

A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE

BY MARTIN McDONAGH



DRAMATISTS
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A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE received its world premiere at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre in New York City on March 4, 2010, produced by Robert Fox, Carole Shorenstein Hays, Debra Black, Stephanie P. McClelland, Ostar, Roger Berlind, Scott Rudin, and The Schubert Organization, in association with Robert G. Bartner, Lorraine Kirke, and Jamie deRoy/Rachel Neuburger.

A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE received its world premiere at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre on March 4, 2010. It was directed by John Crowley; the set and costume design were by Scott Pask; the lighting design was by Brian MacDevitt; the original music and sound design were by David Van Tieghem; and the stage manager was Lisa Buxbaum. The cast was as follows:

CARMICHAEL Christopher Walken
MERVYN Sam Rockwell
TOBY Anthony Mackie
MARILYN Zoe Kazan

CHARACTERS

CARMICHAEL

MERVYN

TOBY

MARILYN

PLACE

Small-town America.

A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE

Scene 1

Hotel room, small-town America. Window in back wall, fire escape outside. A large battered suitcase on one side of the room and a small bed on the other, upon which sits Carmichael, mid- to late 40s. His left hand is missing, and his right has bits of white tape covering the tattoos below his knuckles. There is a closet stage right behind the bed, from which, on lights up, there comes a knocking, as of someone trying to get out. Carmichael sits there for some time, blankly, then reaches inside his overcoat, takes out a gun, sighs, goes over to the closet, and crouches down in front of it. He cocks the gun and opens the closet door. The knocking stops. Carmichael aims the gun into the closet. There's a muffled agitation. He fires a single gunshot. The muffled agitation ceases.

CARMICHAEL. *I did say, didn't I? (Pause. Carmichael shuts the closet door then sits back in the same place on the bed, puts the gun away, and stares off into space again. He takes a cigarette from a silver case, artfully lights it one-handed, puts the case away and flips the lighter back into his pocket. He picks up the phone and dials a number.)* Hi Mom. Just checked into a hotel someplace called Tarlington, 567-902-9211, room ... seventeen. All is well here. Um, I hope all is well *there*. I haven't been able to get you in a coupla days. I hope nothing's wrong. I'm a little bit worried, to be honest, so call me as soon as you get this, OK? Again, the number is 567-902-9211. Room seventeen. *(Pause.)* Nothing further to report, really. *(Pause.)* Love you. *(He replaces the receiver,*

sits smoking a while. A cough outside the door of the room, then a knock upon it. Carmichael quietly goes over and looks through the spyhole.

MERVYN. *(Off.)* I can see the shadows of your feet, man.

CARMICHAEL. *(Pause.)* Hanh?

MERVYN. *(Off.)* I can see the shadows of your feet.

CARMICHAEL. You can see the shadows of my feet?

MERVYN. *(Off.)* So I *know* you're there.

CARMICHAEL. Well I didn't say I *wasn't* here.

MERVYN. *(Off.)* Well you didn't answer me.

CARMICHAEL. Well I'm allowed not to answer a person while I'm looking through my peephole and make sure they check out, aren't I?

MERVYN. *(Off.)* I guess. *(Carmichael opens the door to reveal Mervyn, hotel uniform, nametag, smiling.)* It's me, the hotel guy, Mervyn.

CARMICHAEL. Oh yeah, the receptionist guy.

MERVYN. I wouldn't really call myself a *receptionist*. *Yeah*, I work on the *reception*. I wouldn't really call myself a *receptionist*.

CARMICHAEL. Yeah I, actually, I kinda got that impression offa you when I was checking in.

MERVYN. Oh yeah? How'd you get that impression? Something my attitude? *(Carmichael idles back into the room. Mervyn drifts in.)*

CARMICHAEL. Your attitude? No. I never checked into a place before, the guy on reception was just in his boxer shorts. I don't know anything about any "attitude."

MERVYN. Yeah, well, I was doing some sit-ups, wasn't I? In where the back room is.

CARMICHAEL. *(Pause.)* In where the back room is?

MERVYN. Mm.

CARMICHAEL. *(Pause.)* You mean, "in the back room"?

MERVYN. Yeah, that's where I do my sit-ups in there, because of the carpet, when I don't think nobody's gonna be coming around. Hence the boxer shorts. Except then you surprised me. Y'know?

CARMICHAEL. I guess the reception is unmanned now.

MERVYN. It's temporarily unmanned. We got a temporarily unmanned reception right now, yeah.

CARMICHAEL. What if someone phones? It'll just ring and ring.

MERVYN. Was that a gunshot earlier?

CARMICHAEL. *(Pause.)* Was what a gunshot earlier?

MERVYN. That sound of a gun being shot off.

CARMICHAEL. Oh. No. I heard that too. I think that was just a car backfiring.

MERVYN. *(Pause.)* In your room?

CARMICHAEL. No. Outside my room. Outside, where the cars are.

MERVYN. Oh. *(Pause.)* What happened to those two kids came up to the room with ya? The black kid, and the white chick?

CARMICHAEL. Oh, they left.

MERVYN. They didn't leave via me.

CARMICHAEL. No, they left via the fire escape.

MERVYN. Oh. Why?

CARMICHAEL. Oh, they was just a bunch of no-good fucking scum.

MERVYN. *(Pause.)* I don't really see how that has anything to do with anything.

CARMICHAEL. Well, a fire escape is out of bounds to guests, isn't it?

MERVYN. Yeah. Unless there's a fire or something. Or a drill or something, a fire drill.

CARMICHAEL. And was there either of those two things? A fire, or a fire drill?

MERVYN. No. I'm the one who would instigate a fire drill anyway, with the fire-drill button.

CARMICHAEL. Exactly.

MERVYN. Exactly what?

CARMICHAEL. Exactly that they was a bunch of no-good fucking scum going off on your fire escape.

MERVYN. Well ... what are you doing being friends with a bunch of no-good scum in the first place for?

CARMICHAEL. Oh, they ain't my friends.

MERVYN. What are they then?

CARMICHAEL. Had some business with 'em.

MERVYN. What kinda business?

CARMICHAEL. Oh, you know, some of that none of your business business.

MERVYN. *(Pause.)* Drugs, you mean?

CARMICHAEL. Drugs? Do I look like I'm involved in the drug business?

MERVYN. Totally.

CARMICHAEL. Well, I ain't. I can't abide that kinda weakness.

MERVYN. Abide?

CARMICHAEL. Yeah.

MERVYN. (*Pause.*) I thought the girl looked pretty but I thought the black guy looked kinda suspicious, if I'm being honest.

CARMICHAEL. I agree with you about the black guy.

MERVYN. You didn't think the girl looked pretty?

CARMICHAEL. I wouldn't know anything about that kinda shit, man. Are you finished nosing around now, or what?

MERVYN. (*Pause.*) How come you only got one hand?

CARMICHAEL. (*Pause.*) It's a long story.

MERVYN. Yeah?

CARMICHAEL. Yeah. A long fucking story.

MERVYN. (*Pause.*) I got time! (*Pause.*) I really *do* have time, I'm on 'til six.

CARMICHAEL. Yeah? Well, I *don't* have time. I *don't* have time. (*Pause.*) Are you going now, Mervyn? Seems like reception's been unmanned for a coon's age.

MERVYN. Man, I *knew* there was something about you as soon as you came in, man. See, I've had this vision ... not so much a vision as ... some other kinda thing, that if I worked here long enough and kept my eyes open, man, something was gonna *happen*, you know? Something *dramatic* was gonna happen. Like, if a bunch of guys wearing *cloaks* checked in, their only luggage was *harpoons*. Where's a story like *that* gonna go? Buncha cloak-wearing harpoon guys? Or some guy from Nigeria checks in, he wants to sell you a rollercoaster. "You don't got no rollercoaster, man, you're from Nigeria!" Y'know? 'Cos I don't think they got rollercoasters there. I'm not sure. (*Pause.*) Or if a giant panda checked in. Talkin' gibberish. Where's a story like *that* gonna go? Giant gibberish-talkin' panda. That'd be more of a funny story! Or what if a guy checks in and he's only got one hand and there's some pretty girl with him and there's some black guy with her, and ten minutes later the shooting starts and the girl and the black guy, well, they ain't nowhere to be seen. Where's a story like *that* gonna go? I wonder. (*Pause.*) That's kinda more like *your* story. Than the other ones. (*Pause.*) Where's a story like *that* gonna go? I wonder.

CARMICHAEL. I guess we'll find out as soon as you leave. (*Mervyn starts to go, kind of sheepish.*)

MERVYN. I haven't upset you, have I?

CARMICHAEL. You didn't upset me none.

MERVYN. I was just checking about the noise, really. They said I'm supposed to do that. Any untoward noises.

CARMICHAEL. Those cars backfiring, man, they'll get ya.
(*Mervyn just looks at him .*)

MERVYN. Yeah, well, I *know* it wasn't a car backfiring, man. I'm not stupid. (*Mervyn goes to the door, just as there is an urgent knocking upon it. Carmichael gestures for Mervyn to open it, and Marilyn, a pretty 22-year-old, bursts in, shaking, nervous, carrying a package wrapped up in paper, bandage and sticky tape.*)

MARILYN. I got it, okay! I got your fucking hand, okay! Now let him fucking go, you fuck! Where is he? Who's this fuck? Oh, the boxer shorts guy. What does he want? (*She tosses the package on the bed. Pause.*)

MERVYN. I was just checking about the gunshot. I'll be downstairs, if either of you need me. (*Mervyn exits sadly.*)

MARILYN. He was just checking about the what?

CARMICHAEL. The gunshot. (*Carmichael picks up the package.*)

MARILYN. (*Scared.*) Where is he? You promised you wouldn't hurt him.

CARMICHAEL. You wanna know how long I've been searching for this, Marilyn?

MARILYN. I said where *is* he, ya goddamn one-handed bastard! (*Carmichael slowly turns to look at her . . .*) I mean, ya goddamn bastard. (*Pause. Carmichael slowly points behind her, at the closet that he shot into.*) What's he doing in there?

CARMICHAEL. I tell ya this. He ain't dancing. (*As Carmichael starts carefully unwrapping the package, Marilyn, terrified, goes over to the closet, tentatively opens its door, and looks inside. She crouches down, hand to her mouth.*)

MARILYN. What have you done to him?

CARMICHAEL. I haven't done anything to him.

MARILYN. He's unconscious.

CARMICHAEL. He ain't unconscious. (*Carmichael goes over and looks in the closet.*) No, you're right. He *is* unconscious. I guess he must've fainted when I shot the gun off. (*She looks at Carmichael as he goes back to the package.*) Beside his head, I shot it off.

MARILYN. That's a terrible thing to do!

CARMICHAEL. I guess.

MARILYN. Well could you help me get him out, please!

CARMICHAEL. Hey, he's *your* fucking boyfriend, *you* get him out. (*Marilyn drags him out, awkwardly, revealing Toby, a black guy about 27, gag in mouth, a little blood on his head. Marilyn takes the*

A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE

by Martin McDonagh

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In Martin McDonagh's first American-set play, Carmichael has been searching for his missing left hand for a quarter of a century. Enter two bickering lovebirds with a hand to sell, and a hotel clerk with an aversion to gunfire, and we're set for a hilarious roller coaster of love, hate, desperation and hope.

"When blood is shed in a Martin McDonagh play, the audience always laughs — and usually gasps. Mr. McDonagh is partial to comic violence, and in A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE he lets it rip ... full of grisly surprises ... You're welcome to interpret A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE as a fable about two lost souls who have more in common than they realize ... or you can relax and revel in the virtuosity with which Mr. McDonagh stuffs wildly funny words into the mouths of his cast ... Mr. McDonagh is one of the half-dozen finest playwrights in the English-speaking world."

—The Wall Street Journal

"Insane yet also fiendishly funny. McDonagh is a specialist in unleashed violence, in which he shamelessly revels. Here the violence is comical, and we are kept guessing throughout a farce that is as irresistible as it is improbable ... moves at farce speed from shock to comic shock."

—Bloomberg.com

"True, it is all quite heartless, brittle and smart as it weaves its tall tale, in the same moment making the audience both believe and doubt what they see and hear. In a strange way, it is rather like a twenty-first-century version of a farce — strip away the various brutalities, and you are left with a precisely constructed drama of mistake and misapprehension ... I found it irresistible."

—The Telegraph (UK)

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