

CHARACTERS

- AHMAD A man of 40. He looks like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He wears black clothes under his doctor's jacket, and a black cap, little larger than a kippah.
- BOZEMAN A man in his mid-forties. He looks like Robert Mapplethorpe. He, too, is dressed in black beneath his white coat. His hair is in a pompadour.
- WESSON A woman of an indeterminate age. A poet and a lonely person.

The parts are played by stagehands and passersby.
They trade roles every night.

SETTING

It could be anywhere.

. . .

This play is dedicated to my daughter. Thanks to Zoe from the Finn-Brit Players for giving me a chance. She also edited a sensible, 20-minute version out of this mess (not included: available via author).

– MP

First, there is darkness. BOZEMAN tries singing the Marseillaise – in Russian. The actor may use a language of their own invention, as long as it has a Slavic feel to it, in the vein of Vladimir Vysotsky.

Lights come up. BOZEMAN is teetering on the edge of the stage. He is facing stage left (from actor's point of view), and walking backwards.

BOZEMAN

[Aping a reversing truck]

Beep-beep-beep-beep – stuck! Beep-beep-beep-beep – stuck! Beep-beep – beep-beep. Oh, fuck. Why don't we just stop?

[Turning to stage right, alarmed]

Who goes there?

[Facing the AUDIENCE]

Nobody home. It was a ghost. Well, I'll be damned! In the name of love – in the name of pain and suffering – we can't go back. It's time to stop.

The Burning Bus

[Enter AHMAD, stage left. He is whistling, trimming his fingernails with a Swiss army knife.]

BOZEMAN

And how does it feel? How does it feel to be imprisoned here? Aren't you mad at the powers that be? They promised you a rose garden, and locked us up. When they brought me in, there was a bus parked outside, right in front, in flames.

AHMAD

A Molotov cocktail, I believe. I prefer IEDs – well, preferred. Take out an apartment building, while you're at it, not a measly bus.

BOZEMAN

A tip from a man who's seen it all.

AHMAD

That is just sad.

[Snorts]

A burning bus!

BOZEMAN

Listen. Those not happy with the program, they are free to get up and go, walk outside and get in the bus. The ride is on us. The NATO will pick up the tab, as it should.

Well, anyway, it will. We offer you a safe passage, a corridor, dark as it may seem at the moment. Go back to Fallujah –

AHMAD

You go back to bed.

BOZEMAN

Or Donbass. You'll be back there in no time.

[*To the* AUDIENCE]

He's *titushky*, right? Donbass is for him what Sinaloa is for smack.

AHMAD

What Khorasan is for smack, you mean.

BOZEMAN

What *what* is?

AHMAD

Khorasan: that's Afghanistan for you. Ah, those were the days!

BOZEMAN

[*To the* AUDIENCE]

May I introduce Abu? We use him to harass pedophiles.

AHMAD

[*Threatening* BOZEMAN *with the Swiss army corkscrew*]

I'll jam it in, pull it out? We may study your "perfect eye."

BOZEMAN

Right.

AHMAD

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

My given name was Ahmad al-Khalayleh.

BOZEMAN

Some say it sounds like a drunken slob. But what's in a name? Toss it, take one more to your liking.

[AHMAD *takes a couple of steps back and forth. He holds his head high, his shoulders back. He is swinging his hips. BOZEMAN acts as the narrator in a beauty pageant.*]

The proud father of Musab hails from Zarqa...

[AHMAD *halts, abruptly.*]

... an industrial waste land in Jordan.

AHMAD

SHUT UP! You're giving me up! I *will* fuck you up, I swear!

BOZEMAN

[*Getting worked up despite of being utterly bored*]

I'm giving you up? Are you positive? Your identity as one of the most loathed terrorists of our time, next in notoriety only to the Hydra-headed Bakr al-Baghdadi, is

revealed by... by me? Have you taken a peek in the mirror lately? You aren't exactly in camouflage these days.

[The most famous photo of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is projected on the wall. Or a physical copy of it is taped to a wall beforehand, and now emphasized by a spotlight. There is a big red "X" over the photo.]

AHMAD

I do have my jacket.

BOZEMAN

[Ignoring this – passionately]

If you had just held your horses, toned down your shit a bit, these people would have LOVED you. You were half-Palestinian, for fuck's sake! You had won the lottery of victimhood! You could have been the Che Guevara of the 21st century – yeah, you could. And what did you do? You made bin Laden turn away in disgust!

AHMAD

The Sheikh was a pussy.

BOZEMAN

You made Osama sick to his stomach!

AHMAD

He was *way* too liberal –

BOZEMAN

Oh for the love of God!

AHMAD

[*His index finger upright*]

There is *no* God but God –

BOZEMAN

DON'T GIVE ME THAT SHIT!

[*Indicating the AUDIENCE*]

You may fool them –

AHMAD

[*Turning*]

Who?

BOZEMAN

But you sure as hell aren't fooling me.

AHMAD

Who are you talking to? What're you talking about? Them? *Da?* The... uh... Tit-ooze-key? Hey, Hobo, anybody home? When I was brought in, you were babbling about... What was it?

BOZEMAN

Nichts.

AHMAD

Being a good Brechtian above anything else, you have an obligation. You do have to tell. What is a *titushky*?

Dead Time for Democracy

BOZEMAN

Go fuck yourself. And Google it.

AHMAD

[*Phone in hand*]

I am. But the reception, it's gone to shit.

BOZEMAN

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Titushky, we're sorry. There is no English word available. You may call your lawyers, contact Merry Ma'am Webster, make a complaint, hey, proceed as you will. But do it after the show, okay? Not now. PUT YOUR SUDDENLY-NOT-THAT-SMART SORRY-ASS STUPID EYEPHONES AWAY!

[*Leering*]

We have this thing called "a jammer". What it does, well, as the name says. It's the end of the world as you know it, and this for the price of a –

AHMAD

It isn't working.

BOZEMAN

– holiday in Cambodia. What?

AHMAD

Your jammer. Check this out. It's the Wikipedia speaking:

BOZEMAN

Motherfucker! They robbed me.

AHMAD

[*Reading*]

“During the events in Ukraine known as Euromaidan – WATCH *Winter on Fire*, a documentary on Netflix – titushky became a collective term for provocateurs and thugs hired by the Party of...” And I’m skipping here a bit.

BOZEMAN

What a surprise!

AHMAD

“Supporters of President Yanukovich also used the term ‘titushky’ to refer to pro-opposition thugs.”

BOZEMAN

Let me see it. That is lies.

AHMAD

Well, alright? Hey, what the fuck? And keep your hands to yourself! *It says* so here, the Wikipedia says.

BOZEMAN

Well, fuck Wikipedia! Give it to me!

AHMAD

Wow, man. That is deep. That is original. Cheers for that. Anyhow, what the WIKIPEDIA says –

[BOZEMAN *jumps* AHMAD. *He grabs him by the waist with one hand, reaching for the hand holding the phone with the other. They struggle.*]