



THE INVISIBLE HAND

BY **AYAD AKHTAR**



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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THE INVISIBLE HAND was originally produced by the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis (Steven Woolf, Artistic Director; Mark Bernstein, Managing Director) in March 2012. It was directed by Seth Gordon; the scenic designer was Scott Neale; the costume designer was Lou Bird; the lighting designer was Ann Wrightson; the sound designer was Rusty Wandall; and the stage manager was Champe Leary. The cast was as follows:

DAR Ahmed Hassan
NICK BRIGHT John Hickok
BASHIR Bhavesh Patel
JAMES/GUARD Michael James Reed

The New York premiere of THE INVISIBLE HAND was produced by New York Theatre Workshop (Jim Nicola, Artistic Director; Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director) in November 2014. It was directed by Ken Rus Schmoll; the scenic designer was Riccardo Hernandez; the costume designer was ESosa; the lighting designer was Tyler Micoleau; the sound designer was Leah Gelpe; and the stage manager was Megan Schwarz Dickert. The cast was as follows:

DAR Jameal Ali
NICK BRIGHT Justin Kirk
BASHIR Usman Ally
IMAM SALEEM Dariush Kashani

The UK premiere of THE INVISIBLE HAND was produced by the Tricycle Theatre (Indhu Rubasingham, Artistic Director; Bridget Kalloushi, Executive Producer), London, England, in May 2016. It was directed by Indhu Rubasingham, the scenic designer was Lizzie Clachan, the costume designer was Johanna Coe, the lighting designer was Oliver Fenwick, the sound designer was Alex Caplen, and the deputy stage manager was Charlotte Padgham. The cast was as follows:

DAR Sid Sagar
NICK BRIGHT Daniel Lapaine
BASHIR Parth Thakerar
IMAM SALEEM Tony Jayawardena

CHARACTERS

DAR — early 20s

NICK BRIGHT — 30s

BASHIR — mid-to-late 20s

IMAM SALEEM — 40s/50s

PLACE

Somewhere in Pakistan.

TIME

In the very near future.

NOTE

The play should be performed with an intermission
between Acts One and Two.

This acting edition was created with the draft from the Tricycle
Theatre production.

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love...

—Adam Smith,
The Wealth of Nations

THE INVISIBLE HAND

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A holding room. Spare. In disrepair. A table center stage. Two chairs. Along the far left wall, a small cot. And above it, a window near the ceiling. Covered in bars.

There's a door stage right.

Sitting at the table is Nick Bright—30s—intelligent and vital.

Across from him is Dar—early 20s—a rural Pakistani who speaks English with a thick accent. He wears a Kalashnikov over his shoulder.

Dar is leaned over Nick's handcuffed hands. It may take us a moment to realize:

Dar is cutting Nick's fingernails.

We hear male voices offstage talking in a foreign language—voices to which Dar appears to be listening.

NICK. How's your mother, Dar?

DAR. Good. Good.

NICK. That's good.

Dar smiles, nervously.

Goes back to cutting.

So she's not too sick?

DAR. What?

NICK. Your mother. She's not too sick.

DAR. She sick, Mr. Nick. She sick.

Beat.

But she happy see her son.

NICK. That's good you went to see her, Dar.

*Dar forces a nervous smile, checking over his shoulder as...
...the voices diminish.*

Dar stops—listening.

We hear the faint sound of a door closing. Then silence.

Dar gets up and goes to the door stage right—listening.

Then crosses to the window upstage center—listening.

In the distance, we hear a car engine start up. Then drive off.

*Dar returns to the table. He rests the gun against the chair.
He hands Nick the nail cutter as he pulls a key and undoes
one of the cuffs.*

DAR. They go. You can cut. I know you don't like I cut for you.

NICK. Thank you, Dar.

The shift is palpable. Dar is clearly more at ease.

DAR. I not go my mother, Mr. Nick.

(Explaining, off Nick's confusion.) I not go see my mother. I had plan. I not tell you.

NICK. You had a plan?

DAR. Before I not tell you.

Now I tell you.

You remember my cousin, he have farm? Potato farm?

NICK. Changez, right?

DAR. *(Smiling warmly.)* You remember.

NICK. Of course I remember, Dar.

DAR. Ramzaan coming. Prices going up and up.

NICK. Like they do every year.

DAR. Changez tell me good crop in Jhelum. Very good year for him.

NICK. I remember.

DAR. Changez is good man, Mr. Nick. People like him. He have respect.

NICK. Right.

DAR. I tell him what you tell me. Sell me all potato, all farmer he has friends. Give for me lowest price. I sell potato high price when Ramzaan come. I tell him, we all share money, together.

NICK. And?

DAR. (*Nodding.*) He talk to them. They don't sell potato to other. They give me.

(*Quietly.*) I tell here, I go my mother.

But I not go my mother.

I get trucks...

NICK. ...trucks?

DAR. Three trucks. Drive potato from Jhelum to Multan market, highest price.

NICK. How did you get trucks?

DAR. I pay.

NICK. With what?

DAR. Potato. I had so many!

(*Laughs.*) After three days, potato gone.

Beat.

Seven. Five.

NICK. Seven, five...what?

DAR. Dollar.

NICK. Seventy-five dollars.

DAR. I make.

NICK. You're kidding?

DAR. I change from rupee to dollar. Like you told me, "Change all your saving to dollar, Dar. More..." (*Speaking Punjabi.*) ...*pucka.*

NICK. Stable.

DAR. (*Repeating.*) Stable.

NICK. Dar, this is wonderful news.

DAR. A lot of money for me.

Beat.

Thank you for give me help.

Nick smiles, moved. They share a moment.

We hear sounds in the hall.

Nick quickly takes a seat.

Dar nervously takes the nail cutter, as Nick locks the cuff back onto his wrist.

Just as...

...we hear the lock of the stage right door opening.

Enter Bashir—mid-to-late 20s—sinewy and intense. A human barracuda.

Both Dar and Nick visibly nervous by his sudden appearance. Dar stands. A sign of respect.

Bashir speaks with a working class English accent.

BASHIR. Mr. Bright?

NICK. Bashir.

BASHIR. Been a while.

Three weeks, innit?

(Off Nick's silence.) How've you been?

NICK. Fine.

BASHIR. No complaints?

Wouldn't want to be hearing anything about how you'd been mistreated or some such...

Want to make sure everything's up to your standards, then.

(Nick's further silence.) Dar taking good care of you?

NICK. Dar is fine.

BASHIR. He's a bit of an arse-licker, in't he?

But gets the job done sooner or later.

Whatever job that may be...

(Patting Dar on the back.) I mean he's a good lad.

Takes care of you.

Takes care of his Mum.

Bashir looks over and notices that a water pitcher on the table is empty.

What's this? Pitcher's empty? What if Mr. Bright needs a drink?
What's he gonna do then? Dar?

DAR. I'll get more water.

BASHIR. You gonna do that?

DAR. Yes.

BASHIR. When?

NICK. It's okay. I'm not thirsty.

BASHIR. Well, see, it's the principle now, isn't it?

DAR. You want me to do it now?

BASHIR. Yes I think I do. I think I want you to do it now.

*As Dar approaches, Bashir suddenly strikes him. Viciously.
And then again.*

Maybe you should go back to taking care of old ladies, you fucking dog!

NICK. He didn't mean it.

Bashir turns on Nick. Just as vicious.

BASHIR. Who asked you to open your fucking gob?!

Hmm?!

Did I?!!

Nick looks down. Avoiding eye contact.

That's right. Let's have a little respect around here.

(*Snickering.*) I'm guessing it's not going to come as a surprise to you then that our little piss-ant here did not visit his Mum this week. Innit?

Nick shrugs. Not making eye contact.

You didn't know that?

Really?

You had no idea he was out gallivantin' in Multan flogging potatoes?

No idea at all?

Or how 'bout this: That he walked into a Citibank bank two days ago—

You heard of that, right?

Citibank?

NICK. You know I have.

BASHIR. That's right. I do. I may know a few things more too. Get ready for it:

THE INVISIBLE HAND

by Ayad Akhtar

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THE INVISIBLE HAND follows a kidnapped American investment banker, held for ransom in Pakistan, as he trades for his life. This suspenseful play by Pulitzer Prize-winning Ayad Akhtar is a chilling and complex look at how far we will go to save ourselves and the devastating ramifications of our individual actions on global power and politics.

“Like [his] sizzling drama Disgraced, Mr. Akhtar’s shrewd play [THE INVISIBLE HAND] raises probing questions about the roots of the Islamic terrorism that has rattled the world for the last decade and more. ...[It] makes a forceful point about the seemingly ineradicable terrorism roiling the Middle East. Inspired though it may be by religious ideology, it is necessarily fueled, like most other movements that drive cultural change, by the brute power of money.”

—The New York Times

“THE INVISIBLE HAND is far more politically provocative [than Disgraced], opening as it does in a Pakistani prison where an American banker is being held for ransom. Confounding initial indications, the play is not a captive narrative about pain and torture but a scary (and dreadfully funny) treatise on the universality of human greed.”

—Variety

“THE INVISIBLE HAND is a hand-wringing, throat-clenching thriller that rarely lets up over the course of two hours. ...your focus is kept on the interplay of ideology and plot development, which is Akhtar’s wheelhouse.”

—New York Magazine

Also by Ayad Akhtar
DISGRACED
THE WHO & THE WHAT

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