“UNQUESTIONABLE EVIL”

A SHORT PLAY BY SAM GRABER

ESTIMATED RUN TIME – 10 MINUTES

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SUMMARY

DWAYNE and CHARLENE enlist their first-grade daughter to infiltrate the wedding of a US Senator and reveal hotels as the evil force behind the global warming crisis.

A comedy? You decide.

CHARACTERS (1M/1F)

DWAYNE, 30s
CHARLENE, 30s

SETTING

Downstage sits an oversized, cushiony wing chair of colorful pattern.

The chair faces upstage towards DWAYNE and CHARLENE; the back of the chair towards the audience.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Unquestionable Evil was first performed January 2012 at Box Wine Theatre’s Raucous Caucus II festival, as directed by Jenna Kubly, with the following cast.

DWAYNE – Kyler Chase
CHARLENE – Annie Ward
THE PLAY.

DWAYNE and CHARLENE are standing before the chair, as if talking to Maddy.

DWAYNE
Oh, here she is! Hey, Maddy! Hey, kiddo! …[to CHARLENE] dear.

CHARLENE
Our sweet, little seven-year-old angel.

DWAYNE
So sit down, Maddy!

CHARLENE
She’s already sitting.

DWAYNE
Well, she must be thirsty from all that sitting, huh?

CHARLENE
Why Mommy brought you a cup of non-livestock, oat-distilled milk. In an anti-plastic, wood-regenerated cup.

DWAYNE
And look, now that you’re sitting, with your milk, and now that we’ve kicked off this little emergency family meeting…we want to talk to you about Uncle Ryan.

CHARLENE
You remember your Uncle Ryan?

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.

DWAYNE
Exactly, U.S. Senator Ryan who’s getting remarried this weekend in Seattle! Maddy remembers everything!

CHARLENE
Which is why Daddy and I want to give you a special treat.

DWAYNE
Can you guess the special treat?

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.
CHARLENE
Are you going to be a big sister.

DWAYNE & CHARLENE
Ha ha ha ha ha—!

DWAYNE
No. Mommy and I have told you how each additional human now born into our climate-challenged world harms even further our precarious situation. As much as we’d like to have certain things, we need to be all-in on saving the planet, right?

CHARLENE
Maddy, sit still and stop emitting all that Energy so Daddy can tell you the special treat.

DWAYNE
The special treat is: you’re going to Uncle Ryan’s wedding in Seattle…all by yourself! Isn’t that great?

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.

CHARLENE
I know you don’t like Uncle Ryan. We don’t like Uncle Ryan.

DWAYNE
Dear.

CHARLENE
But there comes a point where every seven-year-old needs to step up and take a solo cross-country adventure to save the planet.

DWAYNE
Like taking your soybean-fueled bus to the all-incandescent LEED charter school we open-enrolled you.

CHARLENE
Traveling to Seattle is going to be just like that, except with a gas-guzzling, waste-spewing steel-toxin plane of climate death.
DWAYNE
But the airline industry has won, Maddy. Many industries have won. You understand that, don’t you? We have to take on the targets still left to take down. That’s why we secretly tested you for this very special mission by having you deliver for your first-grade class that little speech I wrote.

CHARLENE
And you passed the test, Maddy. You showed us you can be a leader.

DWAYNE
You stood there in your recycled-fiber denim and spoke to your first-grade class about the endangering cow.

CHARLENE
How the seemingly harmless cow is silent killer number one with their methane output adding to the global greenhouse total.

DWAYNE
Wasn’t that so…awakening? To learn the truth about cows?

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.

DWAYNE
Yes, I know they taste good, that’s just what Uncle Ryan said.

CHARLENE
Forget the cows, okay? The cows have won. What’s important is you recited that speech from memory.

DWAYNE
Maddy remembers everything! Why you already skipped a grade!

CHARLENE
Your Uncle Ryan never skipped anything except the Kyoto signing.

DWAYNE
Which is the reason you’re going to his wedding in Seattle this weekend.

CHARLENE
Maddy, get your fingers out of your ears so you can hear the special treat about you saving the planet.
DWAYNE
After you land at the Seattle airport, and after all the hyper-capitalists exert all that Energy to be the first ones off, and after you scoot around the electric-needy moving walkway to the baggage pollutant area, you hail a solar-fueled cab and in your most serious voice you say: *the Downtown Sheraton Deluxe*.

CHARLENE
And when you reach *the Downtown Sheraton Deluxe*, you go straight to the check-in desk, you stand on your tip-toes and give your code name.

DWAYNE
Nuclear Rain.

CHARLENE
Go straight to the hotel room and don’t leave for any reason, even food.

DWAYNE
I stuffed your Energy-conscious suitcase with nitrate-free oatmeal bars.

CHARLENE
No matter how much comes out your other end from the oatmeal bars, one flush a day, got it? That’s how we save Energy.

DWAYNE
All clear on everything so far?

* DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare. *

CHARLENE
No, we’re not taking you to the original Starbucks! You’ll be in Seattle by yourself, remember???

DWAYNE
We’d go with you but the hotels know who we are now, Maddy. The hotels know our names. They’ve all banned us. Every one.

CHARLENE
The Nashville Radisson Plus.

DWAYNE
The Minneapolis DoubleTree.
CHARLENE
The Manhattan Hilton.

DWAYNE
The Omaha Hyatt.

CHARLENE
And Uncle Ryan isn’t talking to us anymore.

DWAYNE
He’s cut us off.

CHARLENE
But this time will be different. This time it won’t be Daddy and Mommy holding sit-ins in their gift shops. It won’t be Daddy and I sorting the recycling from their backlot dumpsters. This time our seven-year-old angel will be our secret weapon.

DWAYNE
Revealing hotels as the great unknown culprit behind the global greenhouse crisis.

CHARLENE
Hotels with their always-on hallway lights.

DWAYNE
Their always-on vacancy signs.

CHARLENE
Their always-on backup generators.

DWAYNE
Their always-on heat lamps in the valet pull-up area.

CHARLENE
Their always-on not-really-free wi-fi.

DWAYNE
Their always-on HBO.

CHARLENE
Their always-on extra power sockets by those little desks!
DWAYNE
And this is our perfect chance, Maddy. We know which hotel Uncle Ryan is going to be at, and when. Uncle Ryan and a hotel, together. Now I realize this might be a lot of pressure to put on a seven-year-old, and we didn’t want to have to get you involved, but you see the opportunity here, don’t you?

_DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare._

CHARLENE
No! You’re not going to swim in the indoor pool!

DWAYNE
Focus on the task, Maddy!

CHARLENE
Daddy and I have done plenty of missions to plenty of hotels and ate plenty of oatmeal bars and you don’t hear us complaining about it!

DWAYNE
Look, it’s only one night. By day two you’ll get the call to your hotel room. This activates the infiltration. Once you get that call go straight to Uncle Ryan’s reception in the terrace ballroom.

CHARLENE
Not the snack machine, not the ice maker, not riding the elevators up and down, the terrace ballroom.

DWAYNE
You’re going to a big, fun party at the Downtown Sheraton Deluxe terrace ballroom, isn’t that something!

CHARLENE
And right as Uncle Ryan starts to make a toast to his latest underage wife, you rip the microphone from his hand, and you give a special speech.

DWAYNE
Like the endangering cow speech Daddy wrote for you. Except much longer.

_DWAYNE pulls out a document._

DWAYNE
It’s our new manifesto I wrote entitled: ‘Diabolical Dioxides: The Energy-Sucking Earth-Destroying Hotels.’
CHARLENE
Just hold that microphone right up to your mouth and talk as loud and as fast as you can.

DWAYNE
Do not deviate from the speech, especially page three here about Marriott’s impact on emissions trading, which you can memorize on the flight out to Seattle. It’s so simple any first grader can do it! Now. Any questions.

*DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.*

CHARLENE
Who cares if Uncle Ryan’s serving pizza and ice cream!!!

DWAYNE
Jesus, kid!!!

CHARLENE
Just give her some damn money, in case the reception’s a cash bar.

DWAYNE
Cash bar, Uncle Ryan is so fucking cheap!

CHARLENE
Language.

DWAYNE
Sorry, footprint insensitive, Uncle Ryan is so fucking footprint insensitive.

CHARLENE
It’s the insensitivity that’s killing us! Which is why when Uncle Ryan tries to grab back the microphone: you scream.

DWAYNE
But don’t stop screaming the speech, okay? Today’s world only hears talking by screaming.

CHARLENE
And millions of people will hear on the news about you screaming our manifesto to a U.S. Senator. That’s what we’re going for. That’s the goal.
DWAYNE
Because what’s happening to us…what’s happening all around us…it happens slowly.

CHARLENE
It doesn’t happen overnight like [snapping] that.

DWAYNE
So slowly that people don’t even see it happening. Until one day they’re going to wonder why the place they want to fly to, to stay at, isn’t around anymore. [Pause] So let’s go back and review, huh! Like a little pop quiz!

CHARLENE
Start with an easy question first. I wanna make sure she’s got it.

DWAYNE
Of course she’s got it! She’s our little angel. And our little angel remembers everything, right? Like: the name of the hotel?...

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.

CHARLENE
HOLY SHIT! NO!

DWAYNE
THE DOWNTOWN SEATTLE SHERATON DELUXE A STARWOOD AFFILIATE LUXURY ACCOMMODATION PROPERTY! Is it really that hard!
CHARLENE
Write it all down for her. On her arms. That way she can’t forget. I swear, if you could sit still for one second you would hear there is one absolute in this world and it is that hotels are evil. Unquestionable evil. You can sit there and roll your eyes and plug your ears and wipe your drifters on the manifesto, but you will take action assured that Mommy and Daddy have a moral stronghold on defending what’s left of our planet. I’m packing these candles made from green algae. Use them for light. I’m packing this manual. It explains how to extract water from pillows. I’m packing one toothbrush. But not an ADA-endorsed toothbrush. Notice how all Senators have great teeth? Because hotels are Energy-sucking tryst houses with by-the-hour beds for fertile politicians with their perfect smiles to commit more adultery and have more energy-critical weddings and produce more unwanted babies to fill up their second vacation homes with all that milk causing the rest of us to turn into radioactive dust. WE HAVE NO MORAL ALTERNATIVE. [Pulling out a black tar blob] And this. Pure carbon. Smear it all over your face. When you scream into the microphone you’ll be covered in carbon, representing the dying children of the world.

DWAYNE
Alternate battery sources, hotel evacuation plan, flight home, everything. Okay, Maddy? Okay?

CHARLENE
Okay?

DWAYNE
Okay?

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.

CHARLENE
…what’s she doing?

DWAYNE
Maddy, what are you doing?

CHARLENE
She’s eating the manifesto.

DWAYNE
Why are you eating the manifesto???

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.
CHARLENE
How much did the Sheraton promise you?

They stare.

DWAYNE
We’ll give you fifty-one.

They stare.

CHARLENE
Fifty-three.

They stare.

DWAYNE
Don’t pour the milk on the speech, NO-NO-NO, MADDY—

DWAYNE and CHARLENE stare.

CHARLENE
The Sheraton got to her first.

DWAYNE
Sheratons. They’re everywhere.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.