

The Most Honest Murderer of the World

by:

Afshin Hashemi

seyedafshinhashemi@hotmail.com

Characters

MURDERER
PEDDLER
LADY REPRESENTATIVE
OLD MAN
DRIVER
GREAT AUTHOR
...?

Murderer is speaking with somebody, maybe with the audiences, maybe with some of his invited guests, maybe with a waiter, maybe with an owner of a café or an inn, or with someone at the back of the stage who is swinging the big pendulum of an enormous clock!

Murderer:

Welcome... Welcome... Thanks for coming. Honestly, I didn't suppose you would have accepted an invitation from a stranger; much less a stranger you don't have any reasons to like. But the reason I called you here is to get your help; I'm not asking a lot, I don't need your money or help finding a job. The only thing I'm looking for is to ask your advice on what to do so that the BIG BOSS ignores my mistake. I promise if I'm not fired, I'll offer my wages from my next contract to the one who gives me the best suggestion.

Help me... Because... I'm so... scared. I'm frightened that the BIG BOSS will employ someone else. You know... You don't know the BIG BOSS. He has to reach his great goals of which he's in pursuit. These goals are believed and respected by each member of our organization.

Now if I'm fired due to my mistake, he'll certainly employ someone else. And in this case, it's not unlikely that some day the new employee will come to me. Of course I'm not sure, because I know that the BIG BOSS is too kind; but kindness is one thing, regulation another. And I totally believe in these regulations as a disciplined man. I hereby and by your witness declare my faith to the doctrines of the organization: order, obedience, honour and professional integrity.

Regarding these principals, I don't know what the procedure of the organization is in this special case since there hasn't been any mistake or dismissal among the employees so far. I can only assume that my fate would be the same as in *any* other organization on this planet... *any* other corporation... *any* place where there are workers and bosses... *any* place where there are those who are employed and those who employ them... Either I will murder or be murdered.

By the way, excuse me if I didn't introduce myself. I should've told you that all the problems are caused by my profession as a murderer! A professional murderer! No one, not even the authorities can stop me. Or I should say... they can't interfere... I'm a licensed murderer... a murderer with a license to murder.

I don't know whether you know it or not, but there are two kinds of murderers: authorized and unauthorized ones. I've got the formal permission for each case and all of my murders are carried out under the direct supervision of the BIG BOSS and through detailed, strict procedures.

I myself am well disciplined and believe in my profession. It's very important for me to murder exactly according to the instructions: time as it is due and manner as it is ordered. If the murdered is to be tortured to death, must be tortured; and if to be murdered at once, must be murdered at once through the expected methods: Heart attack, Stroke, Hanging, Falling from a great height, Accident, Cancer, Suicide or any other methods which has been dictated. All these should take place during the dictated time.

Since the first day, in my whole service, not once have I been late in carrying out a contract. But all of my reputation... all of my honor... was wiped out with one small mistake. I believe it is unacceptable for the best employee not to do his task properly, but it wasn't my fault. In this disaster, I'm responsible but not guilty. That drunken old man in charge of the inn is the cause of all these problems; he and that damn peddler in the 13th avenue. That's all because of that peddler's books; otherwise I would not have done the job so hastily. When I was walking back from finishing out a straightforward contract - death by prostrate cancer - walking back on 13th street, in fact... I ran into a corner book-peddler. He caught my attention so I went to take a quick look. He was selling banned books. I noticed that he has every piece written by the GREAT AUTHOR. I'm a desperate lover of fine literature... fine poetry... I especially love drama, especially those with tragic endings... realistic endings. I said to the book-peddler:

Excuse me sir, how much do these books cost?

Peddler: *A hundred thousand bucks!*

Murderer: *A hundred thousand bucks?! Would you please tell me why?!*

Peddler: *You look like you should know your fine literature. Why do you ask such a thing? Literature has its own price! There are differences between toilet paper and a book. Aren't there?*

Murderer: *Yes, that's right! There are numerous differences between toilet paper and a book!*

Peddler: *Bless you, you are a man of reason! Our problem is solved then! After all, you know the poor author loses his sight, works with candlelight and after thirty years; he suffers from tuberculosis or is attacked by cholera. In one word he becomes a market of diseases! He should earn his bread!*

Murderer: *Excuse me sir, do you mean that the money you earn through selling the books goes to the pocket of the authors?*

Peddler: *He gets the honor and the glory!*
Murderer: *I see. Then I'll pay you by check for the end of this month.*
Peddler: *A check?! For the end of the month?! Huh! The price would be doubled then.*
Murderer: *Why on earth?*
Peddler: *For crying out loud... Don't you see what's happening these days? Writers are mur... dying off left and right! What's going to happen if this writer – the GREAT AUTHOR – dies tomorrow? His work would be worth twice as much and I would have already sold it...*
Murderer: *What do you mean by that?! What does the price have to do with the author dead, or alive?*
Peddler: *Don't you know? If anything happens to the writer, his books' contents are changed.*
Murderer: *You're right. They will be censored, but to what extent? Two or three paragraphs at the maximum, which shouldn't cause such an increase in price.*
Peddler: *You're one hell of a customer. It looks like you're not really interested in buying anything. Buzz off!*
Murderer: *All right! But rest assured I will pay you a visit one of these days.*

Hundred thousand bucks in cash! I didn't have more than 30,000 in my account. It was at the middle of the month and if my salary had given, it would've come to ninety thousand on the condition that I didn't eat the whole coming month. Fortunately in my life, there's no frivolous creature, such as a Woman, to waste my money.

Fortunately or unfortunately, at noon of the same day, while I was busy in my room with my office works, the manager of the Heart Attack & Stroke Company, which is a well-to-do and private company, contacted me. He talked about an urgent murder and we agreed that at 12 midnight their representative would come and meet me to discuss and sign the contract.

The LADY REPRESENTATIVE came at 12 midnight sharp. All the primary procedures for murder were to be correctly done, as usual.

The letter of introduction by the BIG BOSS.

Representative: *Here you are.*
Murderer: *The report of your company's activities on the specified murdered.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *The letter of confirmation about the qualified murdered.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Biography and genealogy of the potentially murdered.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Address and phone number of the relatives, friends, families or any other persons who have any relation with him.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Job documents, educational degree, physical signs and exact features.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Those of political activities.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Has he ever had any serious disease?*

Representative: *According to the instructions of the BIG BOSS, there was something wrong with his heart three years ago.*

Murderer: *Documents relating to wife or probable wives.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Documents relating to sexual relationships.*

Representative: *Unfortunately with all our continuous attempts, no real document was found.*

Murderer: *Forged documents of sexual relationships.*

Representative: *It's available in his political ones.*

Murderer: *Miscellaneous documents.*

Representative: *Here you are.*

Murderer: *Kind of instruction?*

Representative: *Heart attack.*

Murderer: *Urgency?*

Representative: *Immediate. To tell the truth, the best way to go about this murder... if you want my opinion... is to...*

Murderer: *Description of the time and the place of murder... By the way, in the fields, which you're not majored, especially in my work, never ever interfere!*

Representative: *Oh... yes... excuse me! The murdered – the guy who's supposed to be murdered at 11:13 a.m. of the due day – today – will leave his friend's house. At thirteen minutes to 12:00 a.m., he'll arrive where he lives – the inn on 13th avenue. At seven minutes to 12:00 a.m., he'll enter his room, which is the 7th room of the first floor. At 12:15 p.m.,*

he'll leave his room to get to the train station of 12:40 p.m., to leave this city. You should go to him at 12:13 p.m., and finish the job!

Murderer:

It was a good opportunity for me, because according to the seventh tariff of the pricing department, the price of murder in public places is one and half times more than in private places.

Name and the latest photo of the potential murdered.

Representative: *Let me explain briefly. In this case we had limited time for preparing all of the necessary documents. And that was due to his Excellency, Big Boss, issuing the order rather unexpectedly. Unfortunately we were able to obtain a recent photograph. Granted that the recent ailment may have changed the individual's appearance, but you shouldn't have any problems since there are other pictures in the documents. Plus, his address and complete descriptions are on file exactly... as always.*

Murderer: *Ok! There's no problem. It isn't very important. [Reads the file] The file of the Mr... Titled as the GREAT AUTHOR. What?! The GREAT AUTHOR?!... Let me see... how much will you pay me for such a task?*

Representative: *As usual, according to the tariff, 60 thousand: half before accomplishing the work, half after you finish it.*

Murderer

I remembered what the peddler said: "What's going to happen if this writer – the GREAT AUTHOR – dies tomorrow? His work would be worth twice as much and I would have already sold it...".

I needed to prepare the money for the books before the GREAT AUTHOR's murder.

60 thousand?! It's really shameful! For my latest contracts with the Poverty and Shooting Company and Suicide Section, I've received two or three times more than your suggestion. However, even without overwork and mission charge, the net price of this murder's 90 thousand not 60... Lady!

Representative: *If you are referring to revision 7, the Inn is the place of residence for the Great Author; therefore, it is not considered a public establishment for our purpose. Plus, all of the neighboring rooms where the Great Author resides are vacant. The Inn itself is practically deserted.*

Murderer: *An Inn is considered a public place by law; Note 4, article 8 mentioned in laws related to the places.*

Representative: *Technically correct.*

Murderer: *Technically and otherwise correct. The rules are very clear on this.*

Representative: *Well! So I'll pay you forty-five thousands in check for the first half of the contract!*

Murderer: *Hold on! The file's incomplete. The new photo's not included in the file. Legally, I shouldn't accept this file till the photo's provided.*

Representative: *But you yourself said that the photo's not important at all.*

Murderer: *I didn't say 'not important at all,' but 'not very important'.*

Representative: *What should I do now?*

Murderer: *Complete the file, Lady!*

Representative: *But in this case, we're a bit pressed for time. Please be reasonable! I'm not asking you to kill the devil himself. It's another human... as always.*

Murderer: *No! It's not - as always!*

First, the murder's at 12:13 p.m. that I don't like the time because it's the time that I enjoy reading, caring for my flowers, listening to romantic music and on rainy days, I like to go for a walk at that time. Secondly, the murdered's a great writer, not some ordinary man... Of course this has nothing to do with our work. Thirdly, the file's incomplete. There's no new photo. I don't know whether after his ailment it would be possible to recognize his face or not. If something was to go wrong, no one is going to remember that the file had old photographs; they will blame the murderer himself for making a mistake. You yourself will blame me!

Anyway, I could contact the BIG BOSS and tell him that the received file, prepared by your organization, is incomplete. The BIG BOSS may order to do it without the new photo and I'll obey. But later, you and your bosses will suffer the consequences.

Representative: *Oh, Sir! Please just do it. Will you?*

Murderer: *You don't want me to do something against the law. Do you?... But... apparently the BIG BOSS has a special emphasis on this case...Ok! I'll do it. By the way, please make out the check for the whole price. I don't have the time to receive a second check and go again and again from this office to that office.*

But that representative managed to waste enough of my time. She drew the complete check, but at half an hour to the due time, there wasn't any money in the company's account. From the same bank, I called the representative and I said whatever I could. I threatened them that if they don't provide the fund, I wouldn't do the job. Fifteen minutes later, the money was available. It was getting late. I should've rushed to the inn. First, I went to the peddler and bought all the books of the GREAT AUTHOR. The peddler said that the GREAT AUTHOR's going to go to a big city to receive a literary award from the writers' festival today. I felt sad that I was stopping him to achieve this honour but there was no time to think. I should've rushed to the inn. At once, I remembered that when I returned from the office, I changed my coat. The murder's address was in the pocket of the other coat. I was shocked but I had to keep my head. I checked my pocket. Fortunately, the address was in my pocket! Cool! It's funny. I had changed my coat, not once... but twice! Quickly, I got there. Up to now, despite all difficulties, everything was going on exactly as it was planned. I entered the inn. The old man in charge of the inn was drunk. He was sitting at the reception.

Old man: *Can I help you, sir?*

Murderer: *Excuse me, may I see the GREAT AUTHOR?*

Old man: *Hmm... The GREAT AUTHOR...You mean the one with the sad eyes? Whose handsome face melts one's heart..? A few seconds ago, he went to his own room... He's going to leave within the five minutes... What an honour!*

Murderer: *Excuse me, may I have his room's number?*

Old man: *Are you the taxi driver? Have you come to pick him up?*

Murderer: *No, I'm the murderer. I've come to murder him.*

Old man: *That's kind of you, sir. He's in the upper floor, seventh room on the right. For sure, he'll be glad to meet you.*

Murderer: *Thank you very much.*

I climbed the stairs. At the landing, I nearly twisted my ankle, but I managed to keep my balance. Having climbed thirteen steps, I entered the corridor. The carpet was very dirty. When I walked, the dust rose. I was bewildered that such a great author should live in such a strange place. I wished the time of the murder was a bit later so that I could take him to a luxurious hotel. Not only could it have benefited him, but also I could do something for the one I liked. Also, his murder would be more splendid. The thought of my favorite author's murder in such a place bothered me. Once again, I concentrated on the job. I had three minutes to the due time. As usual, I prepared everything. I counted the rooms. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 on the right. I wanted to open the door. I thought he might be naked. I listened for a few seconds. He was singing to himself. I thought he was taking a bath. I could hear the sound of pouring water. I knocked on the door. If he didn't open the door in five seconds, I would enter the room. Right at the fifth second, the door's handle shook. I saw him. His hands were wet. I shook hands with him. We looked into each other's eyes. His face was very different from the ones on the back of his books. He had grown older but life was still living in his eyes. It was obvious that he has still so many books not written... Again, we looked at each other. He recognized me. He asked no question. He looked up and closed his eyes. Maybe he was praying. I don't know whether it was real or a dream. Two beautiful angels came over his head. I put my hands on his heart and pressed it. You know, it was Heart Attack Company's order. He changed his expression a bit. He complained no more. I continued to press. It was the due time. Finished. He was in my arms. I descended the stairs.

Old man: *Oh, finally I found you. I checked the list and I noticed that the one you wanted to see is on the upper floor, seventh room on the left, not right!*

Murderer: *Damn! You cursed old man, you tell me now? Why now?!*

Ten seconds later, I was at the door of the opposite room.

Please open the door, sir!... Your murder time is over. Open the door!

I broke in. Nobody was there. I then rushed to the train station. Perhaps I could find him.

Taxi! Taxi! Train station Please... Go faster, sir... faster, please!... I'm talking to you, sir!

Driver: *Permissible speed in city streets is 25 miles per hour.*

Murderer: *Damn these regulations! They're always disturbing! Curse these damn laws that always tie your hands and feet!*

Driver: *Stop talking that way in my car...What's the matter? You got a date? I'd guess that you were up to no good and got taken yourself, right? Right? I know that's what's happen! Maybe the guy's left you in the lurch [the car breaks] Oh...No...! See, you get what you deserve. It's differential gear! I'll repair it now! Stay in!*

Murderer: *I'll get out, sir!*

Finally, I reached the train station.

Stop that damn train! Stop it!

It went.

That was how the murdered, who's not the murdered now, had a narrow escape. I wish I could write a letter from the bottom of my heart to the BIG BOSS so that I could express my feeling, but I can't. Because I'm not an author. I'm a murderer.

In the words of the GREAT AUTHOR himself in his last line of his last page of his last book:

*The little girl left
and disappeared in the thick of fog,
taking with her all the hopes and
dreams of man...*

Now, I don't know what should I say to the BIG BOSS. Just a small mistake! A small mistake between the left and the right; damn to the left and the right!

A letter and a newspaper is brought by somebody, maybe by the audiences, maybe by one of his invited guests, maybe by the waiter, maybe by the owner of a café or an inn, or by someone at the back of the stage who is swinging the big pendulum of an enormous clock or by someone or something else! These papers are read by somebody, maybe by the audiences, maybe by some of his invited guests, maybe by a waiter, maybe by an owner of a café or an inn, by someone at the back of the stage who is swinging the big pendulum of an enormous clock or by someone or something else!

...? :

The newspaper... It's published right now. [reads]
"In the last moments of this newspaper's printing, we received a regretful news. Today at 12:13 p.m., the GREAT AUTHOR died. He left as he was going to travel to another city to receive the great literary award. Our reporter says that his body was found in the room opposite. According to the reports, because the faucets of the GREAT AUTHOR's room were out of order, he had left his room to use the toilet of the opposite room, which was deserted, and there he had the heart attack. This big loss..."

The letter of the BIG BOSS.

Dear MURDERER,
Once again, it became clear to everyone that nothing can hinder our high goals and instructions. My dear murderer, once again you have proven to me the degree of your talent and ability in performing your duties and carrying out the order with congratulations, for your accurate and relentless execution of orders in carrying out your honorable duties using all the necessary means, I bestow upon you the title of

"The Most Honest Murderer of the World"

Afshin Hashemi
1996

Translated into English by: Rouzbeh Eftekhari, Afshin Mikaili
Special tanks to: Noushin Seidhosseini, Hooman Khodadost

Performances&Prizes:

Atashkar Festival/ Isfahan – Iran/ 1996: Best Playwright, Best Actor

Students Festival/ Tehran – Iran/ 1997: Best Actor, Best Design

Ebne-Sina Hall/ Tehran – Iran/ 1998 (30nights)

City Hall/ Tehran – Iran/ 2000 (30nights)/ Director: Vahdat Yeganeh

3rd Black and White Theatre Festival/ Imatra – Finland/ 17 June 2006

And

Bailiwick Repertory Directors' Festival: "In Adaptation/Translation"/ Chicago

– U.S.A/ April 2003/ Director: Susan Galey

“The Most Honest Murderer of the World”

Playwright, Director, Actor: Afshin Hashemi

Special Thanks To:

Soheil Namazi Shirazi, Sasan Pirouz, Makta Qasemlou, Fazel Zhian, Sahar Nasouti,

Houman Khoda Doust, Rana Salehi, Houman Sharifi, Saman Khadem

and

Pekka Kettunen, Katri Latt