand one more minute of anything or one more word from anyone... When there is nothing left to do or say or be.... The Family just...laughs...

(All Hell breaks loose as a whirlwind of emotions and frustrations and thoughts and feelings and sorrows and joys, flies through the air and circles and spins round and round the NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR forcing him to grow smaller and smaller and smaller until he is the size of a withered kumquat.)

THE EARTH

And even though the New Next-Door Neighbor did not disappear, The Family did not feel the same fear as they did before. They did not look to the left or to the right, Instead they looked into each other’s eyes.

GIRL

(Sings)
I stare into my Mother’s eyes
She stares back into mine

BOY

I stare into my Daddy’s eyes
He stares back into mine.
MOTHER AND FATHER
And they both get really close to us
It’s weird, but we don’t mind
We feel their breath on our faces
And everything is fine.

THE EARTH
The moon glows and people blow out the candles in their brains.

BOY AND GIRL
And pretty soon
We fall asleep
In our own beds, in our own place
But by morning’s light
We are side by side
Keeping each other safe

FAMILY
Keeping each other safe.

( Lights fade on THE NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR as the family dreams.)

THE EARTH
And the Mother dreams of:
**********

MOTHER

THE EARTH
And the Father dreams of:
**********

FATHER

THE EARTH
And the Boy dreams of:
**********

BOY

THE EARTH
And the Girl dreams of
**********

GIRL

THE EARTH
They all dream of a time when the New Next-Door Neighbor no longer exists.

END OF PLAY