

Stoner Goes to Hell

*The Hard Problem of
Jahar Tsarnaev*

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For my parents
And Miina and Cata,
Of course

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CHARACTERS

D. MURRAY

A man in his forties, he is a mature, Irish American version of Jahar Tsarnaev. He wears a white t-shirt and black jeans. The shirt states that he is TOO WEIRD TO LIVE, TOO RARE TO DIE, with bats hovering over the text. His hair is in an ultra-liberal pompadour; he wears Converse sneakers.

CASTING DIRECTOR

A woman in her early thirties, she is a lively, attractive blonde.

ZUBEIDAT TSARNAEVA

A woman in her early fifties, she is mother to, among others, Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev.

VLADIMIR PUTIN

RAMZAN KADYROV



Statesmen.

SETTING

A second-hand store in the Boston area. The establishment is currently closed. When in business, it provides its refined clientele with authentic 1980's clothing and Soviet memorabilia.

Two confession booths, pilfered from defunct churches, stand diagonally upstage left and right. They have served as fitting rooms, and still do.

The action takes place in a mirror world. The reader's right is "left" in the text, and vice versa. But "upstage" and "downstage" can still be found where one's gut tells they ought they'd be: away from the audience and close to, respectively.

The author claims no responsibility for this confusion. Let's blame the Elite.

Let's blame Beckett.

An exclamation point at the end of a sentence indicates emphasis. It doesn't mean that the person delivering the line has to shout. Not every time, anyway. Let the music roar.

Wherein, as in a mirror, may be seen
His honour, that consists in shedding blood

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE,
Tamburlaine the Great I

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PROLOGUE

Five people in camouflage gear enter. They are all masked. MURRAY and CASTING DIRECTOR march down-stage and stop. ZUBEIDAT, PUTIN and KADYROV form a row center stage. KADYROV is carrying a black backpack.

MURRAY

Evening, ladies and gentlemen.

PUTIN

That much is true.

ZUBEIDAT

Evening it is.

PUTIN

And a good one at that! (If you stop and think about it.)

ZUBEIDAT

It could have been. It was, until he opened his trap—

[*Of* MURRAY]

‘S a terrorist!

PUTIN

I was thinking, Fascist.

ZUBEIDAT

Same difference.

[PUTIN *titters.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

We are the dead.

PUTIN

True as well.

ZUBEIDAT

Soon, soon. (I will get you.)

PUTIN

“Hands up, who wants to die?”

MURRAY

We have a short announcement to make.

CASTING DIRECTOR

We won't be taking questions at this time.

PUTIN

All right, all right! All *right*!

ZUBEIDAT

You've made your point. Now scram.

[PUTIN *and* ZUBEIDAT *move forward, as*
MURRAY *and* CASTING DIRECTOR *quietly re-*
treat.]

PUTIN

We'll take it from here.

ZUBEIDAT

You may step down. Step *aside*, please.

[PUTIN *unfolds a piece of paper.*]

PUTIN

[*Reads*]

March 4, 2011.

[*Looks up*]

The Russian security service FSB sends a letter to the FBI.

ZUBEIDAT

Guess who's running the bureau at that time?

PUTIN

Meaning the FBI.

[KADYROV *lays the backpack on the floor, behind* PUTIN *and* ZUBEIDAT.]

ZUBEIDAT

Who runs it?

PUTIN

Who runs the FSB? *That* is the question.

ZUBEIDAT

But not the point!

[PUTIN *reveals his face.*]

It isn't—

PUTIN

It isn't me, that's for sure. I'm prime minister at the time.

[KADYROV *adjusts the backpack, leaves it lying on its side.*]

ZUBEIDAT

Who runs the FBI?

PUTIN

Next year, 2012, I will return to my rightful position,
the presidential seat of Russia.

ZUBEIDAT

[Throwing her hands]

You know what? I've had it!

[KADYROV joins the front row.]

KADYROV

Why? What happened?

ZUBEIDAT

Never mind. You can keep it. The evening is all yours!

*[ZUBEIDAT starts to go. PUTIN grabs her by
the arm.]*

He's improvising again!

PUTIN

Do not run away. Okay?

*[She nods. He lets her go. PUTIN hands the
paper to ZUBEIDAT. PUTIN leans his fore-
head to a fist.]*

Let's just pause here a second. Ponder this a while. Do
the Rodin thing. My favorite sculptor, Rodin. He's ex-
quisite!

KADYROV

[*Lays a hand on PUTIN's shoulder*]

Pull yourself together, man.

PUTIN

I am! I'm always completely in control!

KADYROV

Like the Ministry guy?

PUTIN

Which ministry are we talking about?

KADYROV

The band.

PUTIN

The band?

KADYROV

Not that band! Not Blues Brothers.

PUTIN

That's a relief. That guy is fat!

KADYROV

He was a regular guest in Alex Jones's *Infowars*—the conspiracy podcast which is kinda weird. The fact is weird, that this drug addict, this *degenerate* and counterculture figure, this industrial metal MC would turn up there. That he would participate. I'm talking about the Ministry guy, Al Jourgensen, also known as Alien Jourgensen.

PUTIN

I see. And the point was?

KADYROV

You have succeeded, sir. You have sowed the seeds of discord, sir, and they have bloomed into fields and fields full of product! Each flower is a unique, beautiful black poppy.

PUTIN

Thanks. Thank you. Still, there's work to be done.

KADYROV

Of course there is. It's a wonderful world, but not perfect.

PUTIN

Yet. So let's get back to work.

[Clapping his hands]

We're back in business! Back to work, everyone!

ZUBEIDAT

The FSB, the ones that sent the letter, warning the FBI—does everyone here know who they are?

PUTIN

Have serious doubts about it.

KADYROV

The pen-pals of the FBI: the FSB, believe it or not: they are what the KGB used to be. In the good old days—the Cold War, and all.

ZUBEIDAT

They are the Russian equivalent of the CIA, right?

KADYROV

Right.

PUTIN

And the Russian CIA sends a copy of that letter to the one and only, its American counterpart as well. They just take their time, is all. Sending it.

KADYROV

They are the enemy, after all.

PUTIN

The Yankee is, the real CIA: they are the competition.

ZUBEIDAT

And what does the letter say? What message does it bring?

KADYROV

Russians, they warn the federal authorities about Tamerlan Tsarnaev and his mother, Zubeidat Tsarnaeva.

ZUBEIDAT

[Takes off her balaclava]

That's me, Zubeidat. That's whom I'll be playing tonight. I am "their crazy mother," as they say.

[KADYROV looks at ZUBEIDAT. He looks at PUTIN. Seeing he's all alone, KADYROV removes his mask as well.]

PUTIN

Tamerlan, her son, her co-conspirator, he couldn't make it tonight.

KADYROV

No, sadly not. His brother ran him over with a black Mercedes—

PUTIN

A car they stole—

KADYROV

Black Benz GLE three fifty SUV. The make and model.

PUTIN

The same happened to Pier Paolo Pasolini—120 years ago? He was crushed under a car. A male prostitute—but it was his own brother that did this to Tamerlan. His own blood—

KADYROV

After the cops had shot him—

PUTIN

Tamerlan, that is.

KADYROV

Nine times in all—

PUTIN

To think of it that someone counted. He got dragged under the car for—?

KADYROV

Nine yards, give or take.

PUTIN

And if you just stop to think about it, what this punk, this pussy, his own blood, did to him—

KADYROV

He scalped him and gutted him. Like a fish. Killed him, basically.

PUTIN

Yeah.

KADYROV

What is this? The Indian Country?

PUTIN

That's *exactly* what it is!

KADYROV

[*Kicks the backpack*]

Motherfucker!

PUTIN

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

He's Ramzan Kadyrov, my bearded puppet in Chechnya.

KADYROV

I'm no puppet!

PUTIN

No, you're a rebel.

KADYROV

Well. Not a rebel either, exactly. Anymore.

PUTIN

You know what happens to rebels in Chechnya.

KADYROV

I know.

PUTIN

We will WASTE them in the *outhouse*!

KADYROV

I know, I know. But I'd like to see myself as a rebel in another sense.

PUTIN

In the past tense, you mean. You gave it up a long time ago! You came to Daddy.

KADYROV

No, I like chicks. I like women. I still do. You know: "With a rebel yell—"

[He sings the chorus of "Rebel Yell," a Billy Idol song. Meanwhile, CASTING DIRECTOR and MURRAY approach each other. They hug. They let go of each other. MURRAY climbs to the roof of the confession booth to the left. CASTING DIRECTOR enters the priest's compartment to the right. En route and at their destination, they shed their terrorist uniform.]

All the ladies I've had—hundreds, I think—thousands of 'em! Every single one of 'em, they cry, "More, more, more!"

PUTIN

Oh I'm sure.

KADYROV

"Ramzi, gimme more," they cry. "Make me come!" And I say, I say, "Come? Go. Get the fuck outta here! I've got a REPUBLIC to run!" Am I right? Am I right?

PUTIN

I bet you are.

KADYROV

And it's a safe bet! I'm a rebel, all right. I'm like—

PUTIN

That brand—

KADYROV

—like James Dean!

PUTIN

Isn't it a *whiskey*?

KADYROV

James Dean?

PUTIN

No. Rebel Yell.

KADYROV

Hell no!

PUTIN

Hell yes. I think so, yeah.

KADYROV

It's a song! You heard me—

PUTIN

As you sold the bourbon—and please. Do grow up. And wipe that silly expression off of your face! Close your mouth. That'd be a way forward; that'd be a start. The way the world works. You know what they say.

KADYROV

No.

PUTIN

They say, “Kill your darlings.”

KADYROV

No.

PUTIN

I beg your pardon?

KADYROV

They say, they say, “Kill your idols,” is what they say.

PUTIN

Well. Kill them too. Kill ‘Em All. Right?

KADYROV

Right.

PUTIN

I think so, yes? Am I right?

KADYROV

[Nodding his head yes]

Metallica kicks ass!

PUTIN

Who?

KADYROV

Metallica.

*[Music, "N.W.O." by Ministry, erupts in the background. The following is bel-
lowed over the noise, performed as a rock
opera of sorts.]*

PUTIN

And who's that? Who is Met Al Lee Kaa?

KADYROV

Don't you think?
Isn't that—what happened to Tamerlan? Being scalped
by his own blood, his own mother—his brother, I mean.
Isn't that reason enough to get *mad*?
Old-Testament-kind, Quran-kind mad? Like legendary
mad?

PUTIN

Is that what you're talking about?

KADYROV

It is!

PUTIN

Then why didn't you say so?

ZUBEIDAT

Course it is!

KADYROV

It is?

ZUBEIDAT

It is enough!

KADYROV

Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! And that, that *cause* is good enough?

ZUBEIDAT

Course.

[The music fades out.]

KADYROV

Well, that's a relief! And I thought I was lost in the woods, shooting in the dark! "Today your love, tomorrow the world!"

PUTIN

[Somewhat bitterly]

You two, you have my blessing. Get married, make plenty of children. (That should teach you.)

KADYROV

When others were still talking, babbling on endlessly like there's no tomorrow, Tamerlan just out and did it! He showed us all!

PUTIN

He showed us, all right.

KADYROV

He died for our sins.

ZUBEIDAT

Hey! That might be a—

KADYROV

In order to, so that we may live!

PUTIN

You mean—

ZUBEIDAT

A tad too much.

PUTIN

Wait a minute. Are you saying that—?

ZUBEIDAT

Call it “overkill.”

PUTIN

Tamerlan was a martyr? He was a victim?

KADYROV

He was!

ZUBEIDAT

He was no saint, that’s for sure.

KADYROV

But no one was defending his rights! He had to do it all by himself!

PUTIN

[Sings—close to tears]

“All by myself
I don’t wanna be!
All by myself
Any more—”

ZUBEIDAT

Yeah, right, whatever. Back to the letter. The mother and son, they—we “are adherers of radical Islam,” the spooks say.

PUTIN

Hah! That's funny.

[*The others don't get the joke.*]

KADYROV

What is?

PUTIN

If those were their exact words—

KADYROV

“Adherers—”

ZUBEIDAT

[*Staring at the paper*]

“—of radical—”

KADYROV

“Islam?”

ZUBEIDAT

[*Consulting the paper again*]

Yes, they were. Their exact words, according to sources.

PUTIN

Well, that's fucking hilarious!

KADYROV

It is?

PUTIN

Yeah! Don't you think?

KADYROV

What's so funny about Islam?

PUTIN

No. You don't get it! That expression, *those exact words* are the ones that Obama and Hillary absolutely refused to say out loud. They'd rather walk naked on Fifth Avenue than use "radical Islam" in a sentence!

ZUBEIDAT

Why?

PUTIN

They are afraid, that's why. They are scared shitless that they will alienate the, I don't know? Muslim Brotherhood, or someone.

KADYROV

I see.

PUTIN

While the current occupant of the presidential toilet seat, he has no problem *at all* using those words. He *loves* his stun grenades that other people call *words*. So that's funny. It is—come on! Live a little!

KADYROV

[*Turning to* ZUBEIDAT]

And how do the Feds react to this highly unusual communication, a tip from the adversary?

ZUBEIDAT

They sit on it. They do nothing. Okay, alright: they do. They do something. They stop by at the Tsarnaev's, ask a few questions, and that's it. That Is All. They let him go. They let us off the hook! They ask the FSB for more

info, please, as to the evidence. What do the Russkies have on Tamerlan and his mother? They don't reply, the spooks in Moscow don't. The case is closed. And please remind me: Who's running the FBI again, at the time?

PUTIN

Robert Mueller III.

ZUBEIDAT

That's the one, yes. And he will be replaced soon —

PUTIN

Because of this—

ZUBEIDAT

This *blunder*.

KADYROV

Mueller will be replaced by—

PUTIN

By another sad clown—

[ZUBEIDAT *sings the instrumental intro to "Tears of a Clown," a Smokey Robinson song*]

Yet another cry-baby called James Comey.

KADYROV

Who's got to go, eventually, because he can't stand up to that big pussy Trump.

ZUBEIDAT

So here we are.

PUTIN

This is it.

KADYROV

Our predicament.

ZUBEIDAT

If we would just provide the facts. Maybe that would be a way forward.

KADYROV

They wouldn't believe us if we did.

ZUBEIDAT

We can try! Right?

KADYROV

Yeah, right.

PUTIN

All right, okay. Here goes nothing.

ZUBEIDAT

That's my boy! Hot and horny!

KADYROV

I refuse to take any part in this.

PUTIN

September 11, 2012. That's when Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 19, is granted US citizenship. His brother Tamerlan, who's 26, isn't. He is left hung out to dry. He's been arrested for domestic violence in the past, and will forever remain a legal alien. Not an Englishman in New York, no—what a great song, by the way—but a Chechen in

Cambridge. Also, Tamerlan—“Tam” to his friends and family—has recently returned from a six-month trip to Dagestan, Russia. By all accounts, he tried to join a terrorist cell there. He failed, of course. He even failed to pick up his passport. That’s the reason he gave for traveling to Russia in the first place. His passport was expiring. He had to get a new one. But he never picked it up.

ZUBEIDAT

Who keeps a valid passport these days?

KADYROV

[Checking out the time]

Could you speed things up a bit? I have places to be.

PUTIN

You want some action?

KADYROV

I wouldn’t mind, no.

PUTIN

And action you’ve got! It’s April 15, 2013. It’s Patriot’s Day, Marathon Monday. Two pressure cooker bombs, left in backpacks near the Marathon finish line on Boylston Street, go off. Two young women and an eight-year-old boy are killed almost instantly.

ZUBEIDAT

Almost. Nearly 300 people are injured.

PUTIN

You could build a pyramid with lost limbs.

ZUBEIDAT

The bombs are “packed with BB pellets, sealant and pieces of cardboard—intentionally placed inside to set the flesh of the victims ablaze,” as Michele McPhee writes in her book *Maximum Harm*.

PUTIN

One of the backpacks is left in an upright position, the way you usually set your backpack on the ground, on the floor.

[ZUBEIDAT goes to the backpack.]

ZUBEIDAT

[*Pointing*]

The other one is placed like this, behind a row of children.

PUTIN

That way the force of the explosion, the shrapnel, its trajectory is 360 degrees on the ground level—

KADYROV

The force of explosion spreads around the source. Not upward, as it does if the bag is left in the more familiar position to us all, upright.

PUTIN

When lying on its side, the backpack and the bomb in it, the explosion will inflict maximum harm.

KADYROV

It will disembowel. It will sweep people off their feet, for good. It will light them up like candles, oil wells in the desert.

ZUBEIDAT

And whose backpack is this? Who left it here? Like this? Guess. There are two alternatives. Two possibilities. I'll give you hint. Tamerlan the big brother didn't leave his backpack like this.

[Lifts the backpack upright]

He left it like this. This backpack, this one terminated the life of a young woman. The other one, lying on its side, it killed a young woman and an eight-year-old boy. They died almost instantly.

KADYROV

Almost.

PUTIN

Yeah, well, all right. Three days later, the FBI will publish the photos—

KADYROV

Yeah, the photos: of Suspects One and Two, or “Black Hat” and “White Hat,” as they will briefly be known—

PUTIN

True names Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, respectively—

ZUBEIDAT

“Tam” and “Jahar,” to friends and family.

PUTIN

They go downhill from there, fast.

ZUBEIDAT

That night the brothers come across an MIT police officer, Sean Collier, sitting alone in his patrol car. They

approach him from behind, shoot him in the face, six times in all, and run away.

KADYROV

Then the younger brother—

ZUBEIDAT

Jahar.

KADYROV

He comes back and tries to steal Officer Collier's gun.

ZUBEIDAT

But he fails.

KADYROV

Picture that!

ZUBEIDAT

And off he goes, empty-handed.

KADYROV

He runs away again.

PUTIN

They drive around in Jahar's car, a battered green Honda Civic, looking for more cops to kill, I assume.

KADYROV

They jump on a Chinese guy, an immigrant, sitting in a black Mercedes SUV 350.

PUTIN

Texting.

ZUBEIDAT

He stopped his car in order to text.

KADYROV

Shouldn't have been such a stickler for rules!

PUTIN

Should have texted while he drove!

KADYROV

Hadn't he stopped, they never would have gotten to him.

PUTIN

Now the brothers steal the car and take the Chinese kid hostage.

ZUBEIDAT

He escapes with his life as they stop at a gas station. Jahar wants Doritos, he wanders off. Tam is fiddling with the navigator.

PUTIN

The Chinese kid makes a run for it.

ZUBEIDAT

He calls the cops from the gas station.

KADYROV

His own phone, it's still in the car.

[MURRAY *yells from the roof.*]

MURRAY
EVERYBODY, LISTEN UP! I WANT YOU TO PAY
VERY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THIS HERE, THE
FOLLOWING DETAIL!

PUTIN
That's how they can trace the vehicle.

KADYROV
Cops can.

ZUBEIDAT
By tracing the phone.

MURRAY
Boom.

KADYROV
Soon a residential street in Watertown, a Boston suburb, is flooded with cops.

ZUBEIDAT
A firefight ensues—

KADYROV
—between the Boston PD and the brothers—

PUTIN
And that is where our story ends.

ZUBEIDAT
But your story—

KADYROV
Yours—

PUTIN

Sincerely.

ZUBEIDAT

It has barely begun.

[Music, "Ride the Lightning" by Metallica, fades in. CASTING DIRECTOR pops out of her compartment.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

All right, all right! Enough of this crap!

[Lights come up on MURRAY, standing on the roof, as CASTING DIRECTOR presents him to the AUDIENCE.]

Meet Miss O'Shaughnessy, the Mighty Marathon bomber! Her first name's Frigid, and she's all yours! You can have her! You can keep her! And remember, Bogie is dead!

[She storms back to her cubicle. He blinks at the lights.]

END OF EXCERPT