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Dramatic Publishing



Evil Little Thoughts

by

MARK D. KAUFMANN



Dramatic Publishing

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(EVIL LITTLE THOUGHTS)

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EVIL LITTLE THOUGHTS

A Full Length Play
For 5 Men and 2 Women

CHARACTERS

DOUGLAS JENSEN a businessman
ANNA JENSEN his wife
LANEY HAROLD his secretary
LLOYD PRICE a businessman
HERBERT TOOMEY a policeman
BO RIVERTON Rusty's foster brother
RUSTY RIVERTON a hit man

TIME AND SETTING

ACT ONE

Scene One: A theatre lobby.
Scene Two: Two months later. Tuesday.
An office supply room.
Scene Three: Wednesday.
The patio of the Jensen's suburban home.
Scene Four: Thursday. Rusty's living room.
Scene Five: Friday. An office supply room.

ACT TWO

Scene One: Saturday. The Jensen's city penthouse;
the bedroom.
Scene Two: The same; fifteen minutes later.

The world premiere production of *EVIL LITTLE THOUGHTS* opened at the Denver Center Theatre Company on May 20, 1992, as part of the 1992 U S WEST Theatrefest. It was directed by Israel Hicks. The sets were designed by Bill Curley, the lighting was by Robert A. Keoshey, the costumes by Nancy Bassett, and the sound by Jim Kaiser. The production was stage managed by Paul Jefferson with the following cast:

Douglas Jensen	<i>John Hutton</i>
Anna Jensen	<i>Wendy Radford</i>
Laney Harold	<i>Patricia Jones</i>
Lloyd Price	<i>Randolph Mantooth</i>
Herbert Toomey	<i>Ron Headlee</i>
Bo Riverton	<i>James Micheal Connor</i>
Rusty Riverton	<i>William M. Whitehead</i>

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Originally produced at the Denver Center Theatre Co.
a division of the
Denver Center for the Performing Arts
Donovan Marley, Artistic Director

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The last part of the "Hoedown" movement of Copland's "Rodeo" rises to full volume. The house lights go out. The curtain rises on the lobby of a concert hall (indicated by two pools of light on either side of the stage). Posters announce the schedule of future concerts. Stage left there is also one pay phone, and a sign indicating the way to the rest rooms. The music ends and is followed by the sound of applause, off. It is the concert's intermission. The low buzz of chat rises as if the lobby (i.e. stage) were being filled with the "audience" emptying from the auditorium.*

ANNA and DOUGLAS JENSEN enter stage right, both smartly dressed and in agreeable moods. DOUGLAS particularly seems to have limitless inspiration and positive energy. ANNA looks through her program.

ANNA. Copland had such...an insight into the American spirit.

DOUGLAS. You think he did?

ANNA. You don't?

DOUGLAS (*scans the lobby*). I don't see anyone we know; not even photographers.

ANNA. For a change, thank God. I can wear this dress again.

DOUGLAS. Good, I like it.

ANNA. You do? I wasn't sure the neck wasn't cut too... something.

DOUGLAS (*almost agreeing?*). Hm.

(LANEY HAROLD, a practical, canny, off-center woman in her 30's enters. She carries several papers, and a remote phone.)

LANEY. Mr. Jensen, the Nelson proposal was faxed through, but it doesn't have any of those percentage things you told me to look for. (*She hands a sheet to DOUGLAS who quickly scans it, then tears it in half lengthwise and hands the halves back.*)

DOUGLAS. Fax these back. Separately.

LANEY. ...And I have Mr. Conner on the phone.

DOUGLAS (*takes the phone from LANEY*). Peter, what am I hearing about Takashima?

(LLOYD PRICE enters stage left, a drink in his hand.)

ANNA. Hello, Laney.

LANEY. Hi, Mrs. Jensen. Oh, that's a pretty dress.

ANNA. Thank you. I like it, too.

LANEY. Shows off your whole neck.

DOUGLAS. Peter, I want to bring Marco in on this...(*He catches sight of LLOYD across the lobby.*) Peter, hold a second—Laney, go over there and get me the number of that pay phone.

LANEY (*sees where DOUGLAS is pointing*). Sure.

DOUGLAS. Go ahead, Peter. (*LANEY goes across to the phone. LLOYD is leaning against it, in the way.*)

LANEY. Excuse me?

LLOYD. Hm? Oh, sure, sorry. (*He moves back, and LANEY leans in, studying the phone's number. LLOYD puts his program under his arm, and unwraps a stick of chewing*

gum. He becomes aware of LANEY just staring at the phone, not making a call. She gets the number in her head and goes back to DOUGLAS. LLOYD glances after her, then looks at the phone, not quite able to figure out what that was about. He lifts the receiver: yes, there's a dial tone.)

DOUGLAS. *Hm...Takashima could solidify everything. Look, the concert breaks at 10:47; call the car number. (He pushes the button disconnecting the call. LANEY arrives at his side.)*

LANEY. 333-2333.

DOUGLAS (*dials*). Go to the office and dig up whatever you can on Takashima. Fax what you find to Mr. Conner; he's waiting for it.

LANEY (*nods; smiles at ANNA*). See you later. (*LANEY exits. The pay phone next to LLOYD begins to ring. LLOYD looks at it. He looks around to see if anyone is expecting a call; he doesn't see DOUGLAS and ANNA. The phone continues to ring. LLOYD tries to decide what to do.*)

ANNA (*to DOUGLAS*). What are you doing?

DOUGLAS. Impromptu business meeting.

ANNA. Who with?

DOUGLAS (*indicating LLOYD*). Him. He doesn't seem familiar with the device.

ANNA. Douglas, how many people do you know who would pick up a ringing public phone? Why don't you go over and talk to him?

DOUGLAS. That's no fun.

(LLOYD goes for the phone. He picks up the receiver just as LANEY comes back in with a policeman, HERBERT TOOMEY. He holds a pen and parking ticket book in his hand.)

LANEY. Mr. Jensen, this policeman was about to ticket your car. I told him it was the wrong idea.

LLOYD (*into phone*). ...Hello? (*DOUGLAS hesitates a moment, hearing LLOYD's voice; turns to see he's picked up the phone. DOUGLAS switches the phone off, turning back to HERBERT.*)

DOUGLAS. ...You were about to what?

LANEY. You're parked in a "no-parking" zone.

DOUGLAS. Thank you, Laney, I'll take care of it. (*LANEY exits.*)

LLOYD (*into phone*). Hello...? (*He hangs up.*)

HERBERT. So, there's no parking.

DOUGLAS. Why?

HERBERT. Why? Well, I...It's because...I really don't know; I just go by the signs.

DOUGLAS. In other words, you're so low on the totem pole that your sense of equitable justice is dwarfed by a ten-foot parking sign.

ANNA. What my husband is trying to say is that there's a very good reason the car is parked there, and when you hear it you'll probably laugh. And if you don't you'll wish you had.

HERBERT (*confused*). Look, it's only eighteen dollars...

DOUGLAS. Where will that money go?

HERBERT. Road department.

DOUGLAS. You mean it'll go into the pocket of a paper pusher who is undoubtedly the nephew or niece of someone who won the confidence of the voting electorate by kissing babies and eating ethnic foods for three months, and hasn't gone near either since.

HERBERT. I don't think that's what I meant.

DOUGLAS. Officer...?

HERBERT. Toomey.

DOUGLAS. ...An automobile is classified as a modern convenience. That is, it is a device made to facilitate one's movement, which otherwise would be restricted by its lack. Therefore, if I am required to park in a lot a block away, and at the conclusion of the concert find myself jammed in with dozens of other cars, it ceases to facilitate my movement, at which point I might as well be in fourteen-ought-seven, dressed in chain mail, and dragging an ox behind me.

HERBERT. Sir, I have a life...

ANNA. Allow me to interpret? (*DOUGLAS smiles.*) The point my husband is making is that it's not only to his own benefit that he parks in front of the concert hall, but to, actually, everyone's—and even yours—in a tangential kind of way.

HERBERT. How's that?

ANNA. The business he generates extends into almost every area of commerce...

DOUGLAS. "Nearly" every.

ANNA. Isn't "almost" the same?

DOUGLAS. A shade of difference of degree.

ANNA. Really? That's interesting: almost and nearly. (*Turning back to HERBERT.*)...Nearly every area of commerce and governmental service. Which sooner or later trickles down to you.

HERBERT. Okay. Let's just say I made a mistake.

DOUGLAS. No, you wouldn't be doing your job: write the ticket. (*DOUGLAS pulls out his wallet; shows HERBERT his driver's license.*)

HERBERT. I already made my quota—it doesn't matter, believe me...(He takes the license; reads the name.) Douglas Jensen? Oh, you're him?

DOUGLAS. Who I am, or meeting a quota should have no bearing on your sworn duty as a law officer. Write the

ticket: I'm sure it's less than the parking lot rate, anyway.
And I'll hold you in much higher esteem.

HERBERT. You'll hold me in esteem for writing you a parking ticket?

DOUGLAS (*puts his arm around ANNA*). We both will. This is my wife, Anna.

ANNA. Very nice to meet you.

HERBERT. My pleasure. (*He starts scribbling up the ticket.*)

ANNA. This is probably the first time you've been charmed into giving the ticket.

HERBERT. Without a doubt.

ANNA. My husband has a knack for making people feel privileged to be with him. Even if they get the bad end of the bargain.

HERBERT. Is that what I'm doing?

ANNA. No...actually, you seem to be coming out on top all the way around: you go one better than your quota, and you're wearing a big smile. (*Turns to DOUGLAS.*) Am I missing something, or are you taking a bath on this?

DOUGLAS. Foolish whim. (*Turns to keep an eye on LLOYD.*)

ANNA. I bring out the best in him, Officer. Are you married?

HERBERT. Oh, sure. She'd be thrilled I met you; too bad she'll never know about it.

ANNA. Oh, you're...separated?

HERBERT. Oh, no. It's just never my turn to talk. If I can just blurt it out, she'll pump me for every detail. She'll ask me what you were like, what you wore...

ANNA. Definitely a "wife" question.

HERBERT. That is a beautiful dress. Really shows you off.

ANNA. Thank you.

HERBERT. I have a lot of respect for women who don't have that surgery.

DOUGLAS. I'll tell you, Officer Toomey, it isn't every man who finds his life as enriched by the woman he marries as I have.

ANNA. Thank you, Douglas. And...excuse me a minute; I need to make a trip before intermission's over.

DOUGLAS (*looks back to see LLOYD still by the pay phone*). Yes. And I need to make a call.

HERBERT. Oh, please. (*DOUGLAS punches numbers on his phone; ANNA crosses the stage. The pay phone next to LLOYD begins to ring as ANNA nears him. She turns back to see that it is, indeed, DOUGLAS calling again. Slowing only for an instant, she passes LLOYD, going off to the rest room. LLOYD looks at the phone again. He looks around—no one else is responding. He picks up the receiver.*)

LLOYD. Hello...?

DOUGLAS (*into phone*). Mr. Price, this might not be the most orthodox of situations to discuss business, but opportunities shouldn't be wasted. Now, it would be helpful if you were at least open to discussion on...

LLOYD. Wait a minute—wait a minute. Who—who is this? How do you know it's—that I was...?

DOUGLAS. Douglas Jensen. And it's in my interest to keep abreast of my competitors' activities.

LLOYD. You've had me followed?!

DOUGLAS. Mr. Price, I think you've seen too many movies. I don't own a cloak or a dagg—Well, as a matter of fact I do own a dagger, but it's beside the point...

LLOYD. When will you comprehend no means "no"? My company is not for sale—to you or anyone. I've heard about the kind of tactics you use—I know a few people who've been on the wrong side of you. If I have to, I'll get a restraining order slapped on you...

DOUGLAS. Mr. Price, calm down. Paranoia isn't a helpful trait. I wasn't tracking you down, I merely happened upon you. And after all, this is just business.

LLOYD. No it's not! This is a lobby! And I came here to enjoy the concert, and get away from my business and the problems and the things that go on out there. I came in here for civilization! *(Pause.)*

DOUGLAS. You've found it. *(DOUGLAS clicks the phone "off.")*

LLOYD. ...Hello? Jensen...? *(The phone is dead. He hangs up, and stands stunned. HERBERT rips the ticket out of the book and hands it, along with DOUGLAS's license back, to him.)*

HERBERT. Here you go. I know you'll have it fixed tomorrow.

DOUGLAS. That goes without saying. *(Reaches into his coat pocket.)*...And in return for your ticket, please take mine: for the second half of the concert. There are some things, it occurs to me, I should take care of.

HERBERT. Oh, I can't...

DOUGLAS. You'd be doing me a favor.

HERBERT. Well, when you put it like that...Thank you.

DOUGLAS. Not at all. Please explain to my wife. *(DOUGLAS goes off. LLOYD looks around, notices HERBERT.)*

HERBERT. Absolutely—don't worry about a thing. *(He catches sight of LLOYD. They eye each other warily for a moment.)*

(ANNA comes out of the rest room with a brightly flowered silk scarf, not remotely matching her dress, wrapped around her neck and covering her chest. She stops, seeing LLOYD. She makes a move toward him.)

ANNA. Um...excuse me, but...you look...Are you all right?

LLOYD (*doesn't quite focus on ANNA*). Hm? (*Sees ANNA, and recognizes her as DOUGLAS's wife. The intermission warning chime sounds.*) Excuse me. (*LLOYD goes back into the auditorium. ANNA looks after him a moment, then crosses back to HERBERT.*)

ANNA. What...happened to my husband?

HERBERT. Not to worry. He had to go do something very important, and asked me to escort you back for the second half. (*ANNA looks off toward the lobby doors, as if looking for DOUGLAS.*)

ANNA. He did?

HERBERT. Yes. But you are completely safe in my custody, and I'll be sure you get home in comfort.

ANNA. Oh. I see.

HERBERT. I have to tell you, Mrs. Jensen. This kind of thing doesn't happen to me. Not that I ask things of life. The less you ask, the more delightful the surprise will be when something comes along. This is a very special night. (*He looks down at the ticket DOUGLAS gave him. Blackout.*)
