



THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

BY TOM DULACK



DRAMATISTS
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INC.

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A QLab setup and/or an audio or data CD containing original music and sound effects and a cue sheet explaining their use and placement which may be used in connection with the production of this play can be obtained from:

Quentin Chiappetta, mediaNoise LLC,
584 8th Avenue, New York, NY 10018. quentin@medianoise.com.

For my wife, Véronique

The world premiere of THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS was produced by The Directors Company (Michael Parva, Artistic Director; Leah Michalos, Managing Director) in New York City at 59E59 Theaters January 17 to March 1, 2015. It was directed by Michael Parva; the set design was by Brittany Vasta; the costume design was by Lux Haac; the lighting design was by Graham Kindred; the original music and sound design were by Quentin Chiapetta; the video design was by Joshua Paul Johnson; the production stage manager was Rose Riccardi. The cast was as follows:

DEXTER HOBHOUSE Rufus Collins
NADIA KIRILENKO Larissa Polonsky
ROBERTO GUZMAN Joris Stuyck
BREE BENSON Liza Vann
TED BOWLES Joseph Adams
POPE AUGUSTINE Mel Johnson Jr.
CARDINAL MEDEIROS Robert Verlaque

CHARACTERS

DEXTER HOBHOUSE, 50s, an American diplomat.

NADIA KIRILENKO, 40s, refugee from Chechnya as a child, persecuted by Russians, migrated through Ukraine to the west. Muslim.

ROBERTO GUZMAN, a bishop, attached to the Curia in the Vatican.

POPE AUGUSTINE, the first black African Pope.

FERNANDO MEDEIROS, 60s, Vatican Secretary of State.

TED BOWLES, 46, a U.S. Under Secretary of State.

BREE BENSON, 44, attached to the National Security Agency.

PLACE

New York; Washington; Rome; an airplane.

TIME

The not-so-distant future. The first third-party president in American history is in power. Syria remains locked in yet another civil war. Miami and New York City have been attacked by terrorist bombs.

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

Scene 1

Title: "A HOTEL, MANHATTAN, TUESDAY MORNING."

Title: "THE NOT-SO-DISTANT FUTURE."

Dexter Hobhouse, a career U.S. diplomat, is watching a television news report. From the street below the sounds of numerous sirens, faintly. On the television screen is a woman reporter. Hobhouse watches and listen to her on the television. We, however, see her downstage, speaking to us.

NADIA. There are seventeen confirmed dead but authorities say that the final figure is likely to be much higher. It's not clear at this point if more than one explosive device was employed by the terrorists. A second explosion occurred on Fifty-third Street, just north of Rockefeller Center, destroying several vehicles including a bus, but some observers believe that this explosion was the result of the first blast and not a separate terrorist attack. The façades of the buildings in Rockefeller Center facing Fifth Avenue sustained the most severe damage, but St. Patrick's Cathedral across the street was also damaged. All Midtown streets have been closed to traffic until further notice, to expedite the movement of emergency hospital vehicles and fire-fighting and National Security Agency anti-terror personnel. This is Nadia Kirilenko, live in Manhattan, for PanArabya Television Network. *(There is a knock at the door. Hobhouse opens the door and standing there, in civilian clothes, is Roberto Guzman, a Roman Catholic bishop.)*

HOBHOUSE. Robby!

GUZMAN. Dexter! (*They embrace.*) Hobby! Old Hob!

HOBHOUSE. Come in, give me your things. Is this all you have? Where's your luggage?

GUZMAN. (*Indicating a small shoulder bag.*) This is all I have. I'm going back to Rome first thing in the morning.

HOBHOUSE. Drink?

GUZMAN. Yes, thanks. Scotch if you have it. (*As Hobhouse pours drinks.*) What a scene out there! How many dead? Do they know yet?

HOBHOUSE. Seventeen confirmed. Hundreds of wounded.

GUZMAN. My God!

HOBHOUSE. We thought at first St. Patrick's was the target. But now it looks as if it must have been Rockefeller Center.

GUZMAN. Who's taking credit?

HOBHOUSE. It's a bit confused. Three different terror groups so far. Couple new ones we never heard of before. Including possibly a group in North Korea. But the chief suspect is a fourth generation ISIS mutant called the Army of God.

GUZMAN. We are familiar with North Korea, but with the Army of God?

HOBHOUSE. It's still murky. NSA says it doesn't matter who claims the credit. They're convinced that it's Damascus ultimately calling the shots. Hard to believe anything else, really. It's so great to see you again! I didn't even know you were in the Vatican. And a bishop yet! My old drinking buddy! Who would have thought? God certainly works in mysterious ways.

GUZMAN. And who would have ever guessed you'd end up in diplomacy? You were near the bottom of our class, if memory serves.

HOBHOUSE. It's all about who you know.

GUZMAN. You married?

HOBHOUSE. Between marriages actually.

GUZMAN. Ah. Kids?

HOBHOUSE. Three. (*Photos from his wallet.*) This is Adam. By wife number one. He's at Harvard working on his PhD. This is Jessica, by wife number two. She's finishing a degree in PoliSci at Georgetown. And this is Brendan. Wife number three. He's living with his mother in Buenos Aires.

GUZMAN. Well, I think it's probably a good idea for you to take a break from marriage.

HOBHOUSE. I like to think practice makes perfect. I'll get it right one of these times. (*Getting down to business.*) So. What's this all

about, Roberto? This kind of secrecy is highly unusual.

GUZMAN. We feel that it's essential. The stakes are so high.

HOBHOUSE. What stakes exactly?

GUZMAN. The Holy Father needs to know what the President intends to do about what's left of Syria.

HOBHOUSE. Doesn't he watch CNN?

GUZMAN. He watches PanArabya. We all do. But we still need to hear it officially. Even if it's off the record.

HOBHOUSE. Well, you could have saved yourself the trip. Pan-Arabya tells you all you need to know. You don't even have to be particularly keen on reading between the lines.

GUZMAN. You mean you're going to bomb Damascus and then occupy the country.

HOBHOUSE. I wouldn't call it "occupying the country," exactly. But, well, yeah.

GUZMAN. There's no chance that the Democrats and the Republicans in Congress can combine to dissuade the President? He said he was willing to listen.

HOBHOUSE. You have to understand, Robbie, in the State Department we don't have the clout we used to have. NSA now largely, if unofficially, shapes our foreign policy. So given NSA's mania for secrecy, at State we are often kept in the dark. But from what I hear, and my sense of things, it doesn't look good. Ear to the ground, I gather the President really doesn't want to do this. It's not some reckless crazy-ass oil grab like Iraq under Bush and Cheney again. But it doesn't look good.

GUZMAN. Is there a time frame?

HOBHOUSE. Until this happened, we were talking about weeks. Now, it's a matter of days.

GUZMAN. Days!

HOBHOUSE. The White House believes, or says it believes, or is being told by the NSA to act as if it believes, that there is still a vast underground terrorist network existing in the United States that is bankrolled by Syria. The party line is: We can't sit around doing nothing while bombs are going off in Midtown Manhattan.

GUZMAN. Does anyone take this vast underground network seriously?

HOBHOUSE. We can demonstrate that jihadist cells now exist in each and every one of the fifty states. And that they are being bankrolled by Damascus.

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

by Tom Dulack

5M, 2W

As full-scale civil war rages in Syria, a bomb explodes in Manhattan and all roads lead to Damascus. A peace-seeking African Pope is elected to the Vatican and a third-party president is in power in the U.S. With nuclear war looming, will the new Pope intervene directly in American foreign policy, or will he accede to the demands of Washington? Riddled with international intrigue, Tom Dulack's astonishingly prescient play imagines a world ripped from today's headlines.

"Serious ... satisfying ... consciences are examined, allegiances are tested and politics are debated. ... builds a thick mood of intrigue ... This near-future tale of an ill-conceived American plan feels authentic enough to have you believe that such events could take place any day. Or to remind you that similar ones have already occurred."

—**The New York Times**

"The tremendous prescience — and good timing — of this production is a marvel. ... The script really sings when [Dulack] depicts how internal politics can warp otherwise well-meaning people."

—**NYTheatreNow.com**

"[An] incisive and often frightening look into the greed and double-dealing of our international affairs, and the casual way in which the lives of innocent people can be cast aside in the pursuit of power and politics. ... Dulack marries of the small problems of intimacy with the widescale problems of religious and political turmoil ... THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS has a fearlessness and unapologetic boldness that feels fresh and necessary, and though he ultimately leaves us on a note of uncertainty, Dulack enacts a prescient vision of the future, daring to imagine what might happen if even a handful of people were to stand up against massive, seemingly unappeasable forces of power, greed, fear, and corruption."

—**StageBuddy.com**

Also by Tom Dulack

BREAKING LEGS
DIMINISHED CAPACITY
INCOMMUNICADO
SOLOMON'S CHILD

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

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