

Stoner Goes to Hell

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*The Trial by Fire
Of Jahar Tsarnaev*

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For my parents
And Miina and Cata,
Of course

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 shop is currently closed. When operative, the store offered its committed clientele authentic 1980's clothing and Soviet memorabilia.

Two confession booths, pilfered from defunct churches, stand upstage left and right. They have served as fitting rooms. They 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" are still where you thought they would be: away from the audience and close to, respectively.

The author claims no responsibility for the 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

PROLOGUE

Five persons, dressed as Chechen terrorists, enter. Underneath the ski masks, they are: MURRAY and CASTING DIRECTOR, who take their positions downstage; and ZUBEIDAT, PUTIN and KADYROV, who form a row center stage. KADYROV is carrying a backpack.

MURRAY

Evening, ladies and gentlemen.

PUTIN

That much is true.

ZUBEIDAT

Evening it is.

PUTIN

A good one, too.

ZUBEIDAT

It was, until he opened his trap.

[*Of MURRAY*]

A terrorist!

PUTIN

And I'm thinking a *fascist*.

CASTING DIRECTOR

We are the dead.

PUTIN

True also.

ZUBEIDAT

Soon.

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 made your point. Now scam.

PUTIN

We'll take it from here.

[PUTIN *and* ZUBEIDAT *move forward, as* MURRAY *and* CASTING DIRECTOR *quietly retreat.*]

ZUBEIDAT

You may step down. Step aside.

PUTIN

[*Unfolds a piece of paper and 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

She means 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 that's 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 forehead to a fist.]

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

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 and, and *degenerate*, this counterculture figure, this industrial metal MC would turn up there. 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 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 business.

[Clapping his hands]

Back to work, everyone!

ZUBEIDAT

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

PUTIN

I doubt it. 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 CIA as well, the real thing. They just take their time, is all.

KADYROV

They are the enemy, after all.

PUTIN

The Americans, their CIA, they are the competition.

ZUBEIDAT

And what does it say?

The letter—what’s the message in it?

KADYROV

Russians 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 SUV—

PUTIN

A car they stole—

KADYROV

Black Benz GLE three fifty SUV.

PUTIN

The same thing happened to Pier Paolo Pasolini. 120 years ago? He was crushed under a car. It was his own brother that did it to Tamerlan, though. His own brother—

KADYROV

His own blood. After the cops had shot him—

PUTIN

Tamerlan, that is.

KADYROV

Nine times in all—

PUTIN

He got dragged under the car for—for?

KADYROV

Nine yards, give or take.

PUTIN

And if you just stop and 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 bellowed 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's 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, so that we may live!

PUTIN

You mean—

ZUBEIDAT

—an exaggeration. A tad too much. It's overkill.

PUTIN

Wait a minute. Are you saying that Tamerlan was a martyr? He was a victim?

KADYROV

Yes. 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 pussy Trump.

ZUBEIDAT

So here we are.

PUTIN

This is it.

KADYROV

Our predicament.

ZUBEIDAT

If we’d 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

AND I WANT YOU TO PAY VERY CLOSE ATTENTION
TO THIS HERE DETAIL!

PUTIN

That's how they can trace the vehicle.

KADYROV

Cops can.

ZUBEIDAT

By tracing the phone.

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, 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 Marathon bomber! The first name’s Frigid! She’s all yours! You can have her! And remember, Bogie is dead!

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

ONE

The backpack lies where it was left. During the play, everyone seems to stumble on it, kick it, and so on. There is a bean bag chair near center stage and an easy chair at stage right. A bust of Lenin, painted red, gold and green, is watching.

MURRAY is standing on the roof of the left-side confession booth. He is facing left. He takes an unsteady step backwards, hesitates, and returns to his previous position. He picks up a red frisbee, his steering wheel. He tries putting his "car" in reverse.

MURRAY

Sleep, sleep, sleep! Oy, no such luck! I'm counting sheep, sheep, sheep—and Heavens, I am stuck! Ho, ho, ho—Ho Lee Fuck! Listen, my man, my little yellow friend: I'm slouching towards death. A sucker on auto-

pilot, I guess I should be doing something. Do something about it! Indeed, but what? Let's not ask my brother, okay? We all know what he'll say:

[In a rash voice]

“Pedal to the metal! Floor it, you fucking pussy! Drive, you limp-wristed wimp! Or is it too much to ask from a daisy-puller like you?”

[To the AUDIENCE]

I'm so sorry. For my brother, for his bellowing—I'd never use language like, throw slurs like that, I swear. Even in private—and we're not alone. He's having a cage fight with the cops as we speak, right behind this automobile. He's gained super powers lately. He's no longer human. He is the Scourge of God. That's what he thinks anyway. He thinks he's Harvey Keitel in *Bad Lieutenant*. Bullets won't hit him, he's so mad. Or blessed.

[Speaking to someone behind him]

Thanks for the tip, Tammy! I never asked, but that didn't stop you, it never did. I'd rather be a dog than the younger son! Your Honor, I didn't ask for any of this—Boylston Street, the MIT officer—oh, no, I was forced! I was “a puppy following his big brother”—I have it in writing somewhere, the pages of *Rolling Stone*. They still rock, on occasion—the magazine, not the band. I'm not including Matt Taibbi, of course. I'm excluding him. Matt Taibbi whines like the Nutcracker that he is. Dude's a Russian spy, Lee Harvey Oswald the Second. Hey, thanks anyway, Matty! I mean Tammy. I sometimes confuse the two, Matty and Tammy. That's my brother's name, Tamburlaine, Tammy. Hey, look at *me*, Your Honor!

Do I look like criminal to you? I'm being a *good boy*, doing as I'm told! I'm flooring it as we speak, but this piece of shit Nazi wagon won't budge! Something wrong with the wheels, I believe.

[*Directing his words at the ceiling*]

They keep spinning, like the wheels of justice. Eh, your majesty? Are you there? Your Excellency?

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

The old fart fell asleep.

[*He gives the middle finger to God.*]

You're going to fall flat on your ass! By the way, I know what you're dreaming of:

[*Holding his hands in front of his face, two feet apart, palms facing each other, he imitates Al Pacino.*]

"A GREAT—!"

[*He swallows the last word, "ass." He is through with his imitating.*]

I can see you, Saint Just, driving a red convertible at full speed, blind as a bat. Is it a Ferrari? I think so, yes. Meanwhile, I'm rotting away in a stolen black Benz SUV that won't start. It's a GLE three fifty, a real uber-mensch drive, and utterly useless. Man! What I'd call irony.

[*He throws the frisbee and sits on the edge of the roof.*]

Well, alright, it does start. It does, but it won't move an inch. Not the direction I want anyway. Back, going back—I have a creepy feeling that the end is crawling near. I want to undo what has been done. I want to go back, start all over! Isn't that what they call remorse?

Am I right, Your Honor? Eligible for parole and all that—

[*He inspects the sole of his shoe.*]

All that—

[*He inspects the other shoe then lets his foot fall.*]

All that mass. Where's science when you need it? CID, do you read? Maybe forensics will exonerate us after all. In the meantime, I've been searching high and low for an explanation, an *out*, and, to be honest, am getting a little desperate here. I'm not picky. Any kind of excuse will do—dog shit, human shit, I'll gladly smear it all over my cell—hell, all over me, if that's what it takes. I'll do a dirty protest, if that'll please your Irish ass. Your Honor, I will plead insanity. Anything, if you just give me a hint of what it is that you need. But no, nothing. Every time I try reasoning with Him, or Her—the whole experience leaves my cold. The only thing on offer here is Austerity. Life imprisonment or worse: starve to death spiritually. A pretty bleak landscape, don't you think? A vast mud Chernobyl stretching into all infinity, and we're stuck in it, I'm stuck in it, why?

[*He rises.*]

We hit something. That's why. Well, well, well! We've got to get out of this place. Break on through. He ain't heavy, he's my brother.

[*He imitates a line from the song "The Carny" by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.*]

"The nag was dead meat.

We can't afford to carry dead weight!"

[*He tramples his feet.*]

Is Jah trying to tell me something, electrocuting me with all these snippets of song?

[*He covers his eyes.*]

Rushing them up my spine and out of my mouth?

[*He reveals his eyes.*]

And yet, they aren't the One. They aren't the one we need, the song to make us free. It keeps slipping away.

[*Clutching the air*]

It's a bee! No, no! The song of life, it's a—

[*He slaps his cheek. He blows the imaginary insect, like a kiss, at the AUDIENCE.*]

A mosquito!

[*"The Mosquito," a song by The Doors is heard from the beginning. MURRAY jumps to the floor. KADYROV enters. He throws the frisbee back to MURRAY and exits. MURRAY tries the Moonwalk. He is moving backwards, half-dancing, half walking, making some progress this time*]

The song of life makes no fucking sense whatsoever!

[*The tune fades into background music.*]

We've made the full circle, like the band there. The doors are open in front of us, closed behind. We can't go back. The past is gone. The present, the eternal now, was never there. *That* is opium for the masses! And the future is a piece of dark matter, like the Devil it is, an "incarnation of vacuity."

[*He throws the frisbee.*]

Somebody sent me a book. *The Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer. It must be a joke: Doctor Mengele here, he don't sing. They are trying to rattle my cage. But I won't budge! I will stay the course!

[*Abruptly, he turns to stage right.*]

Who goes there?

[*After a beat, he breaks character.*]

I prepared that speech for an audition. They held it for that blockbuster movie, the one about the Boston Marathon bombings. The Tsarnaev Brothers, you know? I would've *loved* to be able to play Jahar the White Hat, the younger brother. Jahar, or Dzhokhar, as he was known among his people, was the pet of the entire extended family. He was their mascot. Matt Taibbi said so, in *Rolling Stone*. They were immigrants, the Tsarnaevs were. I know what you're thinking, but no: they didn't cross from Mexico. They hail from Chechnya, Dagestan, Kyrgyzstan. They lived all over the place. They still do. They went back after, you know, the incident. So, in order to send all those Salvadoran gang-bangers packing, all you need is a terrorist plot. Like flushing the toilet, it's easy.

[*He tries to suppress a smile.*]

I always wanted to be a movie star. But I found out—I found out! The business is corrupt. It's rotten to the core. Hollywood is this country compressed into a single blood diamond. The casting director, guess what she said?

[CASTING DIRECTOR *enters from the priest's compartment to the right. She is carrying a clipboard. She has a pen in her mouth.*]

The Boston Strangler, I call her.

[CASTING DIRECTOR *comes closer and stops. She looks at MURRAY. She looks at the clipboard. She takes the pen from her mouth.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

And you are?

MURRAY

Murray.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who?

MURRAY

Doug Murray.

CASTING DIRECTOR

And what have you done?

MURRAY

Nothing! I mean—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, that's remarkable. You'd be the first.

MURRAY

I didn't do it!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You aren't the first one to have no experience. God, no. The first one to admit it, that's who you are. By far.

MURRAY

It was my brother.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who?

MURRAY

Who made me do it! It was Tam.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Black Betty, bam.

MURRAY

Is why I wasted him!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Wasted?

MURRAY

Yeah.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You've been drinking?

MURRAY

No!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Doing drugs?

MURRAY

Never.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hey, I'm not accusing you of anything. I'm not the prosecution, or, God forbid, the judge. This here's an *audition*, for a role. It's supposed to be *fun*. What I was asking was, what have you done—your career as an actor?

MURRAY

Oh.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That it? Is that it?

[MURRAY *nods*. *He is horrified*. CASTING DIRECTOR *makes a note in her papers*. *She is slowly walking around MURRAY, appraising him, while he is turning with her*. *He doesn't want anyone operating behind his back*.]

MURRAY

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Like I'm a piece of shit! Like I'm something she stepped into out on the street! The cat dragged in! Now is that any way to behave in an audition? Is that any way to treat a fellow human being?

CASTING DIRECTOR

What was that?

MURRAY

Huh?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You were saying?

MURRAY

Um, nothing.

CASTING DIRECTOR

He says nothing.

[Writing]

So nothing it is, then!

MURRAY

It is? What is? Please, Miss, I'm not—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Thou name! Has No Such Thing. Hey, I'm just filling the boxes here. The paperwork is a bitch! But someone has to do it. Name: None Available. Are you a Buddhist?

MURRAY

No!

CASTING DIRECTOR

A feminist, then, perhaps? No, he's a black hole. He's a Leninist. Time stops around him. Nothing escapes, not even light. He swallows it like a souse swallows his sauce.

MURRAY

Swallows what?

CASTING DIRECTOR

His sauce, his booze: Lenin, light, and you.

[She slaps him gently on the head with her clipboard.]

Cheer up! I'm only kidding.

MURRAY

[Smiling nervously]

Okay.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Trying to break ice is all.

MURRAY

Cool.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Also, I'm working out. My tongue, see?

[Wiggles it]

It needs some exercise. You aren't the only one needs to practice their lines Can I confide in you?

MURRAY

What?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Can you keep a secret?

MURRAY

Sure.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'm working on a screenplay at the moment.

MURRAY

Well.

[Drained of all energy, MURRAY flops in the bean bag chair.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's in the early stages yet, but I'm quite confident about it. If all goes well, pretty soon I'll be able to say *sayonara* to my day job, casting, this.

MURRAY

That is just awesome.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Don't you think?

MURRAY

What's it all about?

CASTING DIRECTOR

I beg your pardon?

MURRAY

[Standing up]

Your script. Pitch it to me, please. Think of me as a big, fat producer with a foot fetish. I'm wearing a bathrobe.

Maybe I'm into scatology, even. I'm a monster. Sell it, sell your script to me. What's it all about?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Identities, basically.

MURRAY

Uh huh.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's a about the current climate of—

MURRAY

It's about climate?

CASTING DIRECTOR

No!

MURRAY

Oh.

[He falls back to the bean bag chair.]

Please.

[He waves his hand.]

Go on, please.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's about hostility. It's about sexual identity. And it's about civil discourse.

[MURRAY pretends to be snoring. Then he opens his eyes and stands up.]

MURRAY

May I suggest something?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Sure.

MURRAY

Put a villain in it! Put *me* in it!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You?

MURRAY

The big bad bloodsucking producer! Have a touch of “me too” in it! And that’s a sale! Too bad Philip Seymour Hoffman isn’t available. He was born for this role! See? “I... am... Dracula.”

CASTING DIRECTOR

That’s Gary Oldman.

MURRAY

So?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You’re confusing your creeps.

MURRAY

And the best creeps they are! There’s no competition, none! Well, there was Heath Ledger, of course...

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hey, thanks for the tip! I'll think about it.

MURRAY

[Spreading his arms]

That's all I'm asking.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Now let's get back to business.

MURRAY

No problem.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your name:

[Checking her notes]

It's Doug Murray, right?

MURRAY

No! Yes, but.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You gave me a false name?

MURRAY

Well, not exactly, no. But—

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're into quantum mechanics?

MURRAY

I'm sorry?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You do particle physics? Like a cat in a box: you're alive and dead at the same time?

MURRAY

I'm not dead yet.

CASTING DIRECTOR

No kidding. No shit.

MURRAY

Please, Miss.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's Missus to you.

MURRAY

I'm sorry. Right. Yeah: when leaving for work, remember to stash your ring. Fucking hell! You're confusing me!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. Inhale.

[MURRAY *tries following the instructions for a second. Then he opens his eyes, starts walking around, nervous.*]

Exhale. Chill, my friend. You do yoga?

MURRAY

No. And now I've offended you. Shit, I'm sorry! No excuses, no—Mom was right.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That's alright.

MURRAY

No, I ruined it! I ruin everything! I'm ruining it as we speak!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're not! You're not ruining it! And what is it? This movie? Hey, fuck this movie! Who cares about it? This movie, or that one? Here's a newsflash: they are all the same! You are an artist. That is what matters. Every true artist that I can think of is at least compulsive obsessive. Think of it as the minimum requirement for being let in to Parnassus or whatever. You have to be a neurotic of at least nine on the Richter scale. Everyone is! And you can quote me on that. They care about nothing but themselves.

MURRAY

I'm really a tame person. I'm an easygoing fellow.

CASTING DIRECTOR

The essence of an artist is that he's never satisfied. Hey, that's great think of this as a job interview.

MURRAY

I never landed a job in my life!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Not that, then. Okay. Well, all right. You like games, don't you?

MURRAY

Games? I play some, yeah.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Play station?

[*He nods.*]

That's a field I know absolutely nothing, I know nada, zilch about. But here's what I think. If you thought of it, our little audition here, if you thought of it as a game, as one of yours, where you know exactly what to do—

MURRAY

For you, maybe.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I beg your pardon?

MURRAY

For you that might work. You might see it as a game. You love it, don't you?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Love what?

MURRAY

Being in charge.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hah! Well, I don't see it that way—

MURRAY

Of course you can't.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Excuse me. Wait a second. Hold your horses, hold on. What are you doing here? The situation here is like any art, any effort, it's an *interaction* between people—

MURRAY

I hate to interrupt, but that's it. That is the problem. You're inside. You're part of the machine. You're a tiny component in the massive military-industrial-entertainment complex!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hey, mister! You've got a lot of nerve to come in here and—

MURRAY

You haven't got a worry in the world!

CASTING DIRECTOR

My job is on the line here!

MURRAY

My *life* is on the line here.

[*Silence.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

I think it's safe to say that mine, too. My life is on the line as well. And you're wasting it; you're wasting my time. Why? You want the job, or not?

[He puts his hands to his face and flops down in the bean bag chair.]

Despite of what I said earlier, "fuck this movie," all that—what I tried to do was *encourage* you—I've invested a *lot* in this project, so much so that you wouldn't believe it. If I told you, you wouldn't believe it.

MURRAY

Fail again, I fail again.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'm sorry?

MURRAY

Fail again, I fail again. Fail again, I fail again. Fail again, I fail again—and I don't know what to do!

[She walks to his side. She is about to put a hand on his shoulder, but decides otherwise.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

Poor thing. You poor, deluded thing.

MURRAY

Dog Murray? The name I gave you? It's the one I use for my acting career. My *nom de guerre*, if you will.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I see.

MURRAY

The job I have, my day job, it's a government job. My work is highly classified, so.

CASTING DIRECTOR

So you're a spy.

MURRAY.

In the house of love, yes! Therefore it's crucial that I use a code name. You know?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Like Marilyn Monroe?

[*He stands up hastily.*]

MURRAY

Yeah, well, right. But not quite. Not exact—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Like Cary Grant?

Like John Wayne?

[*He points at her and nods.*]

MURRAY

That's the one.

CASTING DIRECTOR

All right then.

MURRAY

There's just one more, a tiny little thing.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Get out of here.

MURRAY

Now? I haven't—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Please.

MURRAY

I haven't done “my thing”—

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's an expression. You've seen *Donnie Brasco*? Johnny Depp as an undercover agent, he's so brilliant. Anyway, the phrase, “Get out of here,” has a myriad of meanings, as the Depp character explains in the movie. But here, now...

[*She gestures, suggesting he get on with it.*]

MURRAY

Be Here Now.

CASTING DIRECTOR

“Get out of here.”

MURRAY

I see!

CASTING DIRECTOR

If you’d be so kind.

MURRAY

That’s funny! I thought—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yes, yes. I got it, thanks, in Technicolor. You were saying?

[*Silence.*]

MURRAY

All right, here goes nothing. My first, you see, my Christian name is written the same way as the generic name of man’s best friend—and I don’t see this as a gender issue. Do you? When you say “man’s best friend” someone might think that perhaps you’re implying, excluding half of the mankind—the human race. Well, I am not. No way, José! Or Josephine. I’m talking about the domestic animal, creature of the canine family—

CASTING DIRECTOR

A dog?

MURRAY

Yes, yes, almost there. Lose the indefinite article from in front of it, that's all, and, hey presto, there—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Dog Murray? D-o-g?

MURRAY

M-u-r—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Thanks!

MURRAY

—r-a-y.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yeah, I got it.

MURRAY

Murray.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Thanks, I got it!

MURRAY

Great. Superb! Now let's just roll up our sleeves and—

CASTING DIRECTOR

You chose that name yourself?

MURRAY

[Smiling]

It's good, isn't it?

[She just stares at him. His smile melts.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

There's a book out there, called *The Strange Death of Europe*. You haven't, by any chance, heard of it?

[He shakes his head.]

It was written by one Douglas Murray. But that's not you, right?

MURRAY

No. Never heard of no Glass Murray.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Right. And you're reading for—? Who was it?

MURRAY

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

[She stares at him again. Soon she is left in the shadows, as lights focus on him. He returns to Jahar's monologue, raising his hands. He cries out, and she turns away.]

Don't shoot! I'm a U.S. citizen!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Mary Mother of God.

MURRAY

I might look Arab to you, but you can kiss my skinny ass, for I am not! I'm not an Arab! I'm Caucasian—and in the strictest interpretation available! You think I'm a Haji, huh? That's just your racism, your Islamophobia speaking! You are a cop, aren't you? Ergo, a fucking fascist! Listen, everybody! There's a pig present—

[pointing at her]

—and Ergo is his name! And he's aiming his service automatic at me—is it a Glock? And why? It's kill o'clock! That's why! His Crusader genes and Zionist surroundings are filling his brain with p & p!

[He puts his hands down.]

And that's pee and poop, folks, piss and shit. Speaking of which: I had mine—the bar code, the sign of the Beast, citizenship—in a solemn ceremony 11 years to the day after 9/11. And my brother went ballistic. He never got his, no matter how he tried. Some say he was ready to kill for it, and did.

[He grabs the wheel again, as in the beginning. He is determined now. He bounces in place, preparing for action He pushes his butt out.]

We can't stop! Sorry, Tammy, I forgot! It was the cops. The pigs, they told me. They are telling me to give it up. "Be a man, Jahar," my wrestling coach said. He went on national TV to say it. He had to spread the word. He had

to doubt my masculinity in front of 300 million people. “Turn yourself in,” he said. “It’s over.” Fucking dimwit hasn’t heard of Lenny Kravitz, I suppose. It ain’t over till it’s over! But they distracted me there for a sec. They are shooting at me, at us. Are you there, my brother?

[*Aside*]

He’s underneath the car now, I guess.

[*He yells at the floor.*]

Get out! Get in! Shit, I’m running you over as we speak!

[*He stretches the waist of his jeans, addressing his ass crack.*]

Tammy, what you doing down there? Yo, no napping while waging jihad! Hey, retard! Grozny, do you read?

[*He lets go of his trousers and turns to the wheel again.*]

It’s time to man up. Get Boston Strong. Get real! And there’s hardly anything as real as the entire PD lighting you up. It tends to—it’s what they call awakening, I think. It kinda does that to you, no shit, I admit. TAMMY! Get out and get in!

[*Shoulders slumped, bouncing, he proceeds backward. He takes a tampon out of his pocket and mimes using a lighter to light it. This is a pipe bomb, as we shall see. He throws it over his shoulder. He casts four tampons in all.*]

If you’re yap-yap-yapping again about something, I can’t hear you. There’s an all-American gunfight going down. OK Corral was some BB-gun-kid-shit compared to this shit. The noise is just out of sight!

[*Sound effects.*]

Guns go whack-whack-whack; pipe-bombs, bam-bam; the old pressure cooker, boom.

It's a piece of postmodern hardcore industrial hipster music! Ministry's got nothing on us! And you can put your band together, too! Just follow the instructions. Hey, we did!

Go to *Inspire*, the al Qaeda magazine. Just fucking google it, all right? It's online, where it should be. You're hurting, my brother. I know, I hear you—and yet, I can't. The noise is just out of this world! Something has got to give. And I'm so sorry bro, it's you. I have to put you on hold for a five.

[*He uses an imaginary remote control on his imaginary brother. He turns to the AUDIENCE.*]

“And I can still hear her complain.” Well, I've got some explaining to do. Not complaining, no—that's my brother's cup of tea, and Mom's. My brother Tammy, underneath, is a male version of her. He is a—he is my mother! Zubeidat Redux on Ritalin, is what he is. Our mother's name, Zubeidat is. How d'you spell it, you ask. Stay *away* from her, that's how! For your own good: she's a rabid dog. Anyway, I was saying. First, you see, it's a hell of a job, driving and throwing pipe bombs at the same time—I'm no octopus. Not before I reincarnate, anyway. It's a monumental task in itself. Suggest adding it to the summer Olympics—and without the added stress of trying NOT to CRUSH your MOTHER under the WHEELS of this very nice automobile! The Korean kid that drove it—brother, did he fly! Was he

Japanese? And who gives a fuck? What's bugging me is, where did he get a drive like this? Mercedes GLE 350 SUV. Ho Lee Fuck, his name was. He couldn't have been a day older than you, Mom. Look like a child, the Chink did.

Is it fair? Course not! America first, is what I always say. We should've shot him, you know. I told you. Too late now! Well, bygones. But let me tell you, I tell you this: I am sorry. Yelling at you, insulting you, it was my bad. It was... uncalled for. You're not a retard after all. Are you? And yet, and yet, I do have to say, this ain't the time or the place to check the oil. The Korean kid was driving the Benz straight out of the dealer's—

[Lost in thought, he is running his hand across the hood of the car, gently caressing it.]

Maybe he was taking it for a test drive. He was bragging to his friends, the uppity bastard. The wax on it hasn't worn off yet! The car is brand new, is what I'm saying. It's in a pristine condition!

[He gets on his knees, begging.]

Can we keep it? Can we?

Please, Tammy? Please?

[He gets up, angry.]

“No” can't be the answer to everything. Just like Mom you are! Oh, shit, I forgot! It's been established already. It's common knowledge. You are Mom!

[He lets out a heavy sigh.]

I know. I'm doing it again. And they are trying to kill us—you, me, everybody—as we speak. Talk later, all right? Motherfucker, get real and get in!

[He hits himself in the forehead three times. He is using the heel of his hand.]

How silly of me, to act like that. Yelling at your brother—and your older brother at that—that shit is *haram*! It's forbidden in our culture! And I want you to listen very, very carefully now, understood? Among the mountain people one is told to obey their elders even before their red head pops out, before they are even born! You simply can't escape that one!

So, your Honor, what do you say? How about that parole?

[The following happens in the nether-world of justice.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

[Draws multiple x's in her papers]

Denied.

MURRAY

Hey, not so fast!

CASTING DIRECTOR

We've wasted way too much time on you already. Next!

MURRAY

That's not fair! Your Honor, you weren't there! You don't know what I was going through!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And we don't care.

MURRAY

That's the Sex Pistols you're quoting there, Your Honor. Are you sure? A woman in your position wants to be associated with *them*, those thugs? Is it appropriate, is what I'm asking. Hey, I may file a complaint!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Go on. Knock yourself out.

MURRAY

You don't understand! I had a handful back there! The situation was quite stressful, to be frank with you. And I'm no Frank Underwood, you see. Not even close, I'm a very sensitive person. I am!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And we all appreciate that, we do.

MURRAY

You do?

CASTING DIRECTOR

So much so that we'll do everything we can to put you out of your misery.

MURRAY

Very funny—though it wasn't.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It wasn't supposed to be funny.

MURRAY

Well, it wasn't. It wasn't.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That's the truth, funny or not. That's a *fact*.

MURRAY

You wouldn't know a fact even if you sat on it. And, by the way, you do. You do sit on it!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'm standing, see? Never mind; I'll let that pass. Consider this one instead: A skull pyramid. Do you find that funny?

MURRAY

I don't know what you're talking about.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your brother, his name: where it comes from.

MURRAY

Tammy.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do you think he's great? Like the title of the play says?

MURRAY

What play? Which one? Tammy the Wonderful Wynette? The Ladies Man, the Party Animal? The Golden Glove Champion Who Didn't Get into the

Olympics? “Winter spring summer or fall...” All you had to do is call! But you didn’t. Why? You didn’t make him a citizen. Why?

CASTING DIRECTOR

I’m talking about—

MURRAY

Tamerlan “Woe Is Me” Tsarnaev? That Turned into a Religious Fanatic? That’s who, that’s the one you’re talking about? Is he great? Well, of course, why not? He’s a martyr, isn’t he? He’s a martyr. I made him one!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And that was well done.

MURRAY

I’m not so sure about it.

CASTING DIRECTOR

How about you?

MURRAY

What about me?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You want to be a martyr too?

[She makes a note in her papers.]

Just say so, and we’ll make it happen.

*[She looks at him, waiting for his word.
He tries to build up his courage, but fails.
He bursts out in frustration]*

MURRAY

This shit, forget about it!

CASTING DIRECTOR

We will. You better believe it.

MURRAY

[Getting his hopes up]

You'll forget about it?

CASTING DIRECTOR

We already did. We forgot all about it. We forgot all about you. There's nothing to you any longer other than this. Your life: you wiped it all away. That other stuff that one would consider when thinking about a human being—that's all gone. You trashed it. So screw it. And screw you. We forgot already. Instead of you we remember—we celebrate Sean Collier, Martin Richard, Krystle Campbell and Lü Lingzi.

MURRAY

You say you do, yeah.

CASTING DIRECTOR

We do. We celebrate the lives of the victims.

MURRAY

You say you do. You want to, but you can't!

CASTING DIRECTOR

If these are the things you have to tell yourself to make it all—

MURRAY

You had to look up their names.

CASTING DIRECTOR

—right. What if I did? I have tens of cases a year! I can't remember everyone's name—

MURRAY

You do remember my name though. Don't you?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yes, I do.

MURRAY

And why is that? Why is it? It's because we, the people, we love our villains!

CASTING DIRECTOR

We may love our villains, fair enough. And yet, at the same time, we absolutely fucking detest—we hate cowards.

MURRAY

[*Snorts*]

I am no. I am no—

CASTING DIRECTOR

[In a squeaky voice]

“Please help me. They are trying to kill me. Help me! I don’t wanna die!”

[This gets to MURRAY, but he controls himself.]

MURRAY

Well. It isn’t about me.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Now you see it! (Now you don’t.)

MURRAY

It’s about you—and your double standard!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And what might that be?

MURRAY

You kill hundreds of thousands, and then—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hold it.

MURRAY

—and when we, in retaliation, we kill three or four, you go absolutely raving mad! You go nuts! You and your fake moral outrage!

CASTING DIRECTOR

We kill where?

MURRAY

Afghanistan. Iraq. Syria.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hundreds of thousands, you say?

MURRAY

At least. But probably, all truth be told, the body count is in millions.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who gave you that number?

MURRAY

It doesn't matter who. It's *true*, is what matters.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Let me guess who. It was one of these, or all of them. Just nod if I'm on target, so I can yell, "Bingo" at the end. I get five in the row, I get a free book by Jeremy Scahill. His only book, *Muddy Waters*: I've got five copies already, since these guys, they are always the same.

MURRAY

Are you on drugs, Your Honor?

CASTING DIRECTOR

No, but you must be. Otherwise you wouldn't believe their shit.

MURRAY

And whose shit is that?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Noam “Commie” Chomsky; Edward “Unfair” Said; Max “Boohoo” Blumenthal; Seymour “Sad” Hersh. Or Glenn “Godawful” Greenwald? O my goodness! Dear Chairman Mao, it’s a BINGO!

MURRAY

You are sadly mistaken. I don’t know who those good people are.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, you should. You should keep an eye on your useful idiots. They are like canaries in the coal mine. At the first sign of trouble, they will all disappear. They will join the Administration. And that reminds me, it’s fake news, your number. Your numbers are made up, based on absolutely nothing.

MURRAY

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

They just wouldn’t listen. No matter how I tried to explain, the result stayed the same. I didn’t know what to do anymore.

CASTING DIRECTOR

So you thought that killing and maiming, claiming lives and limbs would be a shortcut to hearts and minds?

MURRAY

[*Covering his ears*]

SHUT UP! I can't think in this noise! Your constant yap-yap-yapping—you're like my mother! You're exactly alike. And this isn't about me!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You said that already.

[*He uncovers his ears.*]

MURRAY

It's true. It isn't.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Then what is it "all about," if I may ask?

MURRAY

You.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Me? What do you mean?

[*Music. "Space Cadet" by Kyuss.*]

MURRAY

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

I'm not in charge—you are.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Be careful, Dog, or you'll wake up one morning to find you have a fixation.

MURRAY

[Kneeling, addresses the AUDIENCE]

You were looking after me, always. You were doing it even there, under the car. You were arranging a get-away for both of us. You were showing me the way.

[Music grows louder as lights fade.]

Show me the way!

Show me the way now!

END OF PART ONE

TWO

CASTING DIRECTOR *and* MURRAY *are facing each other.*

CASTING DIRECTOR

And you are reading for—?

MURRAY

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

[She stares at him.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

This ain't my day! I swear—I mean, Jesus! I can't get any of the names right! Stress, I guess.

MURRAY

As I was saying, it's awful.

[Talking faster]

The stress, I mean, what it does to you, and how, I know! What you're talking about, believe me: been there, done that. That is, I can imagine—pew!

CASTING DIRECTOR

[Smiling]

Thanks.

MURRAY

No problem. It's a pleasure. The pleasure, that is, it's mine. All mine.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Look, could you please repeat the last name on your list, the one you—?

MURRAY

And it's a long list!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'm sure.

MURRAY

If you count all the names I've used, the personalities, the covers I took?

CASTING DIRECTOR

The one you're reading for?

MURRAY

For work, see? It's not like I'm schizophrenic or something—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, *you* said that.

MURRAY

It's a part of my Government job.

CASTING DIRECTOR

If you say so. But—

MURRAY

How I serve my country, see?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Just for now. Please—

MURRAY

Like some other dude would be deployed to IRAQ or someplace—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Iraq? Sure, yeah, why not? I've no doubt in my mind. No, let me finish! WE NEED TO STOP for a moment RIGHT NOW. Okay? Just focus on the job at hand? Who knows who's in one of those fitting rooms, waiting for their go at it? It might be Colonel Kurtz himself, for all we know. It might be Marlon Brando, might be Jesus, for all we know. Might be the resurrection and the life. I'm kidding, of course. But this is no joke. Let's stay in the present for now, all right? AFTER, hell, who cares? If we lie in the gutter and smile at the stars, that'll be just fine with me. Discuss the wallpaper with Oscar Wilde. But now: stay awake! And let the sleeping dogs lie. Hey, no pun intended—

MURRAY

I like you!

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Sighing, slyly checking out the exits*]

Well... that's...just...

MURRAY

Say it!

CASTING DIRECTOR

(Creepy.)

MURRAY

Just spit it out!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Kinda creepy is what it is.

MURRAY

Oh, no. Oh, no! I'm no stalker!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, that's a relief.

MURRAY

I just realized—God, what a jerk I am! What it must sound like: “I like you!” And I mean, hell, I don't even—not in that way! Not like I...

CASTING DIRECTOR

Like you?

MURRAY

You do?

CASTING DIRECTOR

No.

MURRAY

No, you mean no. You mean, you asked me to finish my sentence?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yes.

MURRAY

I like you. I do, but not—not in that way.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Go on.

MURRAY

Like I want you?

[She is hugging her clipboard, staring at the floor, while keeping aware of his whereabouts. She is furious.]

No. Yes. No. Well, what the fuck? Let's be honest! I lied. I do, dear, I do!

[She takes her phone out. She is using it as her mirror.]

You too, right? You too?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You nailed it.

[To her mirror image]

Oh, wow. Can I throw up now?

[With an outstretched hand, he takes an awkward step forward. At the same time, she takes a step back. He stops abruptly, and falls flat on his face. She looks at her phone. He is rolling on the floor.]

MURRAY

I'm so glad! Glad I found you—and here, of all places!

[Sitting up]

I mean the gall of these people! This city, Jesus! This industry, it spells Murder to my mind, body and soul!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yes, I can see that.

MURRAY

You're funny! You're smart and—most important of all—you have a heart!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Okay, I confess.

MURRAY

That is so rare these days!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I know, I know.

MURRAY

First I found you a bit of a bitch, but then the wind turned!

[MURRAY jumps to his feet. “I Can See Clearly Now the Rain Is Gone,” a Johnny Nash song, engulfs the entire space. MURRAY starts moving to the music right away.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

I do have a heart, I do. You’ve got that right. You’re onto something there, I admit, but one can’t save the earth all by yourself. On your own, lest you collapse. Have to look after yourself, too. Have to exercise. And enjoy life, too! You don’t want to burn out at thirty-two, do you?

[MURRAY has changed into “party clothes” he found on display—a silver sports coat and a black fedora that is too small for him—dancing all the while He approaches her.]

Oh Lord. Oh my God. Oh Jesus.

[He invites her to dance. Against all her instincts, she accepts. They dance.]

MURRAY

[Shouting over the music]

What's your name? Will you marry me?

[Smiling, she shakes her head.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

We have work to do.

MURRAY

I BEG YOUR PARDON?

CASTING DIRECTOR

There's work to do!

MURRAY

I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Work! WORK! *WORK!*

MURRAY

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY, AS THEY SAY, MAKE
JACK—

CASTING DIRECTOR

YOU SHALL KNOW IT! AND IT SHALL SET YOU
FREE!

MURRAY

SET US FREE?

CASTING DIRECTOR

YES!

MURRAY

FREEDOM! CHIMES OF FREEDOM!

CASTING DIRECTOR

CHIMES OF WORK!

MURRAY

I SAW THEM FLASHING—

CASTING DIRECTOR

AND THEY SET US FREE!

MURRAY

[Stops dancing]

And I thought that in a minute or two, I would be like that light on those bells, that I would be no more.

CASTING DIRECTOR

THE CHIMES OF DEATH, THEY SET US FREE!

MURRAY

Then that clown rode in, waving his amnesty. They didn't shoot me after all. Those bastards!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Set us free!

MURRAY

So here we go.

[Suddenly, the music stops.]

MURRAY & CASTING DIRECTOR

DEATH WILL SET US FREE!

[He takes her hand.]

MURRAY

Come—I want you to meet my mother!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Where?

MURRAY

Kyrgyzstan, if I'm not mistaken,

CASTING DIRECTOR

Kyrg—? Where?

[MURRAY drags her towards the confession booth to the right. He lets go of her and opens the curtain. The booth is empty.]

No! She's gone!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Gone? You mean—?

MURRAY

Yes!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Like *gone-gone*? Or, like, took a trip? Traveled to wherever?

MURRAY

Kyrgyzstan!

CASTING DIRECTOR

She'll be back before you know it.

MURRAY

No, she won't!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You'll see.

MURRAY

Stalin won't let her go! He's forcing her—he made her go against her will!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Stalin robbed her? Is that so?

[MURRAY, *nodding, is holding back tears.*]

I can see Stalin and your mother. I understand. They deserve each other.

MURRAY

[Kneeling]

O mother! The world is gone!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I think you are overdoing it a bit.

[He slams his forehead on the floor twice.]

A tad, maybe?

MURRAY

Death and destruction swept it all away! There's nothing left, nothing no more!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Now don't be drama queen. Look around. There are all kinds of things left here.

MURRAY

Well, the wind, of course—there's that. The north wind, can you hear it howl? We're in the Soviet Union, after all. To quote a war correspondent in the Taliban country: it's "a vast mud Chernobyl." And one more thing: there's a mother carrying her baby through this thick black cloud.

[ZUBEIDAT enters from the confession booth to the left, carrying a bundle. She is in a hurry, despite appearing exhausted.]

She is very determined and seems to possess an iron will. She has to keep going. She won't let anything get in her way. Meanwhile, CASTING DIRECTOR retreats to the shadows and slyly exits.]

There she goes, like the Trans-Siberian Railway. And I'm not talking about sexual minorities here! She hurries across the steppe like a slow train a-coming! Slow train to China—hey, Mom, lose the scarf! You don't wanna advertise your faith down there!

[ZUBEIDAT stops. Her eyes are burning with fury.]

Where you're going, they are not too crazy about the human rights. The rights of the Muslim population trouble them even less, if there is such a thing. Less than Zero that is. In a sense, they are not so different from the Deep State of Boston. You could say—

ZUBEIDAT

Jahar?

MURRAY

They do not exist, our rights. Hi, Mom. Their rights? You bet.

ZUBEIDAT

Where've you been?

MURRAY

Our rights, less. A lot less. The Elite, Mom, they are the same everywhere!

ZUBEIDAT

I've been looking everywhere!

MURRAY

Well, that's where I've been. Hiding in plain sight.
China and the States, Mom, they are the same!

ZUBEIDAT

Let me look at you!

[ZUBEIDAT *approaches*. MURRAY *retreats*
in front of her.]

MURRAY

Looking good, Mom! You're looking great! Excellent
job, what you've been doing, you done. Just keep it up.
Just keep going. Just, please, keep—!

ZUBEIDAT

Keep what, my son?

MURRAY

Your views and your opinions, your hands!

ZUBEIDAT

[*Turning, hurt, to the AUDIENCE*]

My sons, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar—

MURRAY

Keep them to yourself! Are you listening to me?

ZUBEIDAT

They didn't do it!

MURRAY

Mom, please, we did!

[ZUBEIDAT *lifts up her baby. It is a small woven doll.*]

ZUBEIDAT

This is my firstborn.

MURRAY

[*Turning away*]

And he's dead!

ZUBEIDAT

This is my Tamerlan. He look like a criminal to you?

MURRAY

[*Turning to face her*]

We did do it! We did! It was us!

[*The baby starts to cry. ZUBEIDAT lifts him to her shoulder, bouncing him lightly. She is angry at MURRAY and the AUDIENCE, both.*]

ZUBEIDAT

Now see what you did!

[*In frustration, MURRAY spreads his arms.*]

See, everyone? My son is a patsy!

MURRAY

Oh yeah? Like Lee Harvey Oswald!

ZUBEIDAT

Be quiet! I was talking about your brother!

MURRAY

His words, his! Oswald said so (himself)—

ZUBEIDAT

You, Jahar, you are a pansy!

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

He's a sissy, is what I'm afraid of. He's a pussy. And it's such a shame! My mother's heart is torn to tatters!

[*ZUBEIDAT is beating her chest and having a crying jag. Music. "Supa Scoop and Mighty Scoop" by Kyuss. MURRAY and ZUBEIDAT perform a dance, pulling each other close, then pushing away.*]

ZUBEIDAT

STOP SMOKING, I say. Weed is a death sentence! It's turning your brain into a sponge! I don't know why that shit can't be *haram*. Da Prophet, peace and blessings to him, must have looked the other way. It must have slipped through his fingers somehow.

MURRAY

Come on. I hardly smoke anymore, Mom.

ZUBEIDAT

Don't you lie to me! And finish your studies. That's what I say. Quit fooling around! Be a MAN, for God's sake!

MURRAY

Like who?

ZUBEIDAT

What? Who?

MURRAY

You were saying, it was at the tip of your tongue. You pulled back at the last moment. "Be a man." How do you do that? Who's my fucking role model?

ZUBEIDAT

That LANGUAGE—

MURRAY

Who?

ZUBEIDAT

I won't have it in my house!

MURRAY

This is not your house. Who?

ZUBEIDAT

You know who.

MURRAY

You mean that crazy old man—

ZUBEIDAT

Hey!

MURRAY

—we've got to call father? You ask me to take after him?

ZUBEIDAT

You stop RIGHT THERE—

MURRAY

I should be the head of the family just like him, sitting there, staring like a Buddha of Bamiyan? Glued to the TV, his phone? Is that the Way, Mom?

ZUBEIDAT

You aren't good enough to mention his name—

MURRAY

He wasn't much of a use before, but after he got beat up in a bar, by a RUSSIAN, no less—

ZUBEIDAT

You slacker! You lazy bum junkie!

MURRAY

It had to be a Russky, right? Just had to be—wouldn't have fit the picture otherwise. The grand narrative. Dad has been a total waste of time and money since that day!

ZUBEIDAT

Don't you ever speak of your father that way again! No more, I say, never! You don't know what he's been through! Terrible things: oppression, torture, things that you can't even begin to imagine, that he had to endure in the homeland—

MURRAY

Which is—where?

ZUBEIDAT

Are you having a seizure or something?

MURRAY

Yeah, I guess I am. I must be going crazy. I want to know the truth. I want to know my homeland.

ZUBEIDAT

Why, it's Dagestan, of course!

MURRAY

Not Chechnya?

ZUBEIDAT

You can't live in Chechnya!

MURRAY

And how am I supposed to know? We keep moving all the time—

ZUBEIDAT

You should stop complaining, is what you should do!

MURRAY

I've spent half of my life in Kyrgyzstan—

ZUBEIDAT

[*Nodding*]

We had a good life back there.

MURRAY

—and the other half here, in Cambridge—

ZUBEIDAT

O why did we ever leave?

MURRAY

I've never been to your Chechnya—

[*She is clawing at her face.*]

ZUBEIDAT

I want to go back!

MURRAY

That no one ever stops talking about—

ZUBEIDAT

I want to cancel this, all this GARBAGE! THROW IT ALL AWAY AND START AFRESH!

MURRAY

I've never been to Chechnya.

ZUBEIDAT

I WANT START ALL OVER! I WANT TO GO BACK IN TIME!

[He thinks about this.]

MURRAY

How is it back there?

ZUBEIDAT

Wonderful. You should go.

MURRAY

You just said one can't live there.

ZUBEIDAT

You should go.

MURRAY

Well, Mom? I've done something. And I don't think it's possible for me to go anymore.

ZUBEIDAT

You should do something with your life.

[He is getting irritated.]

MURRAY

Do something. “Do something.” Do—like who?

ZUBEIDAT

Well.

MURRAY

Let’s have it! Who?

ZUBEIDAT

Your brother, for instance.

MURRAY

O my, what a surprise! You’re talking about your younger self again—and still can’t see it! Can you?

ZUBEIDAT

See what?

MURRAY

Tammy, your favorite, your alter ego, he was an absolute and total fuck-up and nothing else!

ZUBEIDAT

You’re making no sense—and would you quit swearing to my face, please.

[The baby starts crying again, more desperate than before.]

MURRAY

See what I mean? Here's my big brother! Here's Tam the Ham—also known as Hammy!

[ZUBEIDAT turns around, heading in the direction from which she came. She goes as far as she can, then turns back. She picks another direction, seemingly at random, and repeats the process.]

Our cry-baby, there he goes! He needs to be comforted 24/7. And she will do it! She has to cross the oceans? No problem, she'll do it. Here she comes, without a second thought! Without the first one, either—she doesn't think at all. She runs on fumes by this point. She's on autopilot. The action, it stems from her reptile brain.

ZUBEIDAT

You watch that mouth!

MURRAY

[To the AUDIENCE]

Now she's turned her back on me, her youngest, her only son alive, for speaking his mind!

ZUBEIDAT

[Stopping]

It's you who turned his back on us.

MURRAY

I did not!

ZUBEIDAT

Did, too! And shame on you! You never abandon your blood! Never ever—or your country! You never spread your dirty laundry in the public!

MURRAY

Won't you come and visit me once before I die?

[She does not answer, but starts on her route again.]

MURRAY

Mom, please! I'm begging you, Mom! I said I'm SORRY! Can't you forgive me, just this once? I swear I'll never do it again, ever. You see, if you turn your back on me, it's all finished. It's the end: there's no hope, none.

ZUBEIDAT

You're a rat and a cockroach and you will get what you deserve!

MURRAY

It was my bad, I know.

ZUBEIDAT

What were you thinking, speaking to all these people? My son? I disown you!

MURRAY

So she abandons me—and not just because I spoke my mind. No. That was bad enough, sure, but not the worst

crime I committed. It wasn't even close. She abandons me for abandoning my brother. Allegedly, as they say. She thinks that I left my brother in the lurch—after he had done the same to me, as I think I've made myself clear earlier.

Or did I? I'm not sure anymore. All these people running in and out keep distracting me. I'm losing my focus. I start losing my lines! Lucky me! Mom always remembers hers.

ZUBEIDAT

Woe is me!

[ZUBEIDAT *starts weeping. She keeps walking.*]

MURRAY

[*Defeated*]

I don't know what to do. I have no insults in me anymore. And yet, yet—I can't breathe unless I fight back! Maybe if I called her the Wandering Jew Mother? Since, you know, look at her? She's the embodiment of our people. She's the Chechen character personified. We all know she's no more Chechen than you, dear audience, but who cares?

ZUBEIDAT

It's you who is no Chechen! You're a traitor, Jahar, is what you are!

MURRAY

I'm half-Chechen, as you very well know, Mom. And let me finish, please. This is a history lesson. I'm educating these goodpeople on our people. I'm telling them about Stalin and the Chechens.

ZUBEIDAT

O what have I done to deserve this?

MURRAY

First of all, you brought us here.

ZUBEIDAT

It was your father. It was his idea, his decision.

MURRAY

Second, you wouldn't let us adjust. You were always complaining and comparing everything to "back home"—wherever that was—which was pure paradise, it seemed. Which begs the question: Why on earth did you leave? Oh, yes: Stalin! He made us leave. He deported us the fuck across Asia in 1944, at the end of World War II. Why, you ask. Why did he do it? Well, because he could. Also, he saw us as Nazi collaborators—which was the only way to *be* at that time, if you were up against Stalin. To this day, he drives people with any imagination into the arms of the Fascist Demon in a way that belies comparison. The only thing I can think of that comes even close is what Satan did to those pigs in your Bible. Off the face of the cliff, Pork! And stones *will* break thy bones! Anyway, my mother,

her family, they never went. Our mother, she's an Avar!
And we're from Kyrgyzstan! Or Dagestan, or—

[ZUBEIDAT *has stopped.*]

You've got something to say? Huh? I didn't think so!
Know thy place, woman!

[*She approaches him and the AUDIENCE.*]

ZUBEIDAT

He was an FBI agent!

MURRAY

Jesus. And here we go again.

ZUBEIDAT

Tamerlan was. We both were.

MURRAY

Sure, Mom. Sure. We all believe you!

ZUBEIDAT

I was an informant too!

MURRAY

And as an informant, you informed to whom?

ZUBEIDAT

You know: the usual.

MURRAY

Who?

ZUBEIDAT

Cops, you know. Pigs, you know.

MURRAY

Try to be a bit more specific. Who was it, the Feds?

ZUBEIDAT

That's correct.

MURRAY

The FBI?

ZUBEIDAT

Them, too.

MURRAY

Well, that is something new! By God, if true, that is news! But you have to be very careful here. You have to do your fact-checking thoroughly. You don't want to get caught spreading those—and I'm quoting the president here—

ZUBEIDAT

Which one?

MURRAY

Huh?

ZUBEIDAT

Which president?

MURRAY

“Whack them in the outhouse?”

[She spits with such fervor that she nearly topples.]

No! That’s not the phrase I was looking for!

ZUBEIDAT

That’s—

[She spits again.]

That’s Vladimir Vladimorovich!

[She spits again.]

MURRAY

The line I was after? It wasn’t the one about the outhouse.

ZUBEIDAT

The murderer! Talking about the Beast, you were! Well, why didn’t you say so? Why do you have to speak in riddles all the time?

MURRAY

Riddles?

ZUBEIDAT

Use plain language! I could never figure out your metaphors!

MURRAY

Come on! “Fake news” is no metaphor. It’s a fact.

ZUBEIDAT

You called him a president!

[She spits again.]

MURRAY

Aw, Mom! He’s no worse than his American counterpart—

ZUBEIDAT

That’s no president, no way!

MURRAY

Well, I agree, but—

ZUBEIDAT

That’s a terrorist, plain and simple!

MURRAY

You’re confusing me. Which one is—Vladimir Vladimirovich? Putin is a terrorist?

[She spits yet again.]

ZUBEIDAT

Don’t you speak his name in front of me! Don’t you speak his name, period! It’s not safe!

MURRAY

Or the sitting duck? What's his name? Which one?

ZUBEIDAT

Moscow, Grozny, you'll die for it there! Speaking their names, his or his minion's—

MURRAY

No, no duck. The sitting—

ZUBEIDAT

The caliph of Grozny! The presidential pit bull—

MURRAY

That's it! A bull—in a china shop!

ZUBEIDAT

The one and only AK—not 47, though.

MURRAY

Sitting Bull in the White House!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Ahmad Kadyrov!

MURRAY

Mom, Mom! Snap out of it, please. You're mistaken. Ahmad, that's his father, peace and blessings to him, rest in peace, though I seriously doubt it. His *son*, the caliph who's ruling as we speak, is called Ramzan, Ramzan Kadyrov.

ZUBEIDAT

[*Wide-eyed with terror*]

And he will get us all! He will bury us all, alive! Can't you hear him knocking?

MURRAY

No. I can't. Learned a word today, Mom.

ZUBEIDAT

He's coming to collect!

MURRAY

The word of the day is patricide.

ZUBEIDAT

[*Running around*]

He's coming to my town! He drives a tanker truck! He will drain our souls! And no one, not a soul will be spared! We're his fuel! We're all dead!

MURRAY

Souls.

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

What we all are: someone's property, even when we're dead. Death is not the end—of drilling, at least. And now you see how she can go absolutely batshit crazy like that, out of the blue. She accelerates from zero to one hundred in seconds. But back to the word “patricide—”

ZUBEIDAT

He's worse than Stalin!

MURRAY

It's how I learned the language. You should try it sometime, Mom. Check out the word of the day. Watch TV, follow the news. Watch movies and—let's not forget—

[ZUBEIDAT *grabs his hands.*]

Music, sweet music. There's music everywhere.

ZUBEIDAT

You were right, Jahar!

MURRAY

I was?

ZUBEIDAT

Your brother, he failed! And I did, too! I failed him, and he failed you. We were absolute and total fuck-ups both, like you said. Not you, though—you can make a difference. You should study. Do something with your life. Be happy. Learn to keep your mouth shut. Remember that—and be happy. That's it, that's enough. That's what is important. The previous generations, we didn't stand a chance. We were tricked. But you, you know better. You're different.

MURRAY

Patricide, it means killing your father. As opposed to matricide—

[ZUBEIDAT *slaps him, hard.*]

ZUBEIDAT

Snap out of it!

MURRAY

That means killing your mother. And fratricide, the same thing. Just by proxy.

ZUBEIDAT

I told you!

MURRAY

Your brother is a substitute for your mother. Kill him, and you kill her. Fratricide is matricide by proxy, in our case at least. You follow?

ZUBEIDAT

Be quiet!

MURRAY

Mom, I can't.

ZUBEIDAT

Can't be quiet?

MURRAY

I've learned that much. Quiet isn't the way things are done here. We are in the United States, Mom!

ZUBEIDAT

Well I am not!

MURRAY

We are in Boston.

ZUBEIDAT

And I am leaving!

[She turns, furious, and starts walking away.]

MURRAY

Yeah, well, whatever. Be gone! That state of affairs is no news to anyone anymore.

[ZUBEIDAT stops. She turns again, is about to protest, when MURRAY throws a tampon at her. It explodes, and she disappears in a cloud of smoke.]

One, the world is gone. And two: all your fears come true. So we'd better start facing them.

[MURRAY opens the curtains to the priest's compartment on the right. Inside, KADYROV and PUTIN are kissing passionately. They wear leather pants and dog collars and nothing else. They do not approve of the disturbance, but come out anyway. PUTIN holds a rolled-up dog leash in his hand. KADYROV gets on his hands and knees. PUTIN, uncoils the leash and connects it to the collar around KADYROV's neck.]

PUTIN

Harašoo.

MURRAY

Speak of the Devil!

PUTIN

Yes.

MURRAY

Well, I'll be damned!

PUTIN

No.

KADYROV

Nah.

PUTIN

You'll be shot.

MURRAY

If it isn't Putin himself, and his butt-boy Ramzan Kadyrov!

PUTIN

Not damned, no. You'll be shot. And interrupt me once more and I will adjust your sentence once more. I'll have you skinned alive. Ramzi here will do it. Don't think I'm serious? Having doubts as to my true intentions? "Is he shitting me?" Is that what you ponder? Or

“What Does Putin Want?” Are you feeling lucky? Go ahead. Try me.

KADYROV

Do it! Just do it!

PUTIN

Damning someone is so passé. It’s so—

KADYROV

It’s so Soviet, is what it is!

PUTIN

[Pointing at KADYROV, acting surprised]

That is exactly right!

[PUTIN ruffles KADYROV’s hair. KADYROV pants like a sexually aroused chimpanzee.]

MURRAY

The little man and his little dog, Putin’s pit bull—

PUTIN

You nailed it, Ramzi!

[PUTIN gives KADYROV a Xanax. KADYROV chews on the pill.]

MURRAY

Oh, isn’t he cute!

[To the AUDIENCE]

Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce the Caliph of Grozny, Ramzan Kadyrov!

PUTIN

Who is this guy?

MURRAY

If he were a rapper, he would be the meanest mother-fucker of them all!

[KADYROV is acting more civilized by the second. He sits on the floor. Meanwhile, listening to MURRAY, PUTIN is getting submerged by a primitive rage.]

He isn't just a cop killer. Kadyrov kills dissidents, journalists, the opposition and anyone else who gets in the way—up to and including his own father!

[PUTIN takes hold of MURRAY's cheek and yanks it.]

PUTIN

Can you believe this guy? I love this guy!

[Not letting go, PUTIN asks KADYROV a question.]

Was he interrupting?

KADYROV

[*Swallowing*]

Sorry, I—

[PUTIN *yanks* MURRAY's cheek *this way and that.*]

PUTIN

Was he fucking with my FREE SPEECH? This guy, DID HE DO IT?

MURRAY

Sir, that?

KADYROV

I wasn't following.

MURRAY

It kinda hurts?

KADYROV

I'm sorry. I don't know.

PUTIN

Why not?

KADYROV

I wasn't paying any attention to him. My interest, it lay elsewhere. I was searching for peace and tranquility. Getting closer to God, and all.

PUTIN

But what do you say? Did he do it?

KADYROV

As a recently enlightened yogi, I say leave it. Leave him be. We can always do him later on. Listen to the tapes, make sure. Do it by the book this time.

PUTIN

That would be something!

KADYROV

Or then, don't listen to the tapes, you don't want to. Read the transcripts. That whiny voice of his must make your skin crawl.

PUTIN

It does not, to tell you the truth.

KADYROV

No?

PUTIN

It just barely fits in that, the bearable register.

[PUTIN *twists* MURRAY's *skin*. MURRAY *screams*.]

Unless, of course—

KADYROV

He does that. What they call progress, I guess.

PUTIN

I hate progress!

KADYROV

Don't we all? Ah, the good old times, when there was the USSR, and nothing else! I mean literally, there was nothing. But you can't eat ideology yet. You can die from it—that's easy—but living by it, that's not possible. Yet. And who wants to? Dying I get, I understand it, I totally do. But living—why?

[PUTIN *yanks* MURRAY's skin one last time.]

PUTIN

You can keep this—for now.

[*He lets go. MURRAY's stumbles away, holding his cheek. KADYROV stands up. PUTIN starts strolling impatiently.*]

But I'll be watching you. What a great song, by the way.

KADYROV

Just an idea I had, an epiphany, if you will. I saw the light, like Hank Williams. And what I just proposed, that was part of it. But only a part—and here's the real deal, all of it. What if we did like they *say* they do in a so-called DEMOCRACY? And not the sovereign kind, either—or whatever your boy Surkov wants to call it at this time. I never could stand that creep anyway—I

know he introduced the term, but who is he? He thinks he's a rapper? Huh? Let's just rewind a bit here. Let's go back.

PUTIN

Let's find out what you are talking about. That would be a change.

[KADYROV *speaks to* MURRAY.]

KADYROV

You were saying, a moment ago? You talked about me, and made a reference to rap, rap music, rap culture?

MURRAY

Yeah.

KADYROV

Come on, let's have it. Again. Play it, Sam.

MURRAY

You're one mean motherfucker and a gangster!

KADYROV

And you are my dog!

[KADYROV *gives* MURRAY *a five.*]

Vladislav Surkov can suck my dick! Let him deal with East Ukraine, or Novorossiya, as he insists on calling it—or else, cap, cap! Let him do that! Let him cap!

Let him play God's Avenger for once, while weeping and wailing, burning and looting, rotting away in Donbas! Let me take care of the Empire! All right, all agree? Great! So, back to the original, my epiphany: What if we tried the real thing once?

PUTIN

Which is?

KADYROV

The real thing? The one from Athens.

[*Silence.*]

PUTIN

You're talking about... about *democracy*?

KADYROV

I am.

PUTIN

Well, I prefer Surkov's take on it.

KADYROV

You do?

PUTIN

Yes. And I don't want to hear the damn word—*ever* again, if you don't mind—without that other word, the beautiful, gentle, generous, *kind* word "sovereign" preceding it! Am I clear?

KADYROV

Crystal, sir.

PUTIN

Good. Moving on to—

KADYROV

And yet—

PUTIN

No. Not yet.

KADYROV

If you listened to me for a, just a sec—

PUTIN

You listen to me now.

KADYROV

How PISSED OFF the West would be, if we—

PUTIN

No. You listen! We DON'T NEED that kind of thing here! And we don't WANT it, either! People don't want it! It is not *proper*! Without the sovereignty, the very peculiar little Slavic twist to it, the D-thing, it's pornography! Is what it is, and that's a proven fact! It's true! And pornography, it never did—and never will—take root in Russia! Ever!

KADYROV

All right. Okay. I'm sorry.

PUTIN

You should be. You should be sorry.

KADYROV

I don't know what I was thinking, I guess.

PUTIN

I don't either. You've been chewing chat again? That Somali shit, is that it?

KADYROV

No, sir!

PUTIN

You sure?

KADYROV

One hundred percent! I'll give you my word. I'll pee in a bottle, sir, that's what you want.

PUTIN

That won't be necessary. But still, I'd like to know what it was. What on earth was going through your head—?

KADYROV

Just a vision, sir, I guess. Something an angel dropped.

PUTIN

An *angel*?

KADYROV

Yes, sir. I think.

PUTIN

There are no angels in Russia!

KADYROV

There aren't? Well, I'll be damned—!

PUTIN

No, you'll be shot.

KADYROV

I'll be a motherfucker—

PUTIN

You fucking Judas think I'm turning GAY?

KADYROV

No!

PUTIN

Throwing some AIDS shit at me—"Angels in Russia", huh? I've got AIDS now, huh? Is that it?

KADYROV

Of course not! I mean, no, *no*—

PUTIN

Why don't you accuse me of PEDOPHILIA while you're at it? You and your best buddy Litvinenko—come on, let's have it!

KADYROV

Hey, that's not fair! I worked my ass off to do that guy—

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

Look at me!

[*MURRAY does, blinking.*]

KADYROV

Do you know how hard it is to get your hands on some polonium-210? You've got *any* idea?

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

You think I like little boys?

MURRAY

No, sir!

KADYROV

In short, it's very fucking hard.

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

Do I look like Michael Jackson?

MURRAY

No, sir!

KADYROV

It's nearly, it's damn close to *impossible*, is what it is!
And this is how you thank me?

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

Do I look GAY to you?

MURRAY

No, sir!

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

Is that right?

MURRAY

Yes, sir!

KADYROV

Whoa, shit! No problem! Don't mention it!

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

That means, "Yes" means, it means that I do.

MURRAY

No, sir!

KADYROV

"You're welcome, sir!"

PUTIN

[*To MURRAY*]

I look *gay* to you, right?

MURRAY

No—that's a negative, sir!

KADYROV

Aw come on, Vova! Leave the poor bastard be! He peed in his pants already. It stinks all the way to heaven in here!

PUTIN

[*Sniffing*]

Yes. As a matter of fact, it does. And I'm highly sensitive to smells, too!

KADYROV

Stop acting like a bully! You're not a bully, sir, you're a thinker. Remember?

PUTIN

Yes.

KADYROV

Remember Marcus Aurelius?

PUTIN

The guy in *Gladiator*? I do!

KADYROV

You wanted to become more like him, remember?

PUTIN

I didn't like the ending, though. The emperor, this Marcus guy? He should have got the gladiator, and survived! Then I'd like to be him.

KADYROV

That wasn't him.

PUTIN

I beg your pardon?

KADYROV

That was no Marcus Aurelius. But never mind. Let's not turn this into an outhouse just yet.

PUTIN

No. Let's not.

[*Has an idea*]

Then again, we could waste him in here!

[KADYROV *gently guides* PUTIN *away from* MURRAY.]

KADYROV

Not yet. Remember, you're a thinker—and a speaker! May I suggest, sir, that you do your speech, give us a speech now?

MURRAY

I didn't pee my pants!

[KADYROV *turns to* MURRAY, *silently telling him to keep quiet.*]

PUTIN

A speech?

MURRAY

Just yet I didn't.

KADYROV

Yes, sir. It's what the situation calls for. That's what I think, anyway, my humble observation, sir.

PUTIN

Indeed, I think so, too! It does, doesn't it? Call for—the situ—what the—call for leadership! The Father of the Nation Must Show Himself. What a bright idea! And a bright day it has turned out!

KADYROV

It was your idea, sir.

PUTIN

It was. And where do I get them all?

KADYROV

God moves in mysterious ways. So they say, sir.

PUTIN

We do, yes. Mysterious ways, indeed. Most definitely, yes! It's imperative that I do a speech right away, right now, right here, as they say! Or do they?

[A fanfare is heard. KADYROV produces some crumbled papers and hands them to PUTIN, who starts delivering his address. He is shifting his weight from foot to foot in a restless manner. Avoiding all eye contact, he is speaking to everyone and no one at all. At first, KADYROV and MURRAY seem to listen.]

“We have always followed the philosophy of live, love... and let love... feel good.”

KADYROV

Feel good! That sort of reminds me of—

MURRAY

The quack that killed Hank Williams?

KADYROV

Doctor Feelgood.

MURRAY

Me too! And later on, then he turned the Kennedy—Khrushchev negotiations into a bloodbath!

KADYROV

He did?

MURRAY

Not literally, no.

KADYROV

That was the same guy?

[KADYROV *has produced a small, trendy vaporizer from his pants pocket. He shows it to MURRAY, smiling.*]

Phew!

PUTIN

I haven't heard of it either. Drugs did that to JFK? And what drugs? Give me details! A note to Self: Have to look that one up.

KADYROV

[*Puffing on his vape*]

You do that. But please, now, proceed with your speech, sir.

[KADYROV *offers the pipe to MURRAY. They bury themselves in the bean bag chair, puffing away.*]

PUTIN

“But never did we suggest or imply—not once.”

KADYROV

Or twice.

PUTIN

Or twice, no, never! No way, José! See you later, alligator! G7, G8, G8+5! Where was I?

[MURRAY *has started giggling quietly to himself*. KADYROV *looks at him and breaks up as well. He tries to keep a straight face.*]

KADYROV

I don't know! From what I've heard, it sounds like a scale to me!

PUTIN

What?

[KADYROV *gets up.*]

KADYROV

So many g's out there! You must be bagging shit!

PUTIN

What—bagging what?

KADYROV

Or the Everglades: you could be there, too. What with all the alligators around. Judging from the gators, it could be the Delta, too.

PUTIN

The Delta, you say?

KADYROV

The Mississippi Delta, mind, if you'd be so kind. Get me a shack there, and I will always love you. Longer than Whitney Houston did, that's for sure. And please remember: the Mississippi Delta. Not, say, Niger, no, way! You can torch the Niger Delta for all I care, or anyone does, for that matter.

[MURRAY *gets up, raising his fist.*]

MURRAY

Long live Ken Saro-Wiwa!

KADYROV

Who?

MURRAY

The author that the Nigerian government had such respect for that they hung him until dead. For what, you ask. What did he do? Well, he tried to defend the rights of the indigenous people of the Niger Delta against Shell or some such behemoth. No, no. You can't do that. It is not to be done.

PUTIN

[*To KADYROV*]

What the hell's he talking about?

[KADYROV *shrugs*. PUTIN *can't make the head or tail of any of this, so he gets back to his speech*. KADYROV *disconnects the leash from his collar.*]

PUTIN

“Never did we suggest that it was our duty or our trip—
“

[KADYROV *swings an arm across MURRAY's shoulder.*]

KADYROV

This is a trip!

MURRAY

The best part!

PUTIN

“I really like.”

[PUTIN *looks up from his papers.*]

Where did that come from?

KADYROV

[*Sings*]

She will never have enough!*

PUTIN

Where did I put my glasses? I can't read this shit!

* The melody is that of a song from a reggae superstar's last album. In it, he expresses his eternal affection for a higher power. We can say no more, lest the widow's lawyer-sharks smell blood.

MURRAY

That song! I know that song!

[MURRAY *hums along*, as KADYROV *sings*.]

KADYROV

She will never have enough!

PUTIN

I forgot! I wasn't supposed to need them!

KADYROV

[*Sings*]

Old man Marley! O, who wrote those songs?
Hyenas roll in cash now that the Lion's gone.
Did they build the legend with stolen stuff?
Rasta Man don't ask! Keep selling his dandruff.

PUTIN

The Toupee don't need them. And he learned it from me!

KADYROV & MURRAY

[*Sing*]

She will never have enough!

PUTIN

Therefore I don't need them.

KADYROV

[*Sings*]

She will never, no.

PUTIN

Glasses, who needs them?

KADYROV & MURRAY

[*Sing*]

She will never have enough!

[PUTIN *holds his papers in outstretched hands, while the others continue singing their favorite Rasta anthem.*]

PUTIN

[*Reads*]

“But never did we suggest—”

KADYROV

[*Sings*]

Never ever shall I see that day...

PUTIN

“—or imply—”

KADYROV & MURRAY

[*Sing*]

She will never have enough!

PUTIN

[*Reads*]

“—to become masochistic pigeons or sit quietly like good Germans—”

KADYROV

[Starts]

Germans?

PUTIN

It says so here, I think.

KADYROV

Good Germans?

MURRAY

[Sings]

She will never have enough!

KADYROV

Shut up! Be quiet!

[KADYROV *rushes to* PUTIN, *peers over his shoulder at the paper.*]

What about the Germans?

PUTIN

It says so in here: Never did we intend to—

KADYROV

[*Snatches the piece of paper*]

“—sit quietly like good Germans—”

[*Hands the paper back*]

Bloody hell, no!

PUTIN

Never!

MURRAY

[Raising his fist again]

Just say no!

[KADYROV grabs PUTIN by the shoulders, and shakes him]

KADYROV

Say no to the Nazis! Say no to the Nazis! Just say no—
to the—

PUTIN

No, no, NO!

[KADYROV lets go of PUTIN, who is ready to go off again.]

MURRAY

Nazi punks, Nazi punks, Nazi punks—

KADYROV

FUCK OFF!

PUTIN

Say no to that BITCH! Yeah! That godawful GRANDMA
with her SECOND-HAND CUBAN CLOTHES! I want
her and her Protestant wardrobe GONE NOW!

KADYROV

Angela Merkel? Well, your wish is her command. She is on her way out, sir.

PUTIN

I need to know *now*. Who wrote that speech?

KADYROV

I think. I guess—

PUTIN

We need a name, Ramzi!

KADYROV

Timothy Leary did. I think, yes. Tim Leary wrote it.

PUTIN

And who's he, Leary? Anyway, I don't care. We'll offer him the honorary citizenship of Russia!

KADYROV

I'm afraid he must refuse.

PUTIN

He's a fucking liberal, isn't he?

KADYROV

Yes, sir. And he's dead.

PUTIN

Well, maybe we can extend an olive branch here. Show some mercy. If he indeed wrote that speech, as you said—

KADYROV

I mean for real. He's dead, like, he's gone. Already. Cancer beat you to it.

PUTIN

It did?

KADYROV

Yes, sir. I'm afraid, sir.

PUTIN

Motherfucker! And who gave the order? Who guides those cells? Who is this guy DNA they keep talking about? Huh?

[PUTIN's last outburst has had a chilling effect on the others. KADYROV hides the pipe. MURRAY stands, hands deep in his pockets, really stoned. PUTIN seems lost in a post-eruption depression.]

KADYROV

Just another acid casualty—who cares about Timothy? Say no to him; just say no to Tim. And “yes” to Vladimir Vladimirovich! You were saying, sir? Please, Vova. We need to hear the end of it, your speech. We need to know. Please.

PUTIN

That was it.

KADYROV

Come again?

PUTIN

There's nothing. There's nothing, no more.

KADYROV

There's got to be more!

PUTIN

Huh?

KADYROV

More, more!

[*Clapping his hands*]

We want more! We want more! We want to more!

PUTIN

Henry Moore.

KADYROV

[*To the AUDIENCE—of their participation*]

You're a bunch of slaves!

PUTIN

From Hell, Alan Moore.

KADYROV

Shit! He's out of it! Been smoking again, sir, have you? SMOKING WEED, against DOCTOR'S EXPLICIT ORDERS? Huh?

PUTIN

I'm not deaf yet. You don't have to shout.

KADYROV

But you have been? Not deaf—smoking? Have you? Come on, tell me the truth. You've been getting high?

PUTIN

[Indignant]

I have not!

KADYROV

No?

PUTIN

And how dare you? How? How, how do you sleep at night? Howling at the moon from dusk to dawn, right? How now, let's have a pow-wow!

KADYROV

I rest my case.

PUTIN

You're a vampire, is what you are, Ramzi! And I haven't smoked anything, ever! Not once, even as a teenager, I haven't! I resisted! I just said no! Like Nancy taught us—

KADYROV

Well, then, maybe you should start now.
I'm only kidding, of course.

PUTIN

What makes you say so? What makes you think I might
have smoked—? Something I said or, or—?

KADYROV

You start a sentence? Everyone pays attention, right?
They lean forward in their seats. “What has he got to
say now? Father of the Nation Has to Admonish His
Offspring Again?” Or, perhaps, maybe he has some
praise to offer? “Ooh, we’re all so excited!” And then the
curtain falls.

PUTIN

The Iron curtain?

KADYROV

Well, no.

PUTIN

I like that!

KADYROV

In the middle of your speech, there comes a sentence?
Shit, a single word! You get lost in it! Suddenly, your
speech is a labyrinth—and your weed-fried fungi-
sprouting sponge of a brain is the monster occupying it,

this labyrinth. Feeding on young Russians, young men and women!

PUTIN

I kinda like that, too.

KADYROV

Your mind draws a blank on national TV! Live! And everybody and their grandmother and grandmother's dog sees it!

PUTIN

[*Pointing at* MURRAY]

That's him, right? Grandmother's dog he is.

MURRAY

Alzheimer's. What it seems to me. All the signs are there.

KADYROV

You don't know how to finish your sentence if your life depended on it! And it does. In a way, it does depend on it!

PUTIN

No, no, no!

KADYROV

Your working memory is shot!

PUTIN

That's Donald Trump you're describing there!

KADYROV

Yeah, well, maybe.

PUTIN

You've got your tyrants confused! And that's a capital offense!

KADYROV

But I'm describing you too.

PUTIN

Me too! Well, I'll be goddamned! If that ain't a fresh one—

[For the first time, PUTIN seems genuinely delighted.]

I never thought I could exploit that one, what should you call it?

KADYROV

Movement?

MURRAY

Me too movement?

PUTIN

That one! What was it all about again? Oh, screw it, never mind: anything goes! As long as it's a part of the disarray of the West—and it is, isn't it? Beautiful! Not once in my *wildest* dreams did I conjure up the idea

that I could strut in that arena, too! I mean as well. Oops—can't you hear me knocking? Ladies, let me in! Or I huff and puff and blow—no, you blow! Haha! Hahaha! If there's one thing I love, that's posing as a victim—and I'm always on the lookout for new ways to do it! The mike is open! Ideas, welcome! That's what I keep my Pretorian Guard for, all 300,000 of them. They are there for fresh insight!

KADYROV

And they are doing a wonderful job!

PUTIN

Just wonderful, that's true. Some leaders hire a firm, say, Goldman Sachs, for PR purposes. I made that mistake once, I think, in the past. And never again. That's one of the upsides of owning an army. You don't need an ad agency, ever again!

[KADYROV *approaches* PUTIN.]

But anyway—I was saying.

KADYROV

Back, going back—

PUTIN

In all directions—

KADYROV

But one, forward.

MURRAY

Sleep, sleep, sleep.

PUTIN

Dream your way back—

KADYROV

Before they cut your throat—

MURRAY

Get back!

KADYROV

Quick! Be quick!

PUTIN

—to the year 1989.

[KADYROV *connects the leash to PUTIN's collar. Then he lets go of the leash.*]

KADYROV

Well, that can't be good. That year, the wall came down.
Where were you, sir, again then?

PUTIN

Dresden, East Germany.

KADYROV

“So it goes.”

PUTIN

What was that?

KADYROV

Oh, nothing.

PUTIN

What was it? Come on. Out with, Ramzi!

KADYROV

“So it goes.” It’s just a slogan, a refrain that keeps coming up in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The book, by Vonnegut, you know? It takes place in Dresden, among other places, during the firebombing. Germany: World War II—what?

PUTIN

It’s a case of the kettle and the pot, I see.

KADYROV

Every death that occurs in the book is followed by those three words.

PUTIN

It is you who’s been smoking—!

KADYROV

The subtitle is *The Children’s Crusade*—

*[The red frisbee is thrown to the stage.
PUTIN turns to the direction that it flew
from.]*

PUTIN

And who's dead?

KADYROV

A Duty-Dance with—I'm sorry?

PUTIN

Who's dead? You've said it twice so far, your magic words... so that means we've got two dead bodies unaccounted for. Two missing bodies. Or am I missing something?

KADYROV

Missing something?

MURRAY

What am I missing?

[PUTIN *picks up the frisbee.*]

PUTIN

Cargo 200, two pieces, please! As soon as possible, which means now! I want them to have a heroes' homecoming—they return wearing the full metal jacket! Would someone please make the arrangements? And, and get me two!

MURRAY

O my God! He's been hanging out with Ryan Adams!

KADYROV

Who?

[PUTIN *throws the frisbee at the direction where it came from. A sound is heard, as it hits something.*]

ZUBEIDAT

[*Offstage*]

You son of a bitch!

MURRAY

His story, his me too experience, it's plausible after all!
Adams the country rocker, he fed your majesty pills before molesting her!

ZUBEIDAT

[*Offstage*]

Vova! I'm coming to get you!

MURRAY

I mean him.

PUTIN

And see if I care!

MURRAY

And now our master, Mister Kurtz here, he hooked on tranquillizers, too!

PUTIN

They need a state funeral. Please. Those bodies, please.
And make it two.

MURRAY

It's a song by Ryan Adams. Subject: prescription drug
abuse. Title: "Two."

KADYROV

I see what I can do.

[Making a pistol with his fingers,
KADYROV "shoots" PUTIN.]

One.

[Shoots MURRAY]

Two.

PUTIN

I am waiting!

KADYROV

There you go. You're one of the two.

PUTIN

I am waiting!

KADYROV

You're one of the winged horses. You must be Reason.
Of course, sir. Of course you are. And he's Dionysus or
whatever. But hey. No biggie. Don't mention it.

MURRAY

[*To KADYROV*]

What's all this fuss about?

PUTIN

I am waiting!

KADYROV

Latakia. Donbas.

MURRAY

You are!

KADYROV

No.

PUTIN

I am waiting!

[*ZUBEIDAT enters from the direction that the frisbee flew. She is dressed as Angela Merkel. She is dragging a gas pipe behind her. PUTIN is startled as he sees her. He is horrified and fascinated at the same time.*]

KADYROV

Not dumbass, you dumbass! Donbas! DONBAS, Ukraine!

[*Approaching PUTIN*]

Vova here, poor bastard thinks he's Napoleon. And there's something to it. What was one's eastern front, is the other's western front—and the other way around.

MURRAY

I don't follow.

KADYROV

You're not alone.

[KADYROV *sweeps* PUTIN's feet from under him. PUTIN ends up flat on his face. Then he gets up on all fours. KADYROV sings the bridge from "November Rain," a song by Guns N' Roses.]

"Do you need some time on your own?"

...

...

Everybody needs some time..."

[*On the fly*, KADYROV switches to a Bob Dylan song.]

"And everybody must get stoned!"

PUTIN

The light of these last developments, we find it outrageous that some—whose loyalties seem to be fleeting in the extreme, to say the least—have suggested, as we've witnessed, that I've been smoking *pot*!

[*Staring at the floor, blinking, swallowing*]

When clearly it has been someone else entirely!

KADYROV

[*Pointing at MURRAY*]

Yeah, it was him.

[*Pointing at ZUBEIDAT*]

Look, it's Rita Marley! Hold on to your wallets, folks!

[MURRAY *addressed the* AUDIENCE.
KADYROV *grabs the leash.*]

MURRAY

I guess they gave me something. They gave me a mind-altering substance. Yeah, they pumped me full of drugs! And for a sec there—just a brief, fleeting moment—everything was all right. It was all good, as if nothing had happened. It was paradise. And then I woke up.

PUTIN

In the Soviet consulate, I was surrounded by a ferocious mob. They were yelling outside, calling names. They were defacing the walls, banging at the door. They were calling for blood, my blood. That's what they wanted to draw. Those vampires! It was then that I made up my mind. I said to myself, "Vova, are you listening? Are you paying attention? See this? Never again. No more." It was worse than the Kursk debacle, even: the first year of my presidency, 2000. After the apartment blocks, it was supposed to be a piece of cake. *That* went well, in comparison.

MURRAY

And I cried like a baby.

PUTIN

It was a nightmare. It was anarchy in the DDR.

[Pointing at ZUBEIDAT]

And she bears the sole responsibility for it!

*[PUTIN leans on the floor with both hands.
He hangs his head. ZUBEIDAT laughs.]*

ZUBEIDAT

Aw, come on, Vova! It's time to go, don't you think?

PUTIN

Miss Merkel cooked up the whole thing!

ZUBEIDAT

It's time! And it waits for no one! It's time for both of us!

PUTIN

It was her making, the whole thing!

ZUBEIDAT

1989? Oh, wow: that I didn't know!

PUTIN

She turned that mob against me!

ZUBEIDAT

“There was a time, if my memory does not fail me, when all the wines were flowing...”

PUTIN

And all the flowers, they were screaming!

ZUBEIDAT

That’s not how it goes.

PUTIN

They were asking for blood, and by God, they got it!

ZUBEIDAT

What are you talking about? Have to go back to your copy of *Season in Hell*. You need to reread your Rimbaud. Yours, in sickness as in health, Patti Smith.

PUTIN

You may be laughing now. But by God—

ZUBEIDAT

Come and join me!

PUTIN

You won’t be laughing long.

ZUBEIDAT

Let’s retire down the rabbit hole! It’s what you want, anyway, so come on!

[ZUBEIDAT *crawls into the gas pipe.*]

PUTIN

Let her laugh. She will answer for her deeds later.

ZUBEIDAT

[From the pipe]

Vova! Come out to play!

PUTIN

She will pay and pay and pay!

KADYROV

And that, my friends, is what they call the Children's Crusade.

[Music. "Regular John" by Queens of the Stone Age. Lights fade to black.]

END OF PART TWO

THREE

MURRAY *is kneeling on the roof of the right-side confession booth.*

MURRAY

When they caught me—they shot me and then caught me—they shot me in the mouth! You need more proof that their main objective was to silence me? Too bad I could still talk. I could speak my mind, though no one would listen. That's the invader MO, their standard operating procedure: kill, kill, kill! Shoot first, and we'll ask no questions later. Promise! GET SOME! So, they caught up with me in that dry-docked boat in Watertown. That's where I developed a halo over my head. I'm not kidding. The SWAT teams, there must have been hundreds of them—cops in full combat gear, all dressed in black like the fucking Islamic State, like god-damn Daesh—and they're saying I'm extreme! They are saying I'm surrounded.

[He cups his hand in front of his mouth, when speaking into "megaphone."]

"Come forward with your hands raised," they say, and everyone and their mother repeats. "Come forward with your—" And how am I supposed to do that? My hands in the air—I'm not an octopus! The stern of the boat is eight fucking feet from the ground! I'm going to break my fucking neck that way! Is that what you want? Well, of course, it is. But I'm not giving you what you

want—no, sir! I’ll just go, forever loving Jah! Meanwhile, everyone and their grandma has their rifle trained on me—trigger-happy Dirty Harry wannabes all around—one wrong move, and it’s “Grozny, do you read? Your boy, he’s coming home! Mistah Jahar, he dead!”

[Hesitantly, he raises his hands.]

I’m thinking this. Thinking out loud? Hell, maybe, even, when it seizes me. An ice-cold rush in my gut, like the grim reaper himself squeezing my insides with its bony hand—

[In sotto voce]

They are going to kill me. Please help me. I don’t wanna die! Please, I don’t—

[Back to normal]

That’s when I see the spots.

[Touching his forehead with his fingertips in several places]

Little red dots, like I had the measles. They are everywhere! Well, not everywhere: they gather on my forehead. They weave a beautiful band around my head. And I’m thinking, this is the crown of thorns for the digital age! So then and there, I declare myself the patron saint of all reformed Communists—active ones, too! And I black out.

[He spreads his hands.]

Did I fall overboard? Break my neck? I don’t know! And who can I ask? I don’t trust these people! They are evil! Maybe I died and went to Hell. They send you there for matricide. Or they send you to Limbo. They put you into the system, they bury you alive. Next stop: Supermax! The Alcatraz of the Rockies, here I come! I’m

ready to take the leap of faith. Don't have much choice, do I?

[*He falls off the roof.* CASTING DIRECTOR enters via a confession booth in the middle. Her entrance is a variation of her initial arrival on stage.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your name is? No, sorry, we've covered that already. And you're reading for? The role you're doing your audition for—just remind me one more time, please. Who was it?

MURRAY

[*Getting to his feet*]

Jahar, you know? Representing the Tsarnaev family? Hey, hello? You're making a movie—what's it called? *Patriots Day*? No, that's been done. *The Boston Strongarm*? You're turning his life into a huge blockbuster hit!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I am?

MURRAY

You're cementing his legacy—yes. Yes, you are!

CASTING DIRECTOR

—

MURRAY

You are. Don't you know?

[*As a redneck*]

“Just trying to make ends meet, is all. Putting food on the table, paying the damn bills is all!”

CASTING DIRECTOR

I guess there's never enough of it.

MURRAY

Say no to that! Enough of what?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Humor.

MURRAY

There isn't.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Or was it—?

MURRAY

That's right.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Was it sanctimony? I'm not sure. But I'm not alone. All the people confuse those two all the time.

MURRAY

All right, fair enough.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Moving on to—

MURRAY

The one I'm reading for? He made it to the cover of *Rolling Stone*! The magazine, not the band, fuck the band. He's an icon! He's the Che Guevara of the 21st century!

CASTING DIRECTOR

[Drawing heavy horizontal lines in her notes]

I've no time for this. As entertaining and, most of all, educating as it may be, I do have a job to do. For now.

[Looking up, she is surprised to find him still there.]

Thank you, we'll let you know. Don't call us, we will, and so on, so forth.

MURRAY

[Alarmed]

No, no!

CASTING DIRECTOR

NEXT, PLEASE!

MURRAY

No, no—no, no—oh, no! PLEASE!

CASTING DIRECTOR

So spit it out! Who?

MURRAY

Jahar!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And who's that?

MURRAY

The Wet Dream, Sex Symbol Number One! Ask the Millennials, Now Generation, and they will tell you. He's the Heartthrob That Will Last a Thousand Years!

CASTING DIRECTOR

[Losing it]

Oh for the love of God! And ad infinitum, into all eternity! It's never going to stop! Not unless I'm stopping it! And I am, right now. Since it's my duty to do so! Next, next! NEXT, NEXT, NEXT!

[Waving her phone at MURRAY]

Or else, I'm calling security.

[Silence.]

MURRAY

It's a name you shouldn't mention when the Man's around.

[Glancing around]

You know, the Big Brother? He's all ears!

[MURRAY sees the phone in her hand for what it is—a spy tool. He points at it, shaking.]

We could get into trouble! We could go to jail for it!

[Exhausted, she sits in a bean bag chair, laying her clipboard on the floor.]

Once I did a money transfer. I loaned 40 bucks to a friend. I wrote “Rafael Caro Quintero” in the message box—the fugitive, you know? One of America’s Most Wanted? There’s a 20 million dollar bounty on his head, and I wrote his name, instead of a reference—hell, it was a reference: Watch that show, punk!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And?

MURRAY

The money disappeared. It never arrived where it was supposed to go. Hell, maybe it went to Rafael Caro Quintero—! That’s a true story.

CASTING DIRECTOR

And this goes to prove, what? That we could go to jail, because of my phone?

MURRAY

Remove the battery! Or else, else I’m not speaking his name! There, that’s it! Those are my conditions! You can take it or leave it! You can, you know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Jesus.

MURRAY

He's got nothing to do with this.

CASTING DIRECTOR

All right, take it easy. Relax. It's a saying, for the love of (God)—

MURRAY

There you go again.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Oops. Sorry.

[He's pointing at her phone.]

MURRAY

Just do it.

[Slowly, she starts taking her phone apart.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

All right, I must be nuts. Blame it on the environment. And this time, I've got living proof. Mom and Dad, you're absolved! There's nothing wrong with you or your genes. It's just this guy....What's his name?

MURRAY

Jahar Tsarnaev.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That's the one. I'm doing research on him—

MURRAY

A scapegoat.

CASTING DIRECTOR

—and finding all kinds of horrible shit along the way.
For the script, see? Maybe he'll wind up in it.

MURRAY

He's a pansy. I mean, like Lee Harvey Oswald, he is.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Then why don't we blame him?

[She gets up.]

Yes, let's do this! Or else, what's the use? What has he
got to offer? C'mon, you're choking on your fucking tie!

MURRAY

What do you mean?

[Touching his throat to make sure]

I don't have a—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your shoestrings are too tight!

MURRAY

Oh, no! They are open: I've heard it's all the rage these
days—

CASTING DIRECTOR

SNAP OUT OF IT!

MURRAY

Well, all right, then.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'm responding to your earlier memo of today concerning the younger Tsarnaev, also known as, according to you, let me see.

[She goes to retrieve her notes.]

MURRAY

Jahar.

[She stops for a second.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yes. Thank you.

[She picks up her clipboard anyway.]

MURRAY

No problem.

CASTING DIRECTOR

What do we need him for?

MURRAY

Jahar?

CASTING DIRECTOR

He is the topic of our discussion, yes. And the movie.

[MURRAY *is caught speechless.*]

You can't blame him? That's your "message"?

MURRAY

Yeah. Yeah, I mean. Why would we? Blame him, that is? For what?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're kidding me.

MURRAY

No.

CASTING DIRECTOR

(Humor, there's never enough of it.)

MURRAY

I'm not kidding.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You can't blame him? Says who? Says you! Well, if that's the case, why don't we get rid of him? Huh? What's the use of keeping him, feeding him—?

MURRAY

Wait, wait!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Like a rare creature in a zoo?

MURRAY

Wait!

CASTING DIRECTOR

His lazy ass is a dying breed now? God, I fucking hope so—the dying part, I mean. The protection part, he’s got it covered already, as you can see. He’s got you. You’re taking care of *that*.

MURRAY

Wait a second. Hold on.

[MURRAY is unable to resist the following verbal onslaught. He knows he’s lost this round. Sighing, he sinks in the bean bag chair.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

I can’t believe this. The way you people think! Like he’s some kind of a rock star—he’s worth saving? No, he’s not! And I will yell it from the mountaintop! I refuse to—are you listening? I will not, I refuse to occupy the universe where there’s mercy for the likes of him! Your punk Jahar? Thanks, but no thanks! Stop that train, I’m leaving! And suppose you’re right. I’m not saying you are, but for the sake of the argument, let’s just assume that. If enough noise is created, enough crazies assemble around an idea, pretty soon it’ll be announced, it will be declared the universal and only truth.

MURRAY

I know. It's terrible. Democracy is a bitch.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That's not democracy. That's mob rule.

MURRAY

Hah!

CASTING DIRECTOR

The way of the mob—the way of this world. Your Chechen hit man: you can't blame him? If you say so, well, all right! I say we cut our losses now. I say, Lets waste him. Let him fry. Skip the everlasting torture of the victims' families while the theater of the absurd called the appellate court puts up a show! And the press and the TV, and on and on and on!

MURRAY

Life is a bitch. And it gets worse after.

CASTING DIRECTOR

"Let's do it." Oh my God—Oh Jesus.

MURRAY

What? What is it?

CASTING DIRECTOR

For the first time in my *life* I find solace in the words of Gary Gilmore, the murderer!

MURRAY

And what did he say?

CASTING DIRECTOR

No. What he did is what matters.

MURRAY

He killed someone, I presume?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Mailer wrote a book about him.

MURRAY

Norman Mailer?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Gilmore chose death by firing squad against everyone's expectations. That was his move. He flipped everyone off.

MURRAY

Jahar did too, in his cell, you know? Seen it? He gives the finger to the camera.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I never thought I'd promote the two-time-losing double murderer Gary Gilmore as a role model, but I guess every day brings something new! Anyway, your Jahar should follow his lead. He should take after Mailer's boy.

MURRAY

Swell.

CASTING DIRECTOR

We should speak to him, you know.

MURRAY

Speak to whom?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your lover boy. Can you meet him?

MURRAY

Jahar? Are you kidding me?

CASTING DIRECTOR

We should send him the book, at least.

MURRAY

Book? What, why?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Sell him the idea. Everyone should do it. Send the true crime book by Norman Mailer, *The Executioner's Song*, to Jahar Tsarnaev at—where's he residing again?

MURRAY

Alcatraz of the Rockies.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Speak up, please.

[In some mysterious way, MURRAY manages to cheer himself up with the following He stands up.]

MURRAY

You heard me. It is also known as Supermax. ADX Florence, officially. Dubbed the Alcatraz of the Rockies, it's the most secure prison in the States. It's like the Death Star. Jahar's in good company there, trust me. The Unabomber, the shoe bomber, and now the marathon bomber, they're all locked up in there, rotting away.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Sounds like a product family to me.

MURRAY

Waiting around to die.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Here we have our shoe bomber, our marathon bomber—

MURRAY

And let's not forget—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yeah.

MURRAY

Don't forget your pulse meter bomber!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who's he?

MURRAY

There isn't one. I made him up.

CASTING DIRECTOR

There isn't. Not yet, you mean.

MURRAY

[*Sitting down again*]

It was a joke.

CASTING DIRECTOR

And no one's laughing.

MURRAY

Who's choking on their shoestrings now?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You are.

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Anyway, we're asking for your help here. If every family put their pocket change together, put them in a hat, or I guess a sock would be more appropriate—

MURRAY

She doesn't mean it.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Of course I do! Come on, give me your money! Not me, of course—I'm speaking in metaphors. And who carries

change anymore? Beggars! That's who. But you can do it, do this by phone. Think about it: If each household chipped in, say, 15 dollars in all, they could buy a copy of *The Executioner's Song*, Mailer's book, and pay for its delivery to the facility mentioned before—

MURRAY

[*Suddenly angry, standing up*]

Leave me out of it!

CASTING DIRECTOR

If we did this, each and every one put their money where their mouth is—

MURRAY

That's hate speech right there!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I think we'd be able to send a very strong message here.

MURRAY

Hate speech Lady!

CASTING DIRECTOR

A message that was loud and clear: it would be impossible to ignore.

[*MURRAY does a number with an imaginary handkerchief.*]

MURRAY

Hey, Lady! Did you just drop your hanky?

CASTING DIRECTOR

We'd tell it on the mountaintop.

MURRAY

[Looking at the "hanky" in mock terror]

Oh, no! It's a felony!

CASTING DIRECTOR

"Let's do it."

MURRAY

My Lord! ETHNIC CLEANSING is what it is! Run to the hills! And keep running! The death squad is—

[Pointing at her]

It's closing in!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do it now.

MURRAY

I'm no expert on criminal law, but this—the thing you just dropped, your Kleenex, if you will—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Just do it.

MURRAY

I'm sure that with your incitement to hatred, you've bought yourself a place with the kings.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do it, do it.

MURRAY

King of the Sinaloa Cartel, he'll be there, too.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do it NOW!

MURRAY

And pretty soon, with some luck and/or a decent prosecutor, in no time at all, you'll be able to dance with the gods!

[Finally, he has piqued her interest.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

What are you talking about?

MURRAY

You'll wind up at the Rockies with your Richard Reid and Theodor Kaczynski—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Ah.

MURRAY

—the shoe bomber and the Unabomber, respectively.

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*To the* AUDIENCE]

At first, I have to admit, when I was wading through the desert of Mailer's tome, those one-thousand-and-some pages, as I was dying of dehydration, I stopped more than once. And I wondered: What is this for? What's the *use* in all this? Why, Virgin Mary, why? And now I know. I know. It was destiny.

[*To* MURRAY]

So you can sue me.

MURRAY

Sue you?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yeah. Please do.

MURRAY

Why?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Isn't that what you people do? You lose an argument, someone disagrees with you, and then, *bam*—what you do. Problem goes poof. You sue your opponent. Problem no longer there, problem solved.

MURRAY

I will do no such thing!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Are you having second thoughts about your stance?

MURRAY

No!

[She goes to the easy chair.]

CASTING DIRECTOR

Having second thoughts on the death penalty? A Socialist Looks at It. Now there's a Russian novel!

MURRAY

There's no need to get all sarcastic about it.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Help me lift this thing, will you?

[He does. They carry the chair downstage center. She turns the chair so that it is facing the confession booths. They keep talking while working.]

I wasn't being sarcastic. Just—

MURRAY

Think you were.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You guys are so deluded! You are children. And everyone is a victim, until death makes them a martyr. No one is guilty of anything, ever, in your little world! You can't fly, poor things, and you are oh so tired of running...

MURRAY

No use trying to sweet-talk me, you know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your only option is to bury your head so deep in the desert sand you'll never see the light of the day again! It's no use, huh? My rhetoric? Nothing I can say will move you in any way, ever, even if I spoke for thousand years? Well, alright, then. Moving on to brass tacks—what do you call them again?

MURRAY

You mean torture.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I mean enhanced interrogation techniques.

[Pointing to the chair]

Sit.

MURRAY

I'm going to report you.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Report me? See this? This is me giving a fuck.
SIDDOWN!

[He does.]

MURRAY

In fact, I sent my report already.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Oh wow.

MURRAY

It's on its way.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Where?

MURRAY

The proper authorities.

CASTING DIRECTOR

The proper what?

[Jumping up, MURRAY starts walking back and forth, poking his finger in the air, in the general direction of her.]

MURRAY

They have a say in the matter. Let the *professionals*, let them be the judge of it! And that is all. That, my friend, is—what I'd call a—as you said—a “problem solved.”

CASTING DIRECTOR

Aw. That's so cute!

MURRAY

One down, a thousand to go!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're so cute when you get, you know, all flustered like that. You know, do that thing—

MURRAY

No.

CASTING DIRECTOR

—with your hand, like that.

MURRAY

Please. Don't laugh at me.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I wasn't. I wasn't laughing at you.

MURRAY

Horseshit.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Honest to, I don't know, Jah? Not laughing, no—on one condition, I won't. I need you to sit the fuck down. Now.

MURRAY

Why?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're making me nervous. And I need to show you something.

[She leads him toward the chair.]

MURRAY

Show me what?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Let us call it a surprise.

[MURRAY *sits in the chair.*]

Let us call it a piece of performance art, okay?

[*Lights change. What follows is a reenactment of the execution of Gary Gilmore.*]

There, that's my boy! You're doing great. Very good, Gary! I mean Dog, you're doing so well! You are being so brave! This is the part where I must step down, but you'll be alright. I'll be right here with you, in Jah, in Jesus Christ!

[*She moves to the side. Four rifle barrels poke through the curtains of the confession booths. MURRAY is terrified and mesmerized, unable to leave the chair.*]

Just like Susan Sarandon in *Dead Man Walking*—I'll be the face of love for you! Look at me, here, it's the face of love! Oh, shit. I forgot.

[*She runs to him and plants a kiss on his forehead. Then she pulls a black pillowcase over his head. She retreats.*]

I'm sorry. It's mandatory. But you'll be all right. In the end you'll be.

[MURRAY *turns towards the AUDIENCE. His head is peering over the backrest of the chair.*]

MURRAY

Stop it! Please!

CASTING DIRECTOR

This means nothing to you. Let's not forget that. You believe in reincarnation. You were so convinced of your forthcoming rebirth that you asked your girl Nicole to kill herself, too. Leave her two small children and have a date with you, reunite with you in the land of the unicorns. That was mighty big of you, I do have to say. Well, she tried, that's all I can say. Don't worry! You'll be reborn a snail in a matter of seconds! Just relax. Sit back and enjoy the cosmic ride.

MURRAY

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Help me! Help me, please!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Don't be a pussy!

[*A drum roll is heard, or, possibly a bit of "The Unknown Soldier" by the Doors. The rifle barrels are aiming here and there.*]

You know your line.

[She waits for him to deliver it, but he's unable or unwilling to contribute. She fills in for him.]

And then he just says it. He says it. He says, "Let's do it."

[MURRAY turns to face the rifles and they fire, out of sync with each other. He goes limp. It gets very quiet. Blood is dripping to the floor through MURRAY's fingers. CASTING DIRECTOR moves closer. She presses her ear to his chest. She straightens herself, addressing the AUDIENCE.]

He's still alive.

[Turning towards the firing squad]

Have another go at it?

[Enter KADYROV. He is holding PUTIN by the arm, helping him along. PUTIN moves like a frail old man. He wears a heavy, grey overcoat and a Chechen fur hat. KADYROV is dressed for a night out. MURRAY removes the pillowcase and jumps up from the easy chair.]

KADYROV

Ho-ho-ho! Santa came early this year!

PUTIN

Stoy!

KADYROV

And here he is! Say hello to Saint Nicholas, folks!

PUTIN

Stop, I said.

KADYROV

Santa is here, bearing amazing gifts!

PUTIN

I wanna go incognito.

KADYROV

He can ride a horse better than a Mongol. He can fish better than an Icelander. And, can you believe it? The man can even fly—better than a crane! In fact, he's been teaching the cranes to fly!

PUTIN

They just didn't heed my advice.

KADYROV

Of course they did! Look, listen! How modest he is! Of course the cranes did follow his lead!

PUTIN

I shot them down. They dropped—sank like a submarine—like a passenger jet that crashed near Torez. Why Torez, you ask. What’s in a name? Why do I remember that one, and not the others?

KADYROV

It reminds you of your favorite player?

PUTIN

Favorite what?

KADYROV

Your favorite forward?

[Kicks an imaginary ball]

Never mind that. Never mind. It was not important.

PUTIN

You’re losing it!

KADYROV

I’m sorry, sir.

PUTIN

You’re losing your grip, Ramzi!

KADYROV

I’ll try and do better, sir.

PUTIN

Trying won’t do. You have to accomplish! ABC—Always Be Closing. You’ve been smoking again, haven’t you?

KADYROV

No!

PUTIN

Don't lie to me.

KADYROV

It's *haram*—my faith forbids smoking. That is why it is impossible. The Quran says, you know. It says no. So I haven't been smoking. You should sit down, sir. Before you get all worked up, have another dizzy spell.

PUTIN

Go fuck yourself.

KADYROV

Come on, now. Sit down. Sit. Somebody turn that chair around!

[MURRAY *and* CASTING DIRECTOR *follow his instructions, fast.* PUTIN *sits down carefully. He is facing the* AUDIENCE.]

PUTIN

I love ice hockey. Everyone knows that. Everyone but a pot smoker, that is! I love hockey—and Kursk! It was a submarine, and it sank! Like I said at the press conference—what is a submarine? What is it, their essence? What do they do, huh? They sink. So it sank, full stop. But that wasn't enough! What do you want from me, an

Ode to the Heroes? The Heavenly Hundred immortalized in song?

KADYROV

No, sir.

PUTIN

Bring me a piano! I'll get to it immediately!

[KADYROV *lays a hand* PUTIN's *shoulder*.]

KADYROV

That's not—

PUTIN

I can sing! You heard me!

KADYROV

That's not a—

PUTIN

I can write songs!

KADYROV

Not a good idea, sir. Not such a hot one, that one.

MURRAY

“If not so, very damn near so.”
A Jamaican proverb, that is.

PUTIN

There's nothing to it!

[*Pumping the air with his fist*]

Hail the Heavenly Hundred! Glory! Glory to the Heroes!

KADYROV

You have to listen to me now, sir!

PUTIN

But I choose not to! I prefer not to! I can do it! I am the Lizard King, I can do anything! For your sake—and theirs, too! The dead sailors and their families haunt me in my dreams! It was hell. It was anarchy. I'll do it. Bring me a balalaika! Bring me a pump organ! A New Anthem for the Heavenly Hundred—

KADYROV

They were fascists.

[*Silence.*]

They were, sir. Honest to Al—

PUTIN

Get out of here.

KADYROV

The Heavenly Hundred—

PUTIN

RAMZI OUT! RAMZI OUT! YOU HEAR ME? GO! GET OUT! I'LL HAVE YOU SHOT!

[*Pointing*]

Go. Get.

KADYROV

I'm afraid I must disobey that order this time, sir. I must explain myself first, at least. The Heavenly Hundred—you have to listen to me now. That's what they call the victims of the Independence Square, Euro-Maidan. Kiev, 2014: the coup, remember? Your pal Yanukovych had to go.

PUTIN

I'll have you drawn and quartered. You know what that means? No?

KADYROV

I know, Dad. I know.

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

That's how it always went.

PUTIN

You're hanged. They take you down while you're still alive.

KADYROV

This here, he's my father.

PUTIN

They cut you open like a fish.

KADYROV

Ahmad is his name. Ahmad Kadyrov.

PUTIN

The cut off your dick and stick it to down your throat.

PUTIN

I know he sounds and looks a lot like Putin to you— sounds exactly alike, to be honest! That's just magic of the performing arts!

PUTIN

And you're still alive, note that, when they do that.

KADYROV

I bet I could find a cool Oscar Wilde quote to fit the occasion. But there's no time for that. No—we've got work to do. We're here to inform you.

PUTIN

You're begging for mercy, begging for death.

KADYROV

We're here to educate, not entertain. There's a bust of Bertolt Brecht lying around here somewhere. He lived just nearby once. And he says, BB says—

MURRAY

You speak ten languages? Man, that's out of sight! That's *über Alles*. But then you've got nothing to say.

KADYROV

You're free to go back to your phones in half an hour. Just 30 minutes, and you have a lifetime to spend with

your phones after that, after the show, so bear with us for a while.

MURRAY

Or?

KADYROV

Go now, and you'll be gassed.

PUTIN

Finally, they'll grant it, and hack you to pieces. Man, that's what I call a sentence of death! After that, it's—the deluge! After us, the only proper response is: curtain!

[PUTIN's *falls asleep.*]

KADYROV

What the—?

MURRAY

I don't know.

KADYROV

Is he dead?

[MURRAY *inspects* PUTIN *and shakes his head.*]

MURRAY

Just out cold.

KADYROV

Knocked his lights out with his own speech! He should get a Nobel Prize for Peace and Literature, both, for that one!

MURRAY

[*To* KADYROV]

Is it okay if I put something—?

KADYROV

Put what?

MURRAY

Say, a backpack?

KADYROV

“To prop up his feet”...?

MURRAY

Yeah.

KADYROV

Go ahead.

MURRAY

Sure?

KADYROV

Just do it.

[MURRAY *gets the backpack and kneels beside* PUTIN *who startles and opens his eyes. He is agitated, but still asleep, apparently.* MURRAY *hesitates for a moment; then he completes the mission. He gets up and retreats.*]

PUTIN

It was a nightmare! Dresden, 1989—

MURRAY

[*To* KADYROV]

All clear, sir.

PUTIN

And I was alone! All alone—

KADYROV

[*To the* AUDIENCE]

That's how it went down. Victory Day Parade in Grozny, 2004—

PUTIN

Left behind the lines! In enemy territory!

CASTING DIRECTOR

The ninth of May—

PUTIN

It was anarchy!

[PUTIN senses something. He raises a hand in weak salute—perhaps trying to shield himself from what is about to befall him.]

KADYROV

My father was receiving it: the Victory Day parade and his fate at the same time, at one setting, unbeknownst to him. The moment we did him in—

[*The backpack under PUTIN's feet explodes. There is a cloud of smoke.*]

That was the happiest day of my life!

[*When smoke clears, we see PUTIN sprawled on the chair, his face smeared with blood and soot. KADYROV and MURRAY appraise the situation. Then they carry the chair—with PUTIN in it—to its original place, stage right. KADYROV lifts PUTIN and carries him, making a small tour to present his trophy. Exit KADYROV and PUTIN.*]

MURRAY

You would think there were easier ways to leave your family. But, hey—what they say. The road seldom took and the good book, three days that shook the world. And who are we to judge? We are no one. We are Anonymous. Well. That was fun! That was a riot, all right. But you can't expect everyone to behave like that. It's

like you're asking a man in the electric chair, asking if he would be so kind and save us the trouble, pull the switch himself!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Now there's an idea.

MURRAY

And dig his own grave while he's at it. You can't possibly expect them to—

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'll write it down.

[She does not.]

MURRAY

Tell me you don't expect it to actually happen. In real life, you don't. There's no way.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I'm offering your boy a way out.

MURRAY

You're washing your hands.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You are. He is. All I'm doing is, I'm suggesting he could die with dignity. Take responsibility for his actions this once, once in a lifetime.

MURRAY

But they never do, do they?

CASTING DIRECTOR

In a lifetime of lies.

MURRAY

They never do.

CASTING DIRECTOR

No.

MURRAY

Like owls in the fucking night, they never sleep. They go for your eyes for the smallest slight!

CASTING DIRECTOR

What are you talking about?

MURRAY

Those damn voters, and the press, they are watching you all the time! Get drunk once, and you're history! Public policy is such a bitch! No rest for the wicked, as they say—and no glory either!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I have no clue as to what—

MURRAY

Never mind! Forget about it. You're not planning a career in politics after all, are you? And there are bigger issues at hand, questions to tackle and—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Sorry. I'm so sorry. I hate to interrupt, but—

MURRAY

The hell you are.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Sorry?

MURRAY

You've never been truly sorry in your life!

CASTING DIRECTOR

And should I start now? Is that it? You're going to show me how? Teach me manners? Is that it?

MURRAY

No, ma'am.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Don't call me that.

MURRAY

To be honest, I don't know what to call you.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You can call me E.

MURRAY

Well, E. It's nice to finally meet you.

[*They shake hands.*]

My name is Dog. Dog Murray.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I know.

MURRAY

That's what I gather.

CASTING DIRECTOR

And this brings us right back to the beginning, the matter at hand.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That is my age and, what is worse, my race.

CASTING DIRECTOR

In a nutshell, yes.

MURRAY

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Trigger warning. What follows is a scene from the ongoing opera called "Flogging the White Horse".

CASTING DIRECTOR

What? No, I love horses!

MURRAY

How about horseshit, then?

CASTING DIRECTOR

What are you talking about?

MURRAY

Horses, horses—horseshit!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Have you lost your mind?

MURRAY

It was John Lydon that lost it. Also known as Johnny Rotten. His reply to Patty Smith, whose debut album was titled, as you may know, *Horses*: “Horses, horses—horseshit,” is what Johnny said.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, that’s deep. But I’ll let it pass. We shall skip the question of your sanity for now. I want to pop another one. I just need to know. Did you say “swell” a moment ago?

MURRAY

Swell? I don’t know—well—I might have. Why?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Have you read *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett?

MURRAY

No?

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Writing it down*]

No it is, then. Negative.

MURRAY

Why?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You remind me of the villain in it. The trickiest one of them all. There's a whole cast of them, a cast of villains, but she's by far the most devious of them all: Miss O'Shaughnessy.

MURRAY

Gee. Thanks!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Don't mention it.

MURRAY

[*Addressing the AUDIENCE*]

Now you've seen a choice selection of what happened. This kind of thing, it just went on and on and on in real life! She wouldn't let me "do my thing"—what? What are you thinking? Fucking perverts! I couldn't perform the thing I had prepared! The one you've seen already, well, most of it anyway. She used me, made fun of me, and for what? I don't know! I guess she was lonely, too. But I'll be damned if she didn't drive me half-crazy with her questions, picking on me, pressing with her comments and—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Why him?

MURRAY

Huh?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Why do you want to play him?

MURRAY

I guess I see this role—the possibility of portraying Jahar—as a giant “fuck you” to the world. You know? I don’t know! This don’t make no sense!

CASTING DIRECTOR

No, I think it does.

MURRAY

You do? Gee, thanks!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Don’t mention it.

MURRAY

Until finally—

CASTING DIRECTOR

I think we should get back to business.

MURRAY

Well, I can live with that.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That's good. That's all right. Whenever you're ready.

[What follows is an audition for a movie role.]

MURRAY

This is how I'm going to do it. First, I introduce myself and my character. If a Power Point presentation is possible, that's just wonderful. If not—well, that's wonderful too. Now imagine a caption here. It says: How “Jahar” Tsarnaev got his very nearly unpronounceable Christian name. No, strike that! Heavens, it is NOT a Christian name... first, first name! Now replace “Christian” with that, and off we go. How he got his almost unfathomable first name. End caption. Let's go! Rock and roll! All right, dude! He was named—the dude was—after the first president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Yeah, I know! Lots of names, lots of letters—but there's a lot going on here! It's a long story! Bear with me, please. Dzhokhar Dudayev, the president of the republic, may he rest in peace. His country too, for neither of them is no more. Putin finished them both with the same single missile. It wasn't Putin, though. That's poetic license right there. That is the Art in all of this. Putin the pedophile was still in diapers himself! In Saint Petersburg. Anyway, the president was speaking on a satellite phone when the skies came crashing down. Now I've tried to talk to you about the dangers of these phones—but no one seems to listen.

People are just laughing in my face! But heed this message: those phones, they are evil fuckers! They go hand in hand with that diaper-wearing motherfucker! You just wait and see. Anyway, Jahar was named after him, after Dudayev. He was. I was. That's me, who I am.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Jahar?

MURRAY

Yes, sir.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who you are. That's Jahar?

MURRAY

Yes, Miss.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's Missus to you.

MURRAY

Sorry. I forgot.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Have you taken a look in the mirror lately?

MURRAY

No.

CASTING DIRECTOR

No.

MURRAY

I have not. Negative.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, you should. I suggest you do, as soon as possible. Next, please!

MURRAY

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

“You’re white! You’re too old! You’re too old and white!” The worst possible thing to *be* these days! Honest to God, what she says: just blurts it out like that. If that’s not racism, I don’t know what is!

CASTING DIRECTOR

There’s a lot of money involved, in this project.

MURRAY

That goes without saying. And you sold your soul first thing out of college! Never went? Well, that figures. Daddy owns the company, I guess.

CASTING DIRECTOR

People on the left, people on the right, they’ve come together like never before. They’ve all been unified by this project. No matter which side of the great chasm that divides our country—no matter where they stand, people are turning the house upside down to make this happen. It’s amazing, it is. The way they’ve answered the call. People all over are putting their lives—their careers on the line!

MURRAY

Like, like the finish line?

CASTING DIRECTOR

I beg your pardon?

MURRAY

On Boylston Street.

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Checking the time*]

I don't see where you're going with this. But—

CASTING DIRECTOR

The Boston Marathon, remember? The finish line was on *Boylston* Street. Does it ring any bells?

CASTING DIRECTOR

I don't see the point in this, and I'm quite busy currently. So I'm going to have to ask you to—

MURRAY

Those people put their lives on the line! The ones down there, on Boylston Street! They were ripped apart! They were shred to pieces! So don't you speak of "coming together" or "answering the call" on the same *day* as we are discussing them!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Fair enough. Okay.

MURRAY

It is?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yeah, point taken. But—

MURRAY

Those two, they were hunted down like animals—!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Wait a minute!

MURRAY

They were tracked down like dogs—with dogs, for fuck's sake!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Wait a second. Hold on.

MURRAY

Pushed to the ground, face in the dirt, they were told to submit—and they didn't! They **RESISTED**. They wouldn't bow to the heathen gods of sex and drugs and trinkets whose worship is the law around here!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Trinkets?

MURRAY

Look around and you'll see.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I see trinkets.

MURRAY

And they paid—and will pay—with their lives for that! That's for certain. But just as certain, even more so, in fact, is the fact that we will rise. The *ummah* will take back the land—

[*She picks up a bust of Lenin.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who?

MURRAY

—it lost and conquer new territory!—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Did you just say, uh, Amma? The stout Indian lady that likes to *hug* people?

MURRAY

Fuck you! *Ummah* is the worldwide Muslim community!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I see.

MURRAY

Do you?

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Referring to the bust*]

I thought you were referring to Shri Mataji here.

MURRAY

No. That's Lenin. It's who it is, Lenin.

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Handing him the bust*]

Are we going to have a Q. and A. session later on, or is now a good time to—

MURRAY

I haven't finished.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Then, by all means, do.

MURRAY

I will. You have a towel for me? Wipe the sweat from my eyes—?

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Gesturing*]

Feel free to use any of the rags hanging around.

MURRAY

A strange place to arrange an audition is all I can say.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, there are factors. There are trinkets, as you say, like your Mother TERESA there, and—

[She is referring to Lenin, but he has put the bust away. He is drying himself on a piece of cloth, interrupting her. Their lines may overlap.]

MURRAY

I figured that out.

CASTING DIRECTOR

In all honesty, there is a factor.

MURRAY

Lots of props around —

CASTING DIRECTOR

Just one, that is.

MURRAY

I can see the advantage in that. I can.

CASTING DIRECTOR

One word: foreclosure. We got this place for next to nothing.

[MURRAY considers this. He drops the cloth. He walks over it. He does it again, dragging the cloth along in his feet.]

What are you doing?

MURRAY

Mopping the floor.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Why?

MURRAY

It's so dirty! The floor is. And I can't stand dirt! I'm only kidding, of course. It has a strange therapeutic effect on me, doing this thing has. It kind of reminds me of my brother.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your brother?

MURRAY

Yeah.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You close?

MURRAY

Can't say that. I'd rather be a dog than the younger son!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Come again?

MURRAY

Are we close? That was the question. Not any more, no. He passed.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Oh. I'm so sorry.

MURRAY

Don't be. I'm not. Sorry, that is.
See, who killed him. It was me.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're kidding.

MURRAY

Ran him down, ran him over with a Black Benz SUV. A
car we stole.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Why?

MURRAY

We liked the looks of it?

CASTING DIRECTOR

What?

MURRAY

I don't know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

That makes no sense.

MURRAY

I never drove a Benz before. Putting it to reverse is a
bitch!

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're giving me a headache! What I mean is: Why?
Why do that to your brother?

MURRAY

Oh. He was in the way. The way out—he was lying
across it. I would have left sooner, but I couldn't deal
with the transmission. Couldn't put the Benz to reverse.

CASTING DIRECTOR

He was in the way.

MURRAY

So I made a U-turn. And I floored it.

CASTING DIRECTOR

"He was in the way." Is that it?

MURRAY

And now he's in heaven.

CASTING DIRECTOR

There's nothing else.

MURRAY

There's Hell. There's that. Where I'm heading, I sup-
pose.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Why?

MURRAY

Like I said, I sent my brother there, to Heaven. And I put him on the top floor, too. Yana Doula Fir House, the best there is, the best, ever. They've got, like, a dozen stars? Michelin, Goodyear. Bridgestone: you name it, they've got it. Trump's got nothing on them! My brother, he's got the best digs anyone can imagine—and even better! For God moves in shady circles. And he'll spend an eternity there. Not God—he won't stick around. It's my dog, my brother I'm talking about. He's stuck in there! Meanwhile, I'm stuck in here—

CASTING DIRECTOR

With you.

MURRAY

Huh?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Stuck in the middle.

MURRAY

Stuck—in the middle?

CASTING DIRECTOR

With you.

MURRAY

You, you, you! I need John Belushi like something awful. Stuck in the middle with him: imagine that! With Belushi? Huh!

[CASTING DIRECTOR *imitates Michael Madsen's creepy dance from Reservoir Dogs.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Singing*]

“Jokers to the left of me, jokers to the right
Here I am, stuck in the middle with you.”

[MURRAY *is impressed by her performance. He speaks against his better judgment.*]

MURRAY

Lady, give me your key!

CASTING DIRECTOR

No, I won't. I'll just cut off your ear, douse you with gasoline, and then die in a hail of bullets.

MURRAY

Please! I mean no! You're freaking me out!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I am not. But you showed me your true colors in spite of—

MURRAY

In spite!

CASTING DIRECTOR

—of your *role*—

MURRAY

My role!

CASTING DIRECTOR

—or with very little regard to it, yes. And please don't repeat that. You're doing your Jekyll and Hyde act again, becoming the love interest of Sam Spade in front of my very eyes. It's *The Maltese Falcon* again: book, not the movie. Mary Astor is no femme fatale. And neither ends well for her! It's to the gallows, and Sam has to spend a couple of rough nights. So get a grip!

MURRAY

[*Kneeling, bowing to the ground*]

May Jah the merciful—peace and blessings and kisses, lots of kisses—give me strength in the middle of this. Amen.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well said. And if I asked you nicely, which character from which movie I was just portraying, before, would you start spouting that same old jihadi shit at me? Again?

MURRAY

[*Getting up*]

No shit! And I would! Take offense in that! Your describing my deepest, holiest articles of faith as, as—

CASTING DIRECTOR

Ass.

MURRAY

It's *outrageous!*

CASTING DIRECTOR

And you're an ass.

MURRAY

Such a disparaging and insulting manner, it's a breeding ground, it's a hate crime—

CASTING DIRECTOR

It is? I'm so sorry. And take it back.

MURRAY

You will?

CASTING DIRECTOR

And offer this instead—

[CASTING DIRECTOR *hits* MURRAY *to the side of his head with her clipboard, hard. Her papers fly all around. He drops to his knees. She puts her foot on his shoulder.*]

I'll give you a second chance.
I'm asking again, nicely.
Who?

MURRAY

Do not go quiet.

[CASTING DIRECTOR *pushes* MURRAY *with her foot. He falls on his back.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

How long do you want to keep this up? I can go all day and all of the night!

[*Presenting her pen*]

And I haven't even used my most Marlowe-like weapon yet!

MURRAY

Marlowe? As in Philip?

[*She kicks him.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

CHRISTOPHER, YOU DIMWIT!!

MURRAY

Okay, okay. All right... for God's sake!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Yeah?

MURRAY

It's the switchblade scene.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I can't hear you!

MURRAY

The switchblade scene!

[*Sitting up*]

The abduction, torture, mutilation and murder of a police officer as presented to you in Quentin Tarantino's first and only movie *Reservoir Dogs* from the early 1990s.

CASTING DIRECTOR

1992.

MURRAY

That's what I thought.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Then why didn't you say so? And it isn't by any means his only movie, you know that.

MURRAY

Yes, it is. Oh, yes. A faithful depiction of the siege of Sarajevo, it was a prophecy.

[CASTING DIRECTOR *gives* MURRAY *a hand. She helps him to his feet.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well done.

MURRAY

That's nothing.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It is not. It is not nothing.

MURRAY

Anyone can come up with that.

CASTING DIRECTOR

No. I'm not interested in how well you've memorized your Internet Movie Database. There's no point in it, memorizing it. A computer, an app does it for you. But an app can't act. And that's what you did there. And you did a first-rate job. Hell, you had me fooled!

MURRAY

[*Grinning*]

I did, didn't I?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Look, Dog. If we were putting up a theater production—

MURRAY

I know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

—or could rewrite a portion of the script—

MURRAY

It's alright.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Even as it is? Hell, if it were up to me—

MURRAY

I know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You'd get the job—
[snaps her fingers]
—like that!

MURRAY

Thanks.

CASTING DIRECTOR

But it's a shitty world that we live in.

MURRAY

I know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hey, one more thing—and then I'll let you go. I won't be keeping you any longer.

MURRAY

It was I that was keeping you.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Nonsense. I was dragging you *down* with me. I was doing my very best to ruin your show! I was ruining your rocket hop to Rrrr...

MURRAY

Rocket hop to?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Ever been to SeaWorld?

MURRAY

No.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Me neither. Well, I've been at the gates, plenty of times, singing and dancing—

MURRAY

Cool.

CASTING DIRECTOR

—protesting the living conditions of the whales and dolphins, hell, everyone down there; they're in hell. It may be a hell with blues skies and sunshine, but it's a hell regardless.

MURRAY

I bet.

CASTING DIRECTOR

There's a killer whale called Tilikum there, all alone in Orlando. Your performance, it kind of brought him to mind.

MURRAY

It did? Wow. I'm flattered.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's the Alcatraz of Orange County, SeaWorld is for him. You've seen the Russian film *Leviathan*? That's Tilikum for you: full of surprises. A tough son of a bitch

he is. And he only killed three, you know? Your boy, he did four, didn't he?

MURRAY

Four—what, who?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Human lives: Jahar, four; Tilikum, three. So far, so good.

MURRAY

I've always wanted, you know.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Tell me.

MURRAY

Sheer folly is what it is. You'll die laughing.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I won't! I swear.

MURRAY

I wanted to study marine biology.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I see. We're kindred spirits, then.

MURRAY

I guess we are.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hey, maybe someday you might join us? At the gates?

MURRAY

Maybe.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's a good cause.

MURRAY

I know it is.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Someone ought to blow the damn place up. I'm only kidding, of course. I tell you what. I've got your e-mail address here somewhere.

[She indicates her papers, strewn all over.]

What I'm going to do is, I'm going to steal it, your address, and I'm going to send you an invitation next time we're headed down there. Ready to kick ass, right? And if you don't like it, you can kiss my ass.

MURRAY

[Smiling]

I'd love to.

CASTING DIRECTOR

It's a date, then.

MURRAY

It is?

[*Lights start slowly fading.*]

CASTING DIRECTOR

By the way, where did you pick all that jihadi shit?

MURRAY

Oh. Here and there—

CASTING DIRECTOR

[*Overlapping*]

Oh my God!

[*Slaps him on the chest*]

“He was in the way.” I was going to pee my pants!

MURRAY

Yeah, well, basically, he was. In the way: *en route*, the escape route, he was spread across, lying there like an idiot, in the middle of it. The cops tried to remove him, but he resisted with all his might. And Tamerlan was a strong dude. I mean, what could you do? Make a U-turn and I floor it. Run him over, killing and scalping him in the process. And it served the bastard right!

CASTING DIRECTOR!

I must say, you really threw yourself into that role.

MURRAY

It felt so real, so important at the time. While I was rehearsing, you know? Seize the moment, seize the opportunity. Make something out of nothing you know?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You've done some serious research there. Where?

[It is twilight now. The actors don't move.]

MURRAY

Are you a spy?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Not that I know of.

No, I am not.

MURRAY

Well, there are websites. There are high resolution glossy slick magazines in impeccable English. There's a ton of videos. And, most important of all, there are detailed, written instructions. The internet is full of Anarchist's Cookbooks, if you just switch the ideology. These are current, contemporary and thoroughly jihadist. They are fanatic. And that's where the brothers got theirs bomb-making manual, too.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do we know where?

MURRAY

Yeah.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do we know the exact site?

MURRAY

Yeah.

CASTING DIRECTOR

And what's it called?

MURRAY

Spire.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Stop sighing. Out loud, please!

MURRAY

In spire.

CASTING DIRECTOR

What?

MURRAY

I swear to God—I'm not making this shit up! *Inspire*, that's the name of an online magazine published by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. That means Yemen, mostly. Anwar al Awlaki and Samir Khan, two American defectors put it together, the zine. They were both killed in a drone strike, but the work—

CASTING DIRECTOR

“The great work begins.”

MURRAY

I'm sorry?

CASTING DIRECTOR

That just popped into my head. It's from *Angels in America*. You know, the play? "The world only spins forward."

MURRAY

Only on HBO.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I beg your pardon?

MURRAY

It does.

[*Waves a hand—"Forget it."*]

And when you come to think of it, that's a fair name, *Inspire*. It describes the stories in the webzine, the effect they have on someone who's prone to that, the Jihadist worldview. It is, I don't know, accurate? *Inspire*? It seems that—however unpleasant that may seem to us—they do.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Jesus.

MURRAY

And, at the same time, it looks like nothing does that to us over here anymore.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Inspire? Hey, Tilly does that! Tilikum the killer whale, he does that for me.

MURRAY

Ahmed Shah Massoud does it for me.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Who's that?

MURRAY

The Afghan who won the Cold War. Massoud fought the Soviets; he fought the Taliban. They assassinated him the day before 9/11. It wouldn't have gone done so well had he been around.

CASTING DIRECTOR

So you *are* Muslim, after all?

MURRAY

Says who? Says you! And so what? What if I am Muslim?

CASTING DIRECTOR

No, it's cool. I'm just trying to figure you out, that's all. I'm going—going to put my phone back together now, all right?

MURRAY

You see, that's the problem.

CASTING DIRECTOR

My phone is?

MURRAY

That's what inspires you, and nothing else. A fucking device!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, that's not true.

MURRAY

It is!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Not what inspires me, that is.

MURRAY

It's a toy, for God's sake! And a lethal toy at that—a piece of junk that killed Dudayev!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I just told you about my hero, Tilly the Orca—

CASTING DIRECTOR

The first and only president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, he went up in smoke! And why? He was taking a selfie on the mountainside, I suppose. And thus began the process that led to that murdering homophobic Ramzan Kadyrov in power!

CASTING DIRECTOR

I don't know what you're talking about.

MURRAY

CHECHNYA! The apartment buildings in Moscow that were blown up—!

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well. You need to calm down.

MURRAY

And that's how Putin came to power, by wasting the rebels in the outhouse, as he said. And then Kadyrov jumped in, after his father got blown to pieces. And now they're joined at the hip.

CASTING DIRECTOR

I see.

MURRAY

Yeah, that's what you say. But do you? Jesus. Don't you know *anything*? We live in a vacuum! Everyone in the West does. Everyone is on their knees, begging for someone, anyone, to come crashing through the roof and—

CASTING DIRECTOR

And inspire.

MURRAY

And take it away. Or inspire, yeah, but that can't be done. It's impossible. Since we're already dead. We are begging to be euthanized! And a creep like Putin, he's more than happy to oblige.

[He takes her hand.]

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry I yelled at you.

CASTING DIRECTOR

"That's okay."

[She lets go of his hand.]

For we are already dead.

MURRAY

Yes, we are. We are zombies living in a palace, unable to get out. We are royal children left to our own devices. We have nothing to do but wander from one splendid room to the next one, waiting for the roof to come crashing in.

CASTING DIRECTOR

And when it does?

MURRAY

Then we'll be free.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Finally.

MURRAY

Eventually, yes.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Possibly.

MURRAY

No, we have to be. We have to, we must have at least that.

CASTING DIRECTOR

(Grow up?)

MURRAY

We must have faith in something other than ourselves. Else, we're doomed. We must believe in something.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Something, huh?

MURRAY

Yeah, something.

CASTING DIRECTOR

All right, then. Let's do it.

[They look at each other. They turn their backs to the AUDIENCE and put on their balaclavas. Masked, they climb to the roof of the confession booth to the right. Music. "Sonic Titan" by Sleep. They lay on their backs. Lights fade.]

END OF PLAY

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And here's the question that I have tried to deal with this text:

Can we shake it?

June 18, 2019
MATTI PAASIO

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