

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

---

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

---

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

# **We declare you a terrorist ...**

By

TIM J. LORD

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXXV by  
TIM J. LORD

Printed in the United States of America

*All Rights Reserved*

(WE DECLARE YOU A TERRORIST ... )

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:

Gurman Agency LLC; Susan Gurman

14 Penn Plaza, Suite 1407

New York, NY 10122-1701

ISBN: 978-1-61959-343-5

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“Originally produced at Round House Theatre,  
Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director; Ed Zakreski, Managing Director.”

*We declare you a terrorist ...* premiered at the Round House Theatre (Bethesda, Md.) in March 2022. Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director; Ed Zakreski, Managing Director.

CAST:

THE WRITER.....Cody Nickell  
THE FSB OFFICER .....Elliot Bales  
MASHA .....Bekah Umansky Zornosa  
KAYIRA.....Ava Eisenson

PRODUCTION:

Directors..... Ryan Rilette & Jared Mezzocchi  
Production Stage Manager..... Che Wernsman  
Set Design .....Lawrence E. Motten, III  
Costume Design .....Ivania Stack  
Lighting Design ..... Amith Chandrashaker  
Sound Design ..... Matthew Nielsen  
Projections Design ..... Jared Mezzocchi

*We declare you a terrorist ...* was given a finishing commission by Round House Theatre in Bethesda, Md. Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director; Ed Zakreski, Managing Director.

*We declare you a terrorist ...* was produced as part of the Summer Play Festival in New York, directed by Niegel Smith, July 2009.

*We declare you a terrorist ...* was developed at the 2009 New Harmony Project.

An earlier version of the play was conceived and developed by Tim J. Lord and West Hyler, directed by West Hyler, at HERE Arts Center (New York), 2007.

# **We declare you a terrorist ...**

## **CHARACTERS**

THE FSB OFFICER: 50s, an old-school KGB agent stuck in a modern-day FSB world, living on the frontier of his home country. A bureaucrat. An idealist. A true believer. White male.

THE WRITER: 45, the creator of *Nord-Ost*, the musical that was taken hostage by Chechen terrorists in October 2002. A hostage. A dissident. A seeker. White male.

MASHA: 16, dragged to *Nord-Ost* by her parents when she really just wanted to stay home and chat with her friends. A practical philosopher. A realist. White female.

KAYIRA: Mid-20s, one of the Chechen women who helped hold the theatre hostage by strapping a bomb to her body. Fiercely determined. Old beyond her years. White female.

## **TIME & PLACE**

Three days in October 2002 in The House of Culture Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow.

One day in October 2003 in a makeshift interrogation room near the border of Georgia and Chechnya.

## AUTHOR NOTE

A person only has an accent when speaking a language that is not their own. Though we are hearing them in English, all the characters in this play are speaking Russian to one another and so should not have accents. Kayira would speak Chechen at home and to the other militants; however, like most Chechens, she would also have been a fluent Russian speaker. Moreover, I wrote this play with an American dialect in my head, not the rhythms of a native Russian speaker using English with an accent; so no Russian dialects in performance please. Thanks.

This play is based on the Dubrovka Theater siege, which took place in Moscow in 2002. The Writer, Kayira and Masha are all based on real people, and the events that happen inside the theater are based on things that actually happened in 2002; however, the characters and the exact chain of events have all been fictionalized for the purposes of telling the story I set out to tell here. The 2003 timeline between The Writer and The FSB Officer is entirely a work of fiction.

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA

“Are we, the lawful, fighting against the unlawful?  
Or, are we battling their lawlessness with our own?”

(“We Declare You a Terrorist: The Anti-Terrorist  
Politics of Torture in the North Caucasus”)

“People call the newspaper and send letters with one and the same question: ‘Why are you writing about this? Why are you scaring us? Why do we need to know this?’

“I’m sure this has to be done, for one simple reason: as contemporaries of this war, we will be held responsible for it ...

“So I want you to know the truth. Then you’ll be free of cynicism.

“And of the sticky swamp of racism that our society has been sliding into.

“And of having to make the difficult decisions about who’s right and who’s wrong in the Caucasus, and if there are any real heroes there now.”

*(A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya)*



## **We declare you a terrorist ...**

*(A room in disrepair. A room that was built for some other purpose than it's currently serving.*

*Maybe there's a table and two chairs.*

*Maybe THE WRITER is sitting in one of the chairs.*

*There is definitely a rough-sewn bag over his head and his hands are bound with zip cuffs. He sits motionless.*

*Muffled voices are heard coming from an adjacent room. THE WRITER turns his head in the direction of the voices.*

*They become angry shouts.*

*They continue on for awhile.*

*They stop.*

*Then more angry voices, shouts, and then a very loud thud, like someone being slammed into a wall.*

*Thud.*

*Shout.*

*Thud.*

*Shout.*

*Thud.*

*Silence.*

*Blackout.*

*Lights come back up as THE FSB OFFICER is removing the bag from THE WRITER's head.*

*THE FSB OFFICER walks around to the other chair. He assesses THE WRITER.*

*THE FSB OFFICER sits.*

*He lights a cigarette.*

*He smokes.*

*He smokes some more.)*

THE FSB OFFICER. Are you unhappy?

THE WRITER. What?

THE FSB OFFICER. What “what?”

THE WRITER. I was expecting ... a different question.

THE FSB OFFICER. Like what?

THE WRITER. I don't know. Just something different.

THE FSB OFFICER. Well?

THE WRITER. I don't follow—

THE FSB OFFICER. Are you unhappy?

THE WRITER. I'm not ... sure how to answer.

THE FSB OFFICER. It's pretty easy.

THE WRITER. Am I under arrest—?

THE FSB OFFICER. You're happy or you aren't.

THE WRITER. You didn't—

THE FSB OFFICER. It's a yes or no question.

THE WRITER. I'm ...

I disagree. It's not that easy to answer.

THE FSB OFFICER. Well, maybe I can help?

THE WRITER. I doubt it.

THE FSB OFFICER. Can I at least try? You have to let me try.

THE WRITER. Do your worst.

THE FSB OFFICER. No-no, my best.

Let's see, you have a family: a wife and ...

THE WRITER. Two daughters.

THE FSB OFFICER. Two? Hm ...

THE WRITER. What?

THE FSB OFFICER. That's good. Family is good.

Family is important.

... And you're successful, yes?

THE WRITER. I suppose.

THE FSB OFFICER. No. You are. You wrote a hit play. It won numerous awards. Sold thousands of tickets.

I hear the Americans even want to translate it. Take it to Broadway. No Russian writer has ever had a play on Broadway, or the West End.

THE WRITER. The West End?

THE FSB OFFICER. London's "Broadway?"

THE WRITER. Yes, I know—

THE FSB OFFICER. You were just there, weren't you? In London?

*(No response.)*

THE FSB OFFICER *(cont'd)*. Weren't you?

THE WRITER. How did you—?

THE FSB OFFICER. Were you or were you not just in London, talking to ... a producer, about bringing your hit play to the West End?

THE WRITER. He declined.

THE FSB OFFICER. That's too bad. I'd love to be able to say I'd met the first Russian to have a hit play in the West End.

THE WRITER. I wouldn't be the—

*(THE FSB OFFICER looks blankly back at him.)*

THE WRITER *(cont'd)*. Chekhov?

THE FSB OFFICER. Chekhov?!

Chekhov doesn't count. Chekhov is dead. Long dead.

You're alive. You live.

And that's something else to be happy about, right?

THE WRITER. I suppose.

THE FSB OFFICER. Do you wish you were dead?

THE WRITER. No.

THE FSB OFFICER. No?

THE WRITER. No.

THE FSB OFFICER. Are you certain about that?

THE WRITER. Yes.

THE FSB OFFICER. Because it's quite common. Survivor's guilt is quite common among people who have survived trying circumstances. You ask yourself why you lived when others died.

THE WRITER. That's not what—

THE FSB OFFICER. People came to see your play and died ... while you lived. You wrote the play—produced it too—an impresario ... the reason everyone was there that night. Maybe you started to think that you should be dead too—you *want* to die—is that it? Do you want to die?

THE WRITER. I already answered.

THE FSB OFFICER. Did you?

THE WRITER. Yes.

THE FSB OFFICER. Yes, you answered? Or yes, you want to die?

THE WRITER. Yes, I answered. No, I don't want to die.

THE FSB OFFICER. OK-OK.

*(A moment.)*

THE FSB OFFICER *(cont'd)*. This is going well, don't you think?

THE WRITER. Yes?

*(A moment.)*

THE FSB OFFICER. Problem is though, it doesn't add up.

THE WRITER. What—?

THE FSB OFFICER. This sudden desire of yours to live.

THE WRITER. What doesn't add up?

THE FSB OFFICER. Your words are in opposition to your actions.

THE WRITER. No they aren't—

THE FSB OFFICER. But we caught you.

You were trying to get into Chechnya—

THE WRITER. I wasn't—

THE FSB OFFICER. My rational brain wants to believe there's been some colossal mistake, because no one goes to Chechnya—no peace-loving citizen of Mother Russia, no award-winning theatre impresario surely—no one. Unless they are ordered to do so, like our brave soldiers or our officers of the FSB—men like myself, men who care about protecting our fellow citizens from the lawlessness of the Caucasus. But that's not you—a talented, award-winning, theatre impresario.

THE WRITER. No.

THE FSB OFFICER. There is another type of person who goes to Chechnya ...

THE WRITER. Chechens?

THE FSB OFFICER. Fine. There are two other types of people who go to Chechnya, Chechens and ...

*(No response.)*

THE FSB OFFICER *(cont'd)*. Terrorists, I'm sad to say. Terrorists who want to kill Russians ...

And then I suppose there's yet another category of persons who might try to go to Chechnya: people who want to die. Because Chechnya is a good place to get oneself killed.

If you're that type of person.

So tell me, which of these describes you?

THE WRITER. None of those.

*(THE FSB OFFICER silently takes out a knife.)*

THE WRITER *(cont'd)*. What are you—?

THE FSB OFFICER. Your hands.

*(THE WRITER tentatively holds out his hands. THE FSB OFFICER cuts the cuffs.)*

THE FSB OFFICER *(cont'd)*. Why were you trying to get into Chechnya?

THE WRITER. I wasn't—

THE FSB OFFICER. You were in London.

You were all set to go home.

And then you changed your ticket. To Tbilisi.

THE WRITER. A last-minute vacation—

THE FSB OFFICER. To Chechnya—

THE WRITER. No, Georgia, the Caucasus Mountains. I've always wanted to visit them—

THE FSB OFFICER. So you could slip into Chechnya?  
Undetected?

THE WRITER. Why do you think I was trying to get into  
Chechnya?

THE FSB OFFICER. Because when we found you, sneaking  
through the bushes, you had just crossed the border, a few  
meters into Chechnya.

THE WRITER. I had?

THE FSB OFFICER. Yes.

Why were you sneaking into Chechnya?

THE WRITER. I wasn't, I was just out for a walk—got turned  
around, and I didn't know I was so close—the mountains  
confuse me.

THE FSB OFFICER. A walk?

THE WRITER. Yes.

THE FSB OFFICER. At night. A long way from the nearest  
town or village.

THE WRITER. I was camping.

THE FSB OFFICER. Oh yes.

We found your campsite.

Not very well-equipped.

THE WRITER. I like to rough it.

THE FSB OFFICER. It's October, pretty cold out there. I'd  
think you'd have some matches.

THE WRITER. I have a lighter—had one—

I was carrying it on me. Did you find it?

THE FSB OFFICER. Yes.

THE WRITER. Oh?

*(A moment.)*

THE FSB OFFICER. Do you know how dangerous Chechnya is?

THE WRITER. Not personally, no.

THE FSB OFFICER. Borders in this part of the world are fairly porous, not likely to lend you much safety.

THE WRITER. Probably good you found me then. I suppose I could've wandered into a minefield or something.

THE FSB OFFICER. When we found you that's exactly where you were.

THE WRITER. Oh.

THE FSB OFFICER. Minefields are known by the locals, that's why we were suspicious, to see someone out there.

THE WRITER. Well ...

THE FSB OFFICER. Yes.

It's against the law, you know, to cross an international border at a place other than an official border crossing, even if you are a Russian citizen, just ... going home.

THE WRITER. I'm sorry, really, it was an honest mistake—

THE FSB OFFICER. We don't take illegal crossings lightly.

THE WRITER. I know.

THE FSB OFFICER. Like you also knew that it was a minefield? Because you did know. You knew that you were trying to cross into Chechnya illegally.

THE WRITER. No, I'm telling you, I wasn't—

*(THE FSB OFFICER reaches into a pocket and pulls out a plastic bag with a small piece of paper inside it.)*

THE FSB OFFICER. What's this then?

We found it on you.

THE WRITER. It's nothing.



THE FSB OFFICER. There's Arabic writing on it.

Can you read it?

THE WRITER. No, actually. Can you?

THE FSB OFFICER. Do you know what it says?

*(Silence.)*

THE FSB OFFICER *(cont'd)*. I have translators, I know what it says.

THE WRITER. Then I don't have to say it.

THE FSB OFFICER. Yes, you do. I don't know if you and I think it says the same thing.

THE WRITER. It's mine, yes. But it's—

It was a gift—

THE FSB OFFICER. Tell me what it says.

THE WRITER. Why?

THE FSB OFFICER. Because I think it says that you're a piece of shit. I think it says that something happened to you inside that theatre, that despite having your life threatened along with the lives of eight hundred others, that something got inside you, poisoned you and turned you against your country. I think it says that you're a goddamned traitor, and we caught you just in time.

THE WRITER. No, please don't—

*(THE FSB OFFICER grabs THE WRITER by the hair and forces his head down to the table. THE FSB OFFICER is shockingly calm through all this.)*

THE FSB OFFICER. I need reasons, motives.

I need to know what you're capable of and, most of all,

I need to know what you're planning to do.

THE WRITER. I'm not—

THE FSB OFFICER. Let's start with the woman, Bayroкова.

THE WRITER. I don't know who—

THE FSB OFFICER (*slams his hand down on the table*).  
Kayira Bayroкова.

*(A shift. October 2002. The Dubrovka Theater.*

*THE WRITER and MASHA, a girl in her teens, are sitting near each other inside the theatre. KAYIRA stands nearby, but effectively out of hearing range.)*

MASHA. I knew we should've gone to *42nd Street*.

THE WRITER. Why that play?

MASHA. Isn't it obvious?

THE WRITER. Well, yes—but—but, uh ... *42nd Street* is a boring, American fantasy.

MASHA. It has tap dancing.

THE WRITER. So does *Nord-Ost*.

MASHA. That was folk dancing plus tap shoes.

In *42nd Street* they do wings and time steps.

*42nd Street* is a good show.

THE WRITER. *Nord-Ost* is one of a kind, been running for over a year now—

MASHA. We have no business writing musicals like this. The Americans can. The Brits are good too—I love *Les Mis*. But this show sucked.

THE WRITER. It's one of the best-selling shows in Moscow. And it has a fan club run by kids your age—

MASHA. Then they have shitty taste.

THE WRITER. Does that mean I have “shitty taste” too?

MASHA. Who cares about your taste, you're old—

THE WRITER. I'm not old—!

MASHA. Oh my God, were you actually enjoying it?

THE WRITER. Yes. I like this play—quite a lot.

Also, I would add, I'm involved with the production.

MASHA. Did you build the sets or something?

THE WRITER. I wrote it.

MASHA. Oh shit.

THE WRITER. And I'm the producer.

MASHA. Sorry.

THE WRITER. You should be.

MASHA. No, I'm sorry that your play sucks so bad.

THE WRITER. Your parents must be very proud to have a child like you.

MASHA. If it's any consolation, my parents were enjoying the play—

THE WRITER. They're here?

MASHA. At least my mom was enjoying it—

THE WRITER. Wh ... where—?

MASHA. But she likes anything with singing in it.

THE WRITER. Where are they?

MASHA. The other side of the theatre. I was still in the lobby when the Chechens stormed in.

We got split up.

THE WRITER. I'm sorry.

MASHA. It's cool. Last time we talked, my mom told me that she and my dad thought this was all going to work out fine—such bullshit—I bet she called her sister to tell her where to find money for our funerals when we're all blown into a million fucking pieces ...

THE WRITER. Go easy on her—I'm sure she's terrified