The Fall of theHouse of Tsarnaev

Josie Jammet for The Boston Globe

Tamerlan, the eldest, started hearing the voice as a young man. It disturbed him. It frightened him, as the voice inside grew more insistent. It may in the end have directed him.

Dzhokhar, the youngest, was the child full of promise. But almost from the moment he left home, trouble and failure seemed to mark him, and risk to allure him. He was anything but a passive figure in the history the brothers would soon make.

A five-month Globe investigation offers new details and insights into the two young men accused in the greatest act of terrorism in Boston history and the deeply dysfunctional family that produced them.

Tamerlan's dreams in shards, the voices inside grew louder

By Sally Jacobs, David Filipov and Patricia Wen

*Josie Jammet for The Boston Globe*Based on interviews and photographic references, the Globe commissioned illustrated re-creations of scenes from the Tsarnaevs' lives, such as Tamerlan and Jahar's bedroom.

Chapter 1

Hopes gave way to chaos

Tamerlan Tsarnaev first heard the voice when he was a young man.

It came to him at unexpected times, an internal rambling that he alone could hear. Alarmed, he confided to his mother that the voice "felt like two people inside of me."

As he got older, the voice became more authoritative, its bidding more insistent. Tamerlan confided in a close friend that the voice had begun to issue orders and to require him to perform certain acts, though he never told his friend specifically what those acts were.

"He was torn between those two people," said Donald Larking, 67, who attended the mosque with Tamerlan for nearly two years. "He said that several times. And he did not like it."

Federal investigators have suspected that Tamerlan, the 26-year-old boxer from southern Russia who is believed, along with his brother, to have set off the deadly Boston Marathon bombs in April, was motivated, if not deliberately directed, by real life jihadist revolutionaries on the other side of the globe. But an investigation by the Boston Globe suggests that Tamerlan was in the perilous grip of someone far more menacing: himself.

The Globe corroborated with several people who knew him just how plagued Tamerlan felt by the inner voices. Some family acquaintances feared for his mental health, among them a doctor concerned it could be schizophrenia. The Globe's five-month investigation, with reporting in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Canada, and the United States, also:

■ Fundamentally recasts the conventional public understanding of the brothers, showing them to be much more nearly coequals in failure, in growing desperation, and in conspiracy.

■ Establishes that the brothers were heirs to a pattern of violence and dysfunction running back several generations. Their father, Anzor, scarred by brutal assaults in Russia and later in Boston, often awoke screaming and tearful at night. Both parents sought psychiatric care shortly after arriving in the United States but apparently sought no help for Tamerlan even as his mental condition grew more obvious and worrisome.

■ Casts doubt on the claim by Russian security officials that Tamerlan made contact with or was recruited by Islamist radicals during his visit to his family homeland.

■ Raises questions about the Tsarnaevs' claim that they came to this country as victims of persecution seeking asylum. More likely, they were on the run from elements of the Russian underworld whom Anzor had fallen afoul of. Or they were simply fleeing economic hardship.

In any case, the family from which two alleged bombers emerged very likely should not have been here at all. But once they arrived the promise of a fresh start quickly soured; the chaotic ways that had long marked this clan only intensified. Long before the bombs ripped through Boylston Street, all six members of the Tsarnaev family had encounters with local police, some of them repeatedly. One decade after they arrived bristling with expectation, the Tsarnaev family had imploded, each member marked by some personal failure within a culture they never fully understood or adapted to. Only two of the Tsarnaev children would graduate from high school, and none of the four ever found their footing outside the troubled family circle.

"Anzor was not able to adjust to life in this country, that was very obvious," said Chris Walter, owner of Yayla Tribal Rugs in Cambridge, who allowed Anzor to work on cars in a space behind

his shop. "He could not follow the logical path you need to follow. He just couldn't put it together, and it affected all of them."

Taken together, these findings suggest that the motivation for the Tsarnaev brothers' violent acts is more likely rooted in the turbulent collapse of their family and their escalating personal and collective failures than, as federal investigators have suggested, on the other side of the globe. It is a portrait that makes the plot that yielded the carnage of April 15 seem less complicated, and the horrific outcome less preventable.

If the truth is that Tamerlan Tsarnaev and his rangy teenage brother acted out of private motives, reinforced by the fervent entreaties of the Muslim militants whose voices and images boiled on their computer screen, they would join the ranks of homegrown murderers such as the Colorado movie theater shooter and the Oklahoma City bombers. Other than their run-ins with local law enforcement, little about them cried out for intervention. When the FBI, responding to a tip from Russian intelligence, checked out the Tsarnaevs in 2011, they apparently found nothing to trigger alarm or particular precautions — their findings were tucked away in a database with hundreds of other similar cases.

The Tsarnaevs, at the time of the FBI encounter, could easily have seemed just another floundering, fragmenting family. At its core, one more reckless young man. Or perhaps it was two.

*Reuters*The Tsarnaevs — siblings Tamerlan, Dzhokhar (later called Jahar), Bella, and Ailina, and parents Anzor and Zubeidat — all had incidents with police in the years they were in the United States.

Chapter 2

Eagerly chasing dreams

To find the Tsarnaevs' place in Cambridge, all you had to do was follow the noise.

By 2008, five years after they'd all arrived in the United States, the Tsarnaev family had expanded and their cramped third-floor apartment, tucked in one of the run-down triple deckers on Norfolk Street, was as crowded as it was loud. At varying times there were one or two babies, the offspring of the Tsarnaev's two teenage daughters; three adults; and three teenagers occupying 800 square feet of living space designed for a family half their size. Their shoes spilled down the stairway; their voices rang out the windows.

The babies' cries were an erratic undercurrent, erupting both day and night. When the older children got home the decibel level in the apartment rose considerably, particularly when Tamerlan pounded out his favorite hip-hop riffs on his keyboard. But none of them could compare to Zubeidat, the matriarch of the household and a woman prone to emotional effusiveness. At times some neighbors had to put their hands over their ears to block it all out.

"Zubeidat had the loud voice," sighed Harvey Smith, who lived in the basement apartment.

In the early years, the family plunged into their new life with enthusiasm. Tamerlan and his sister, Bella, attended the local public high school, Cambridge Rindge and Latin, while Ailina was in the public middle school and Dzhokhar was enrolled at the public elementary school, The Cambridgeport School, where he flourished. Although he was initially held back because of his limited English-language skills, Dzhokhar — later simplified to Jahar by his classmates — was reading so proficiently by the end of the third grade that he was bumped to fifth grade. Katie Charner-Laird, one of his former teachers and now the school's principal, recalls one of his report cards saying that he had "a heart of gold."

Dzhokhar started third grade at Cambridgeport School, eager to learn English and make friends. He was reserved, but showed athletic flair on the soccer field. He later improved so much academically that he was bumped to fifth grade the following year.

Tamerlan, as the eldest child, was expected to look after his sisters in the whorl of a new school, particularly the mischievous Ailina, whom some in the family called the "wild child." More than once Tamerlan struck her when he felt she was out of line, according to a friend of the sisters.

Both Tsarnaev parents scaled back their work ambitions as they struggled to adapt. Although Zubeidat said to many that she had trained as a lawyer, she began providing home health care and would eventually switch to cosmetology doing facials and skin care at a Belmont spa and then in her own home. Anzor, who told many that he had worked as a prosecutor before emigrating, seized upon the square of asphalt that Chris Walter offered him and set to work repairing and trading cars. Able to earn up to $100 a day, ten times what he said he could make back home, Anzor was thrilled.

"When he came here, Anzor loved it," recalled his brother, Ruslan Tsarni, who lives in Montgomery Village, Md. "He appreciated the opportunity very, very much. He never complained."

They had arrived in New Jersey on a raw spring day in 2002, the Tsarnaev parents and their youngest son, a quiet boy of eight with an insatiable appetite for french fries. The other three children, who remained behind with relatives, would join them later. In his pocket, Anzor had the scribbled phone number of a fellow Chechen, Dr. Khassan Baiev, a prominent surgeon who has a home in Needham.

"He called me and said, 'Please, can you help me? There is no one here to meet us,' " said Baiev.

The Tsarnaevs stayed with the Baievs for one month before moving into their Cambridge apartment. Anzor got right to work, fixing cars. Cruising around town in his battered van, often at breakneck speed, he befriended many merchants and their customers along Broadway in Cambridge and soon developed a faithful clientele of his own, many of them drawn by his competitive prices and spirited nature.

"Anzor was tough as they come," recalled Joe Timko, a supervisor at Webster Auto Body in Somerville where Anzor did body work for several months. "He'd change a transmission right there on the street. I mean, he was a stone. But he was also very emotional. He always came right up and gave you a hug."

One of about a dozen Chechen families in the Greater Boston area, the Tsarnaevs soon became a part of their loose-knit social scene. Pulling up at their picnics and dinners in their used Hyundai with their gaggle of children in back, the "two swans," as they had been called back home, were hard to miss. Anna Nikaeva, a Chechen who runs a senior care facility in Newton with her husband, recalls that both the Tsarnaevs liked to dress well.

"She was very glamorous, very fancy, like she was going to walk down the red carpet," said Nikaeva. "She wore elegant dresses with high heels. ... Anzor was also dressed finely and he was most handsome. They had big plans for their kids in America."

*Dmitry Kostyukov/The New York Times*Zubeidat Tsarnaev, the mother of the two suspects in the Boston bombing, after a news conference in Makhachkala, Russia, on April 25, 2013. Both parents insisted that their sons were innocent and had no connection to radical Islam.

The child they had the biggest plans for was their first-born son, Tamerlan. Zubeidat clearly doted on him and was forever singing his praises or musing about his brilliant prospects. As Nikaeva put it, "Tamerlan was idolized. Anything he said was right. He was perfect."

Except that he wasn't. One day in 2008 when the two women were talking, Nikaeva told Zubeidat that she was very impressed with Tamerlan, who had worked for her during the past summer helping with some of her elderly clients. Zubeidat responded by confiding in Nikaeva.

"He had told his mother that he felt there were two people living inside of him," said Nikaeva. "I told her, 'You should get that checked out.' But she just said, 'No, he's fine.' She couldn't accept the tiniest criticism of him. But obviously she was thinking about it enough that she brought it up."

Although they appear not to have sought mental health care for their son, the Tsarnaevs regularly saw a psychiatrist themselves. Dr. Alexander Niss, whose practice is now based just outside Los Angeles, says he saw Anzor and Zubeidat during his residency at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Brighton for monthly visits from 2003 to 2005. Anzor told Niss that he had been captured by Russian troops during the bloody civil war in Chechnya and had been repeatedly tortured. His experience, as Anzor described it, "was very traumatic and it was interfering with his daily life," said Niss. "He had trouble sleeping, things like that. He was really a sick person."

Niss, who is from Russia, said Zubeidat also met with him occasionally to address some "neurotic problems," but he declined to elaborate.

After the Tsarnaev brothers were implicated in the bombing, Nikaeva recounted to her husband, Makhmud "Max" Mazaev, her startling conversation with Zubeidat about Tamerlan's talk of angry voices inside. Mazaev, a urologist, speculated that Tamerlan suffered a kind of mental imbalance, probably schizophrenia. Telling his mother about it was tantamount, according to Mazaev, to "Tamerlan giving her his own diagnosis. But when a parent is not prepared to hear something like that they just don't hear it."

Mazaev later called Niss, whom he knew from his days in Boston, to discuss the matter.

"I told Niss that Tamerlan had some form of schizophrenia. That, combined with smoking marijuana and head trauma from boxing had all made him ill," recalled Mazaev. "But Niss thought it was more a form of paranoia. We were just talking, you know, two doctors talking."

Nikaeva also discussed the issue of Tamerlan's inner voices in an interview earlier this year with Rolling Stone magazine.

*Reuters*A photo shared by Zubeidat's family in Makhachkala, the provincial capital of Dagestan, shows a young Tamerlan, with his father Anzor (left), mother Zubeidat, and uncle Muhamad Suleimanov.

Chapter 3

The pull of Islam

Medical treatment wasn't the answer for her son, Zubeidat evidently decided; religion was. Eventually, she would encourage Tamerlan to embrace Islam to discourage him from partying and drinking. But Niss said that even when he was seeing her she was encouraging her eldest son to read the Koran.

The Tsarnaevs, like many Muslims from the former Soviet Union, practiced a relaxed form of Islam at home and attended mosque only occasionally. But as the stress of life in their adopted country began to take its toll, the family turned to religion with mounting fervor. Only Anzor remained stubbornly secular, even as he was deeply traditional in other ways.

Tamerlan, some times accompanied by Jahar, occasionally attended the Friday service at the Islamic Society of Boston's small blue and silver mosque, a short walk from their house. Some neighbors recall Zubeidat, clad in dark hijab, sternly leading her daughters there.

But faith, too, was soon a source of turmoil and conflict — as ever, the Tsarnaev family way. It was Bella, the more conservative of the girls, who triggered the first clash when she began dating a young Brazilian man who was not Muslim. Anzor was enraged. Determined that his children abide by his wishes, he was not above raising his hand to ensure they did. Once, when he discovered marijuana in a beer can in Jahar's car, he struck him, according to a couple of Jahar's friends. The girls, particularly Ailina, were fearful of their father.

*Mark Garfinkel/Pool Photo*In October, Ailina Tsarnaev was in South Boston district court, charged with impeding a counterfeiting investigation.

Adamant that the girls marry men of their own religion and heritage, Anzor ordered Tamerlan to intervene and bring Bella's relationship to an end. Tamerlan obliged with a neat right hook to the other student's face, according to several sources, for which he was suspended from school for one week. Generally, he didn't have to say a word to get his message across; his intimidating aura sufficed.

Tamerlan had been working at his boxing full force since arriving in the United States. Not only was he training at the Somerville Boxing Club, but most days of the week he ran long distances through the city streets as Anzor shouted advice from a bicycle close behind. When he began using the grape-covered trellis near their apartment as a makeshift gym, neighbors dubbed him the "pull-up boy."

Would-be suitors of the Tsarnaev girls got the message fast.

"It wasn't like he ever said, don't mess with my sister. People just knew," recalled Luis Vasquez, a fellow student and former candidate for the Cambridge City Council.

Tamerlan's role as the enforcer was reserved largely for his siblings. Jahar in particular came under close scrutiny of his brother, who at seven years his senior seemed more a mentor than a friend. Tamerlan sometimes took his brother with him to the gym and encouraged him to box. As one trainer remembered it, Jahar was not particularly interested in boxing, "but he was going through the motions for his brother. ... He was like a lost dog."

Classmates dubbed Tamerlan "Tam," the first of a host of nicknames he was given and readily assumed like so many different identities. They knew him as an amiable fellow always ready with a "Yo, bro..." and a slap on the back.

Tamerlan was a voracious reader — his personal library included Sherlock Holmes and the writings of Gandhi — but school did not come easy to him. In an effort to help the children with their studies, the Tsarnaevs bought a computer with guidance from Smith, their basement neighbor. As with most things in the house, Smith recalls that the Tsarnaev boys dominated the screen and routinely took priority over the girls. For Tamerlan, the computer would become a near constant companion.

As the building's landlady, Joanna Herlihy, put it, "Tamerlan was on the Internet from the time he came here."

The computer screen also offered a way for the Tsarnaev sisters to screen potential mates, some of whom their parents selected for them. They scrutinized one photo in particular of a teenager with light brown hair and an inviting smile. He had been chosen by the family to be the spouse of one of the girls in an arranged marriage.

It would come as a shock to many in their Cambridge community, but the Tsarnaev parents were adamant that their children have marriage partners selected for them. Never mind that they had dodged arranged marriages for themselves: Anzor now regarded the practice as a crucial cultural link to their distant homeland.

"Anzor wanted the family to be a typical Muslim, Chechen family, and that meant the parents controlled things and arranged the children's marriages," said Walter, owner of the Cambridge rug shop behind which Anzor worked.

Bella, however, decided she did not like the young man looking out from the computer screen and declined. And so it was that Elmirza Khozhugov, a relative of one of Anzor's brothers and a native of Kazakhstan, became Ailina's husband.

She was 16. It was time.

Like some others who knew the family, Smith, the basement neighbor, was appalled. "I told them to run away," he said, referring to the two girls.

They didn't. Instead, Ailina and Khozhugov were married in Cambridge in 2007. Ailina was still 16; Khozhugov was 20. Seventeen days later, Ailina gave birth to her first child, a son named Ziyaudy. That Ailina was pregnant at the time of her marriage seemed to trouble the Tsarnaevs little. Getting pregnant before getting married is not uncommon in the former Soviet Union.

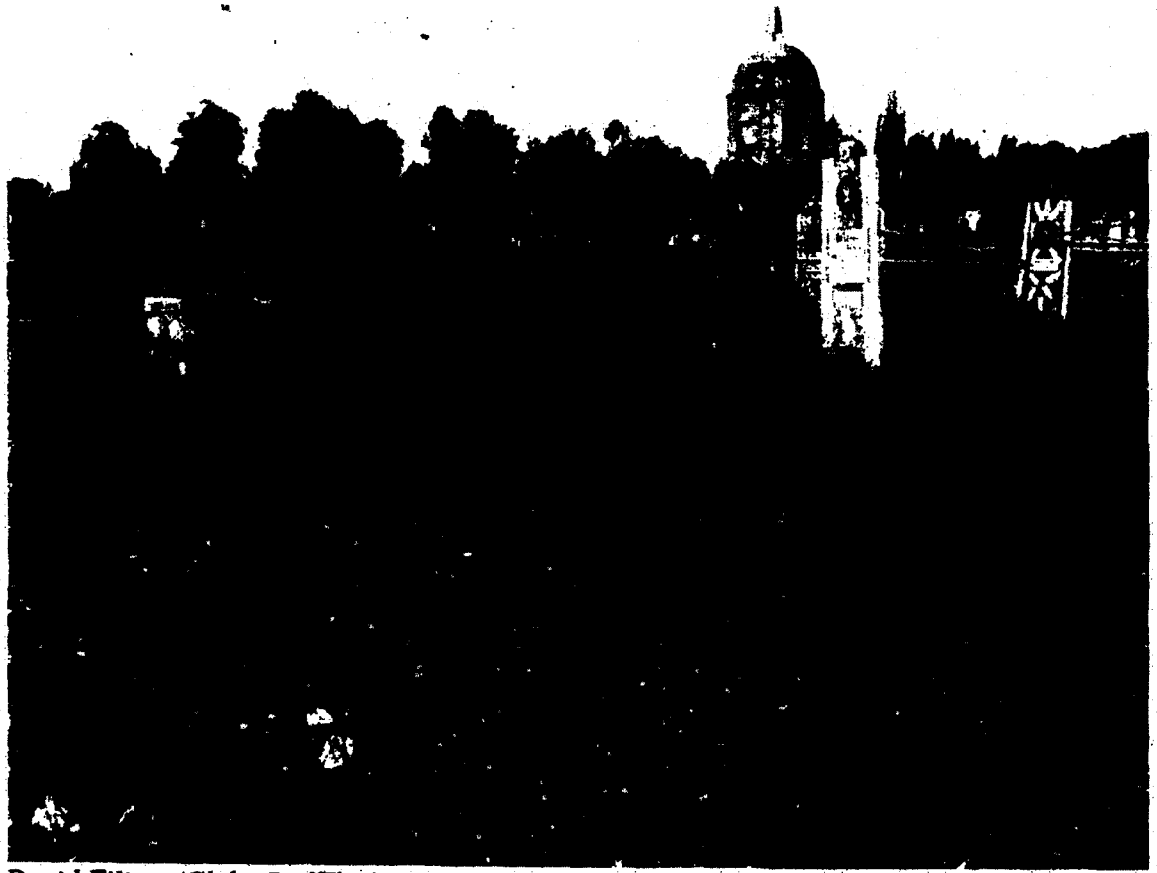
The marriage lasted barely more than a year. On a spring morning in 2008, a sobbing Ailina stood barefoot in the rain outside of her apartment in Bellingham, Wash., begging passersby for a cell phone so that she could call the police to report that her husband had tried to strangle her, according to court records. Khozhugov pleaded guilty to assault, and the marriage was clearly over.

Not long after Ailina moved back into Norfolk Street, Bella followed, with her own baby in tow. Bella had dropped out of school in her junior year, and gone to Kazakhstan to marry. But soon afterwards, her marriage had failed, too.

*Amy Newman/Northjersey.com*Though they were not implicated in the bombings, the Tsarnaev sisters have both had trouble with the law. In September, Bella Tsarnaev was in court in New Jersey on marijuana charges.

With all of them living, at various times, under one roof by 2008, the household churned with babies and bills. Agitated by it all, Anzor developed an increasing array of health problems. His stomach hurt constantly. His head pounded. He tried acupuncture and consulted with a Chinese herbalist. He even swore off his beloved cognac. He admitted to his Yayla Rugs lunch companions that he had been wrong about his daughters' marriages. Anzor even seemed to be losing his affection for his adopted homeland.

"Life here was tough," said Walter. "Anzor always said, 'America, America is a great country.' But it was sort of a joke. You had to work so hard here."



*David Filipov/Globe Staff*The Kyrgyzstan grave of Zaindy Tsarnaev, Tamerlan and Jahar's grandfather, who was killed in 1988. His first name was misspelled, crossed out, and written correctly.

Chapter 4

Fleeing, but from what?

The world they'd left behind was so very different from the one they'd found.

The Tsarnaev clan had lived for generations in the Caucasus foothills of Chechnya, until they were uprooted in 1944, when Soviet dictator Josef Stalin viciously exiled the entire Chechen people to Central Asia and Siberia. Tens of thousands of Chechens starved or froze to death during the journey. Anzor's father, Zaindy, just 11 years old at the time, was one who survived. He carved out a life in Tokmok, a rambling provincial city in the former Soviet republic now called Kyrgyzstan that sprawls between the great Tien Shan mountains and endless steppe.

Like many of his countrymen living on the edge, Zaindy at times survived by scavenging. He often mined a local dump nicknamed "The Golden Pit" for items or scrap to sell. One day in 1988, he threw some promising metal objects into his car, unaware that among them were live munitions. The car exploded, killing the father of seven and the grandfather of Tamerlan and Jahar.

David Filipov/Globe Staff The site of the former home of Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar's mother, in Chokh, Dagestan, a province of southern Russia in the Caucasus mountains. Though the Tsarnaevs are usually identified as Chechens, Zubeidat is an ethnic Avar, the largest of more than 50 ethnicities that live in Dagestan.

Zaindy's headstone, located in a remote corner of the Muslim cemetery in Tokmok, is a mute tribute to his short and brutal life. The name TSARNAEV, crudely painted in black, is split in two; the painter, having miscalculated the space, was forced to tuck the EV under the TSARNA. He also misspelled the first name, Zaindy, then hastily crossed it out and rewrote it. An emblem; all in all, of a family of faint imprint and uncertain prospects.

Like his father, Anzor would also learn to work with other people's wreckage and fix junked cars. By such means, he was able to provide for his wife, Zubeidat, whom he met in the mid-1980s, and their four children. Theirs was, at best, an unconventional union: the exotic, dark-haired young woman was an ethnic Avar. Her people, from Chechnya's neighbor to the east, Dagestan, had a tense relationship with the Chechens. The two peoples rarely intermarried, and Anzor and Zubeidat's union was likely a shock to the family. Just as astonishing, Zubeidat had already fled an arranged marriage, a brazen act in that tradition-bound time and culture.

But Anzor and Zubeidat were both willful personalities, and they paid little mind to the whispers. She was the dramatic beauty, prone to excess. He was a strapping former boxer and a talented raconteur. Together, they made a fiery mix. And more than a few envied their marriage.

Zubeidat (top row, third from right) pictured in 1982 with her ninth-grade high school class in Chokh, Dagestan.

"You'd look at them and think, 'they're like two swans,' " recalled Raisa Kaaeva, who grew up across the street from the Tsarnaevs in Tokmok.

In the early 1990s, Anzor took his family to his historical homeland, Chechnya, which declared independence from Russia in 1991, and at the time appeared to offer better prospects than Kyrgyzstan. He called his friend in Tokmok, Bakhtiar Nurmenov, declaring, "'Everything's great." Then, Nurmenov recalled, "the war began."

In 1994, the Kremlin sent its troops to put down the rebellion. Tens of thousands died, hundreds of thousands fled. Among them were the Tsarnaevs. Nurmenov remembers the day Anzor showed up in Tokmok in his battered hatchback with his family, some clothes, and little else.

*Igor Kovalenko/European Pressphoto Agency*Bakhtiar Nurmenov in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan, where the Tsarnaev family lived after the Chechen people were deported from the Caucasus to

Central Asia in 1944. Nurmenov and Anzor Tsarnaev, father of the Marathon bombing suspects, repaired cars for a living in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

"He was crying. The car had little bullet holes," Nurmenov recalled.

Anzor returned to the business of refurbishing cars. He would later say in interviews that he also earned a law degree, but the university in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, where his three sisters and one of his brothers earned law degrees, has no record that Anzor received a diploma. Friends say he was more likely just taking classes.

Anzor and family members have also said that he worked for a district prosecutor's office in Bishkek, but the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry has no record that Anzor ever did. More likely, according to Uzbek Aliev, a leader of Tokmok's Chechen diaspora, he had some kind of unpaid internship.

But the internship provided Anzor with something perhaps more valuable to him than a law degree — an ID card from the prosecutor's office. This, according to friends, helped him ward off corrupt officials and extortion gangs seeking to get in on his main livelihood: "Shuttle trading," moving consumer goods to meet free market demand in the ruins of the Communist economy.

One product Anzor traded in was tobacco, according to Badrudi Tsokaev, a longtime family friend. Anzor and an uncle would transport tobacco from a factory in southern Kyrgyzstan and to buyers elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. It was a good business, but a dangerous one. Gangsters were also drawn to the tobacco trade.

It is possible that threats from such criminals prompted Anzor's hasty departure, with his family, from Kyrgyzstan. His wife would later suggest as much, but that wasn't the story Anzor told.

In interviews with Russian journalists after the Boston bombing, Anzor said that the family had been the victims of oppression of ethnic Chechens. Anzor, according to family and friends in the United States, suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and often woke up screaming or weeping in the middle of the night.

But some associates believe that Anzor exaggerated his narrative of persecution. Among them is Aliev, the deputy head of the Chechen diaspora. While Chechens faced hardships in Kyrgyzstan, he said, "there was no special treatment, bad treatment, for Chechens" in Tokmok when Anzor lived there.

Some experts have also raised doubts about Anzor's claim. Kathleen Collins, a University of Minnesota associate professor of political science who worked in Kyrgyzstan in the mid-1990s, said that Chechen community leaders complained about harassment in Kyrgyzstan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States — and after the Tsarnaevs left Kyrgyzstan for Zubeidat's homeland of Dagestan in southern Russia.

*Darren Durlach/The Boston Globe*Taking a look at the life of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar's grandfather sheds light on their violent roots.

Mark Kramer, program director of Harvard University's Project on Cold War Studies, who has testified in a number of asylum cases from the region, says he sees, "no basis for their being granted asylum at all."

So, too, do associates of the family in Kyrgyzstan scoff at the notion of such persecution. As the family friend Tsokaev, put it, "He made that up ... so that the Americans would give him a visa."

Zubeidat told a different story of the origins of her husband's nervous disorder and nightmares to a health care aide in the United States who worked with Zubeidat for over a year caring for a disabled couple in West Newton. The aide said Zubeidat told her that Anzor had "tried to prosecute" some members of the Russian mob involved in an illegal trading venture. "When the case was over, the mob came and took Anzor for one week and tortured him so severely that he almost died. When they were done they dumped him out of their truck in the middle of nowhere," said the aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Zubeidat went to the hospital and when she saw how horribly beaten he was she said that she realized they had to get out of the country," the associate said.

The mob, according to this account, took one macabre, parting shot. Before Anzor could leave the hospital, someone took the family's German shepherd, cut off its head, and deposited it on the Tsarnaevs' doorstep.

"Zubeidat said that is why they left," added the aide.

Back in Kyrgyzstan, there is still another account of why the Tsarnaevs wanted to go to America, and it, too, has nothing to do with persecution.

"We watched all these films, saw how beautiful Hollywood was," said Nurmenov. "It seemed that life was good there. [Anzor] told me, 'Let's go to America. Why should we sit here and rust?' One day I found out that he was going away. He said, 'You can get a visa to America. It's easy.' And then later he left."

*Josie Jammet for the Boston Globe*Anzor pushed Tamerlan hard in the boxing ring, and both were increasingly hopeful that Tamerlan's boxing skill would take him to the big time, possibly even the Olympics.

Chapter 5

Shattered illusions

The screaming echoed throughout the building.

Anzor Tsarnaev was standing in the doorway of the old Somerville Boxing Club, his wiry form hunched with urgency, as he barked a succession of commands in his native Russian at his eldest son, who was sparring in the ring. The elder Tsarnaev, himself a former boxer, had been exiled to the doorway for his inflammatory style of coaching. But the bullish Anzor thundered on.

A few of the club's staff let it pass when they saw him try to climb into the ring, but when he leapt to ringside during several heated bouts and again began trumpeting advice, he was ordered back into the audience. That didn't last long either.

"Pretty soon he'd be right back up there on the apron, yelling and screaming at Tamerlan," recalled Lyle Lashley, a trainer who used to work at the club. "Eventually, he went and sat back in the crowd but then he'd just call out from there."

Seated docilely next to Anzor at many of Tamerlan's bouts were his wife and three other children, bound by Anzor's quixotic dream that his son would become a world-class contender. Tamerlan's foray into boxing was no mere matter of sport. For the Tsarnaev family, who religiously showed up at the ring together in the early years after they arrived, it was their passport to respectability and their ticket to success. And none of them believed it more fervently than Tamerlan.

For Anzor, the reality of life in America had proved more difficult than his dream, but the sight of his eldest son in the ring invariably buoyed his spirits. After a couple of years here, Tamerlan had pounded out a steady record of wins and come to be known as one of the better boxers in the region. Trainers gave him nicknames evocative of his raw power: Tam or Timberland or just "The Russian."

*Anne Rearick/Agence Vu/Aurora Photos*Tamerlan Tsarnaev with Somerville Boxing Club trainers got his hands laced at Golden Gloves in Lowell. Just one year after arriving in the United States, Tamerlan showed significant promise in the ring and in 2004 won the novice title in the 178-pound division of the Greater Lowell Golden Gloves competition.

A gifted athlete and sought-after sparring partner, Tamerlan was unorthodox in several respects. He was flamboyant, occasionally doing handstands and cartwheels in the ring. Sometimes he showed up with his keyboard and performed an elegant sonata. Although he did not discuss his Muslim faith with the other boxers, at times he quietly placed a small mat on the floor and prayed.

"Tam was spotty," said one trainer who worked with him in Somerville and asked not to be identified. "Sometimes it seemed he didn't want to be trained by anybody."

And then there were his clothes. Tamerlan's workday outfit consisted of silver hightop tennis shoes, skin-tight jeans, a white scarf, and his trademark furry hat. Although he was often hard up for cash, he drove a sleek white Mercedes, apparently a perk of his father's side business in used cars. On special occasions, he sported snakeskin pants and a shirt unbuttoned to the waist. Kendrick Ball, owner of the Camp Get Right Boxing Gym in Worcester, remembers seeing Tamerlan for the first time.

"He had on a white trench coat and flashy boots that looked like they were made of aluminum foil," said Ball. "At the time I thought if this guy is gonna dress like that he must be one tough mother———. People were definitely watching him."

When Tamerlan later began training at the Wai Kru mixed martial arts center in Allston, one of his training partners there, who asked not to be identified, made fun of his flashy clothes and jokingly called him "Eurotrash." But Tamerlan, he said, joked right back.

*Anne Rearick/Agence Vu/Aurora Photos*Tamerlan Tsarnaev with Micky Ward, former professional boxer, at Golden Gloves in Lowell in 2006. When Tamerlan graduated from high school in that year, he began attending college as a part time student but continued to devote most of his energy to boxing.

Both Tamerlan and Anzor were increasingly hopeful that Tamerlan's boxing skill would take him to the big time, possibly even the Olympics. It might be his only route to success; his other options were not panning out. After he graduated from Rindge in 2006, Tamerlan applied to UMass Boston but was, apparently, turned down because of his mediocre grades. He enrolled at Bunker Hill Community College as a part-time student in accounting but attended fitfully, appearing for only a single semester a year between 2006 and 2008. One of his teachers recalls Tamerlan saying that he was turning in papers late because his father was ill. In the spring of 2008, he took one more shot at higher education and enrolled in two evening classes at Mass Bay Community College. He withdrew after three weeks for reasons that are unclear.

Tamerlan began partying hard. Much of his time was spent smoking pot and listening to music with some of his Rindge friends. One of them, Sebastian Freddura, said that "Tim," or the "oddball Russian," as they called Tamerlan, and their pals would routinely go party on weekends at Salem State University, which Freddura attended from 2008 to 2010.

Another person who happened to be on that campus at the time was Sean Collier, the MIT police officer whom the Tsarnaev brothers are accused of murdering, and who graduated from Salem State in 2009. It is a remarkable coincidence, but the Globe uncovered no evidence that the two ever met. Investigators have indicated that the brothers apparently approached Collier at random on April 18 and shot him as they tried to take his gun. Asked if Tamerlan might have known Collier from the Salem campus or had approached him intentionally, state and federal investigators declined to comment.

The Salem campus is not the only place that Tamerlan and Collier might have crossed paths. Both men were active in Somerville boxing circles. Tamerlan trained at a gym called the Somerville Boxing Club that closed several years ago. Collier provided IT assistance to a newer club called the Somerville Youth Development & Boxing Club. Some trainers and staff involved at both clubs wonder if Tamerlan ever became aware of Collier at one of the two locations.

One of Tamerlan's closest friends around this time was a fellow Cambridge resident and Rindge graduate named Brendan Mess, with whom he often smoked marijuana and trained at Wai Kru. Tamerlan often hung out with a group of friends at Mess's home. One of those who sometimes joined the group recalls Tamerlan talking about conspiracy politics, once referring to " 'the 9/11 setup by the American government.' He said it had nothing to do with terrorists."

No one thought much about it at the time.

Neither of his parents was happy that Tamerlan had abandoned his schooling. Although proud of his son's boxing success, Anzor frequently admonished him about his lack of a job and the two quarreled frequently, according to several sources. Zubeidat, who now lives in Dagestan, said in

a telephone interview with the Globe last month that Tamerlan gave up on college voluntarily, but she was not sure why.

"There was no problem with him in school," she said. "He had a brilliant brain."

Not nearly as much parental attention was focused on Jahar, who was increasingly left to forge his own way. When he graduated from the Community Charter Schools of Cambridge school in 2007, only Joanna Herlihy, the Norfolk Street landlady, showed up to cheer him from the audience. Neither Anzor nor Zubeidat were there.

Soon after he entered Rindge, Jahar was busy with honors courses and wrestling practice. Although not the most gifted wrestler on the team, he was a hard worker and he was voted team captain in his junior and senior years. At home, Jahar continued to be, or at least play the role of, the obedient child and often babysat for his sisters' babies.

But behind the dutiful facade was a freewheeling teenager, who was smoking marijuana and drinking a lot. Concerned about her spiraling children, Zubeidat decided to act. She headed first for Tamerlan, Koran in her hand. Together, the two of them began reading the sacred Islamic text. Tamerlan eventually gave up drinking alcohol, although he continued to smoke marijuana regularly. He also began poring over Islamic websites and began to moralize with his brother. When Jahar announced he was going out, Tamerlan was often on his case, insisting that he stop drinking and come home early.

Although Jahar could stand up to his brother, whom he often found overbearing and annoying, he nonetheless began to show some curiosity about the faith as well. For a time, he attended a Muslim prayer group at Rindge. But he had his limits. While he observed Ramadan and fasted, he continued to smoke marijuana during that month of religious observance even though it was forbidden to do so. Jahar, as one of his friend's explained it, "was serious about religion, but he was also trying to have a good time."

Zubeidat's embrace of Islam was more visible than either of her sons'. Gradually, she put aside her designer dresses and high-heeled shoes and began to wear loose dark clothing and a hijab. At the Essencia Day Spa, the tony Belmont salon where she worked doing skin care, Zubeidat began refusing to do waxes or to do facials on men. Eventually, the spa owner tired of her religiosity and let her go.

By the time Uncle Ruslan — Anzor's brother, who had emigrated earlier and was now living in Maryland — showed up for a visit at the end of 2008 he was horrified to find his nieces and nephews deep in prayer, while his brother's angry objections about their religiosity went completely ignored.

Allison Shelley/Associated Press Ruslan Tsarni, uncle of the suspected Boston Marathon bombing suspects, spoke to reporters in front of his home in Montgomery Village, Md., on April 19, 2013.

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"When I saw [Zubeidat] in that Muslim wear I expressed my deep dislike for that woman," Ruslan declared. "Anzor was unable to fight her. He was hypnotized by her, like a little puppy."

Ruslan, when he left, declared that he would have nothing more to do with his brother's family. Losers, he later called them.

*Glenn DePriest/Getty Images*Lamar Fenner and Tamerlan stood during a decision in the 201-pound division boxing match during the Golden Gloves National Tournament of Champions on May 4, 2009, in Salt Lake City. For Tamerlan, the outcome hinted at troubling developments in his boxing career to come the following year.

Chapter 6

Knockout blow

On this day, however, losing was simply out of the question.

It was Team New England's last bout of the night at the 2009 National Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions in Salt Lake City and Tamerlan had just landed a crushing blow in the first round of the 201-pound division, sending his opponent, Lamar Fenner, to the mat. The crowd erupted in a roar of approval. But when Fenner finally rose and the judges turned in their scoring cards at the fight's end, Fenner was named the victor. After a moment of shocked silence in the Salt Palace Convention Center, the crowd booed loudly.

"Tamerlan was in total disbelief. Everyone was," recalled Alex Noshirvan, who covered the event for the Lowell Sun.

Things were only going to get worse for the Tsarnaevs, and particularly for Tamerlan. One year later, Tamerlan would become the New England Golden Gloves heavyweight champion of the year for the second time and also again capture the Rocky Marciano Trophy, for winning the heavyweight division. But because of a change of rules that year, which prohibited non-citizens from participating in the national tournament of regional Golden Glove champions, Tamerlan was blocked from continuing on the road he and his family hope would lead to Olympic glory. It was the one way the Tsarnaevs were sure they would make their mark on their adopted land, and now the way was blocked.

*Julia Malakie/The Lowell Sun via Associated Press*Tamerlan Tsarnaev, left, accepted the trophy for winning the 2010 New England Golden Gloves Championship on Feb. 17 from Dr. Joseph Downes, right, in Lowell. Despite his victory, Tamerlan was barred from the national tournament of Golden Gloves champions due to a rules change that prohibited noncitizens from competing. For Tamerlan and the entire Tsarnaev family the development brought to a bitter end their hopes for Olympic glory.

"He said he had been robbed," recalled the Wai Kru training partner. "But he told me it was not good to be angry. It would poison you."

But behind that stoic front, Tamerlan was rudderless and unsure. He sought some mooring in his faith and that, as with most other things he was interested in, took him back to the computer screen.

Unemployed, no longer taking classes and training fitfully even in 2009, he had plenty of time on his hands. Too much time. Ever restless, his temper flared. In July, Cambridge police got a 911 call from his girlfriend, Nadine Ascencao, saying that he had beaten her up. When police arrived at the Norfolk Street house, Tamerlan admitted that he had slapped her, according to the police report. Although he was charged with assault and battery, the charges were dismissed. But for the raft of traffic violations he'd accumulated over the years, his record remained clean.

Less than two weeks later, Anzor was also involved in an assault and battery, but in that case he was the victim. The trouble began late one night as Anzor sipped a cognac with friends at the Brighton restaurant, Arbat. Another patron accused him of bumping into his companion's chair; Anzor, he insisted, "must go apologize to the girl," according to the Boston Police report.

When Anzor refused, the two decided to take the matter outside. Several other patrons followed and began hitting Anzor until one struck him in the head with a steel pole, causing severe injuries. Anzor wound up in the hospital for a week, but he would complain of searing headaches for over a year. Some friends felt he never really recovered.

With Anzor unable to work full-time, and plagued by both headaches and stomach pain, the family was granted food stamps for the next couple of years and cash assistance for 10 months under a government program called Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Even with that, money was always in short supply.

*Musa Sadulayev/Associated Press*Anzor Tsarnaev, father of the two Boston bombing suspects, looked on during a meeting with the Associated Press in Makhachkala, provincial capital of Dagestan, Russia, on May 30, 2013. Authorities accuse Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who was slain in a shootout with police, and his younger brother Dzhokhar of organizing the attacks, which killed four and wounded more than 260.

Zubeidat, at this point, was the major breadwinner, but her income was also down because her religious fervor was beginning to disturb some of the customers whom she now saw in the family's apartment. One longtime client, Alyssa Kilzer, noted on her blog that Zubeidat had begun refusing to see boys who had gone through puberty, as she considered doing so sacrilegious. When Zubeidat declared that that 9/11 was "purposely created by the American government to make America hate Muslims," Kilzer stopped coming to her salon.

Amidst the difficulties that the year had brought there was, however, one bright spot. Her name was Katherine Russell. A vivacious brunette with inviting eyes who was a communications

major at Suffolk University, the Rhode Island native was introduced to Tamerlan at a downtown club.

Raised a Catholic, Katie was already questioning her faith in light of the clergy sex abuse scandals; Tamerlan's Muslim convictions intrigued her. For Tamerlan, dating a woman who was neither Chechen nor Muslim was problematic for numerous reasons, not the least of which had to do with his father. And when he decided to move in with her, it caused considerable family distress. "For Tamerlan, this presented a crisis of faith because it was against his religion to live with someone outside of marriage," said the home health aide who later worked with Zubeidat in West Newton. "When Anzor found out, he was furious, furious."

*Evan McGlinn/New York Times*Katherine Russell, outside the Cambridge building where she lived with her husband, Tamerlan, and their daughter. They settled into a routine soon after their quiet marriage; Katie supported the family with her work as a home health aide, while Tamerlan took care of their daughter at home.

Paternal opposition, predictably, only strengthened Tamerlan's resolve, causing him to embrace Islam with even greater fervor and open a breach with his father, who remained adamantly secular. Herlihy, the landlady, said she believes Tamerlan chose to become "more Muslim," largely to show that he was not abandoning his heritage in marrying an American woman who was a Christian.

But when Katie became pregnant, Anzor and Zubeidat warmed to their son's mild-mannered girlfriend. All the Tsarnaevs were pleased when Katie agreed to convert to Islam and take the name "Karima." In June of 2010, the couple was quietly married in a brief ceremony at the Masjid Al-Qur'aan mosque in Dorchester.

Not long afterwards, the couple's daughter, Zahira, was born, and the young family moved back into the Norfolk Street apartment. It was a cheaper option; the rent ran about $1,200 a month. And there was room. Both Bella and Ailina had long since left, partly to escape their father's volatile temper but also to visit their sons who at times were living with family overseas. Boston police would come looking for Ailina that fall in connection with allegations that she lied to investigators looking into a counterfeit bill used at a local restaurant, but Zubeidat told them her daughter had moved out. Ailina would later be charged with impeding the counterfeiting investigation; the case is pending.

Katie and Tamerlan soon settled into a routine; Katie supported the family with her work as a home health aide, while Tamerlan took care of their daughter at home. In his spare time, he often went to the Cambridge mosque.

He frequently took with him an elderly friend who would sit in a chair at the rear of the mosque due to a disability that made it difficult for him to pray with the others on the floor. The man, Don Larking, had been disabled by a gunshot wound decades earlier that caused him some loss of both mental acuity and physical strength. He had met Tamerlan after Zubeidat took a weekend job assisting his wife, a quadriplegic, in their West Newton apartment.

*Josie Jammet for the Boston Globe*As he grew deeper in faith, Tamerlan frequently went to the mosque with his friend Don Larking, who sat in a chair because of a disability.

Larking and Tamerlan, who met when Tamerlan visited his mother at work, took an immediate liking to one another and shared their views on conspiracy theory and American politics. Larking loaned his young friend copies of a newspaper he reads, "The Sovereign, newspaper of the Resistance!' ", which suggests that US military explosives were used in the World Trade Center attack. But Larking found that Tamerlan had strong political views of his own. He did not, for example, approve of President Obama's use of drones in foreign conflicts or what he considered the US government's expansive foreign policy.

"He felt the US should not get involved in other people's affairs and should stick to its own business," said Larking. "He did not like the country's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq at all."

As their relationship grew closer, Tamerlan confided in Larking his troubling secret about the voice inside his head. Tamerlan told him that he had been hearing the voice for some time, and that he had a theory of what might be afflicting him.

"He believed in majestic mind control, which is a way of breaking down a person and creating an alternative personality with which they must coexist," explained Larking. "You can give a signal, a phrase or a gesture, and bring out the alternate personality and make them do things. Tamerlan thought someone might have done that to him."

The person inside him, as Tamerlan described it to Larking, "was someone who wanted to control him to make him do something."

*Darren Durlach/The Boston Globe*Tamerlan Tsarnaev experienced many personal problems leading up to the Boston Marathon.

Weeks before Zubeidat took the job with the Larkings, the FBI concluded an investigation into both Tamerlan and Zubeidat, exploring the possibility that they were religious extremists with terrorist intent. Russian authorities said they had secretly overheard a telephone conversation between the two of them in which jihad was mentioned, and they tipped off American investigators. But after the three-month investigation, the FBI put their names in a terrorism database and closed the case.

Appearing ever more devout, Zubeidat continued in her spiritual mission. In her first months working at the Larkings, Zubeidat wore her hijab. Then, she began praying five times a day on a small rug she laid out in a corner. Always dressed in dark earth tones, as the Larkings' home health aide recalls it, Zubeidat took to wearing long gloves when she drove to avoid making contact with a male toll taker on the highway. Determined that strange men not see her, she stacked her shopping bags from Lord and Taylor and Nordstrom against the window in the aide's bedroom so that no one could peek inside.

"It was just one big wall of bags," said the aide.

Zubeidat was struggling with her marriage as well. Doctors suspected that her husband's stomach pain might be cancer, according to one close friend, and Anzor had become even more anxious and distressed. His night terrors had returned and many nights he screamed into the darkness, making sleep all but impossible for anyone on the third floor on Norfolk Street. Photos of Zubeidat from this time show an angular woman, shrunken in her dark clothing, a far cry from the ebullient figure who once twirled about Chechen parties in a red dress, cigarette in hand.

"She said she did not know how long she could stand it the way he would go off crying in the middle of the night like that," said Larking.

Zubeidat confided in Larking's aide that she was thinking of leaving Anzor, but her husband beat her to it and declared the marriage over. In August 2011, the Tsarnaevs filed for divorce on the grounds of an irretrievable breakdown of their marriage. With his dreams of a prosperous life in America shattered and his aspirations for his children in tatters, Anzor prepared to return to Dagestan.

*Sally Jacobs/Globe staff*Donald Larking, 67, who attended mosque with Tamerlan for several years.

"By the time he decided to go, it was all too much for him," sighed Walter, of Yalya Rugs. "He said, 'I've been here for 10 years in this country and I have nothing to show for it. Nothing. I have less than when I came here.' He was just done."

On his return to Dagestan, Anzor bought an apartment and by early 2012 was working on setting up a store to sell sundry items or perfume. In talking with friends back home, Anzor routinely declared that Jahar was studying at "the best university" back in Massachusetts and Tamerlan was going to represent America in the Olympics. None of it was true.

With his father gone and both Zubeidat and Katie working long hours, Tamerlan had all but given up looking for a job and often found himself alone on Norfolk Street. He spent hours cruising the internet for websites associated with Islamist militants in the Caucasus. A month after his parents filed for divorce, Tamerlan apparently posted on his Facebook page a link from an online Chechen news agency to an article claiming that the US leadership was in an "all out war against Islam" and calling upon Muslims to fight against America, according to "Veterans Today," an online military journal.

Tamerlan's religiosity was growing and, with it, an air of self-righteousness. On his frequent visits to the home of his Cambridge friend, Brendan Mess, Tamerlan often chided another Muslim there for drinking alcohol and for living with her partner out of wedlock. But no one took offense, or took note of Tamerlan's hypocrisy on both counts.

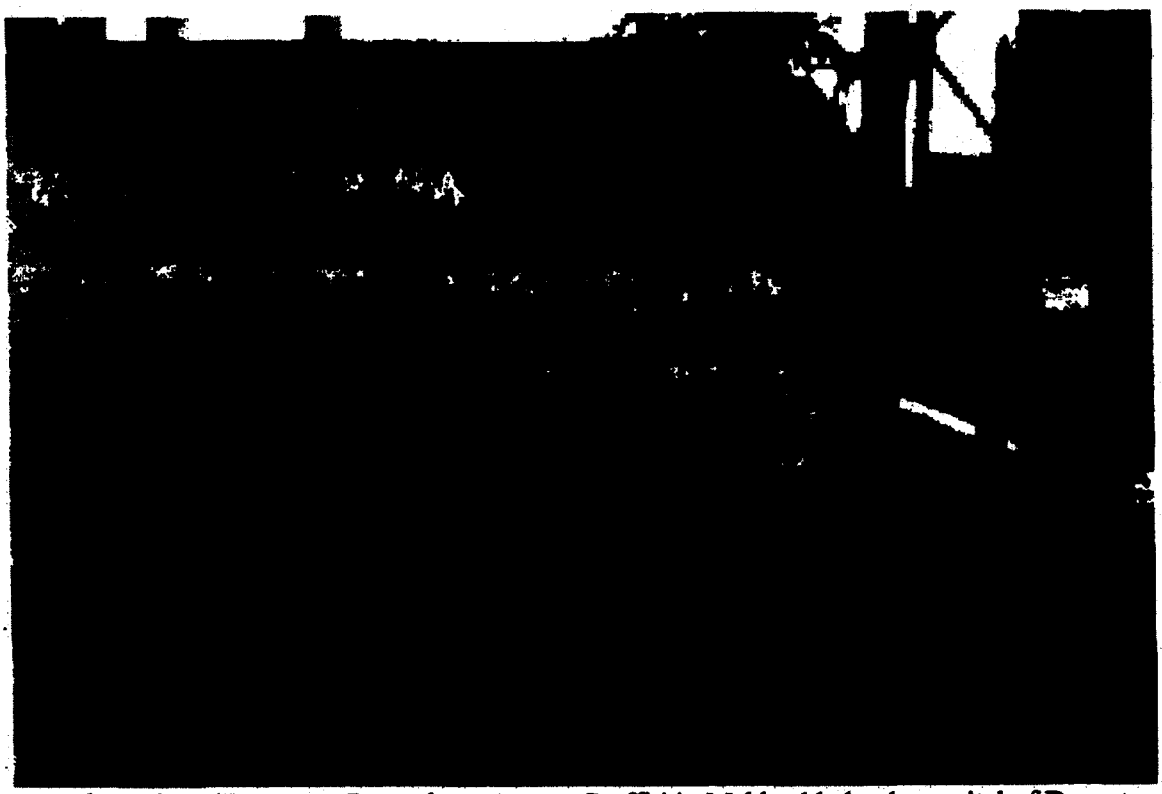
"I really liked Tam," said one person who was present. "He was nice and clean and not intrusive. He was just kind of there."

On Sept. 12, 2011, Mess, and two of his friends, Erik Weissman and Raphael M. Teken, were found brutally murdered in the apartment, their throats slit and their bodies sprinkled with marijuana. Authorities suspected from the start that the murders were drug-related; they have now also come to suspect that Tamerlan might have been involved in the slaying. Prosecutors, in a recent court filing, said that a friend of Tamerlan had implicated him even more directly, though they offered little detail about what his role or motive might have been. The friend, Ibrahim Todashev, was shot dead by the FBI in Florida in May. Nothing else has been revealed to date, or turned up during the Globe examination of the case, to associate Tamerlan, at this time, with violent crime or drug dealers. It is a black hole in his biography.

Tamerlan's demeanor after the killings puzzled people close to him. He was clearly upset and told friends at the gym that he thought Mess had "gotten in with some bad people," according to one of them. But he surprised many when he failed to appear for either Mess's wake or funeral. Shortly afterwards, he announced that he was going to Dagestan to visit family members.

That left Jahar as the only child at home. As Tamerlan and the Tsarnaev parents were preoccupied with the upheaval in their lives, Jahar continued to do well on both academic and athletic fronts. In June 2011, when he graduated from Rindge, Jahar was one of 45 students granted a $2,500 college scholarship from the city of Cambridge and was named to the National Honor Society.

In another senior rite of passage, Jahar was awarded the MVP trophy by his high school's wrestling team. While each of the other team members who received awards were accompanied by a family member or friend, Jahar had neither. His coach, who had an assistant coach walk with Jahar up to the podium, was not surprised. During the three years that Jahar had wrestled, the coach said, not one of his family members had ever come to watch him compete.



Anatoly Maltsev/European Pressphoto Agency Graffiti in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, reads "Fear Allah — Cover Yourself." The Islamic revival since the fall of communism is largely peaceful, but radical insurgents and police are fighting a war that claims a life nearly every day.

Chapter 7

Stranger among kin

Tamerlan arrived in Dagestan in January 2012 looking, as he told many, to immerse himself in his faith. What he found was that the southern Russian province where his mother was born was experiencing an Islamic revival. Friday prayers drew crowds of worshippers that spilled out into the street from dozens of new mosques. The revival has had a violent side: The Islamist insurgency that failed in neighboring Chechnya has moved to Dagestan, where a jihadist underground stages deadly raids on police and the secular government they protect. Police have responded, in some cases, according to human rights advocates, with summary executions of suspects.

The clash of cultures is tangible in the frenetic capital, Makhachkala, where Tamerlan spent much of his time. Young women in dark veils walk hand-in-hand with friends in short skirts and designer sunglasses past walls scrawled with red paint warnings: "Fear Allah, cover yourselves!" "Allah sees all!" "Know, you dogs, there will be jihad before judgment day!" Heavily armed police checkpoints separate streets dotted with wireless cafes, sushi bars, and glistening shopping centers that cater to a growing consumer class. Everyone knows someone, or knows of someone,

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who has been shot passing through these checkpoints on suspicion of being part of the underground.

Anatoly Maltsev/European Pressphoto Agency A young man outside the central mosque of Makhachkala, the provincial capital of Dagestan. As citizens of a predominantly Christian country, young people in Dagestan are aware that the Islamic revival in the southern Russian province is a source of tension.

Tamerlan fell in with members of the Union of the Just, a group that campaigns against human rights violations against Muslims, and is led by a third cousin on his mother's side, Magomed Kartashov. Some of its members follow a strict interpretation of Islam, and believe in the establishment of an Islamic caliphate governed by sharia religious law that would span the Caucasus. They are sharply critical of US interventions in Muslim countries, believe the US government condones the burning of Korans, and have had run-ins with Russian authorities — but they do not openly espouse violence. Tamerlan, they say, arrived with a lot of questions about Islam and wanted to learn how to better express his faith.

"He was at the beginning of his path. He was mostly a listener, a searcher, he was looking for answers," said Mukhamad Magomedov, deputy leader of the group.

Tamerlan spent a lot of time hanging with the Union of the Just members, praying with them and studying the Koran. Also, playing soccer and fooling around. Some of his new friends have pictures of Tamerlan at a Caspian Sea beach, playfully buried in the sand, and attending a wedding. They gave him a second name, Muaz, after an early Islamic scholar, a name he would later use for his YouTube account.

But if Tamerlan was hoping to fit in with Muslims in Dagestan, he did not succeed. Part of it was, yet again, his curious appearance. He wore a long shirt of the type favored by Pakistanis, according to his friends there. He combed his hair with olive oil and darkened his eyes with kohl shadow, practices followed by devout Sunnis in some cultures, but not in Dagestan. Local young Muslims wear track suits and T-shirts and are distinguishable only by their long beards.

Tamerlan's demeanor differed in other ways as well. Speaking in English-inflected Russian, he would smile broadly and chat up strangers, neither of which are common acts on the streets of Dagestan. He also made a show of giving money to beggars on the street, something rarely done by locals.

"What gave him away was his appearance," Magomedov said. "He didn't try to adapt."

Tamerlan also began praying at a mosque attended by Salafi Muslims, a strict, orthodox Sunni sect whose members, authorities believe, often aid the armed insurgency.

There, Russian authorities say, he met with members of the insurgency.

Such contact, according to Russia's Federal Security Service, known as the FSB, was Tamerlan's real motive in coming to Dagestan. The FSB account has it that Tamerlan's name came up during the interrogation of a Canadian national named William Plotnikov, who was suspected of being a member of the underground. Investigators also maintain that Plotnikov and Tamerlan communicated via an Internet site for Muslims. This version of events has it that the bombings could have been prevented had US intelligence heeded warnings the Russians sent US authorities about Tamerlan in 2011 and 2012.

Russian authorities have said that Tamerlan, possibly through Plotnikov, made contact in Dagestan with an alleged recruiter for the underground named Makhmud Mansur Nidal, who was killed in a firefight with security forces in May 2012. Plotnikov was killed in a counterterrorist raid in July, days before Tamerlan left Dagestan and returned to the United States.

But several observers have raised doubts about the FSB version. They say it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Tamerlan to have met with members of the underground without drawing attention. And if the FSB already suspected Tamerlan of seeking such contacts, they would ordinarily have been watching him very closely, said Andrei Soldatov, a leading Russian analyst of the FSB.

"Knowing of Tamerlan's suspicious contacts in Dagestan in 2012 and having suspected him as early as 2011, it is unclear what prevented the FSB from seizing him when he was leaving Russia," Soldatov said.

*David Filipov, Darren Durlach/The Boston Globe*Tamerlan Tsarnaev took a trip to Dagestan in 2012. His reasons for going have been the subject of dispute.

Kartashov, the leader of the Union of the Just, was quoted in May suggesting that Tamerlan was seeking to make contact with the rebels. According to news reports at the time, Kartashov said he spent hours trying to disabuse Tamerlan of the notion that violence was the way to establish an Islamic state. Arrested earlier this year on charges of assaulting a police officer, Kartashov was not available to be interviewed. Magomedov denied that Kartashov ever said he had to talk Tamerlan out of joining the rebels.

If US investigators suspected that Tamerlan had actually met with insurgents, Magomedov and other members of the Union of the Just said, they never brought it up when they interviewed Tamerlan's friends in Dagestan in June. The friends said they were never asked about Nidal or Plotnikov. This claim is supported by a three-hour recording of an interview by two FBI agents with one of Tamerlan's friends in June, which the Globe was able to listen to. The names never come up.

"They were looking for just one thing; to find an explanation for why a person coming from Dagestan would start setting off explosions in the US," Magomedov said. "As far as some sort of proof, no, there was absolutely none."

Tamerlan, he added, left Dagestan promising to come back.

Mukhamad Magomedov (center, in jacket) was an associate of Tamerlan in Dagestan and deputy head of the Union of the Just.

Chapter 8

A worrying homecoming

On his return to Cambridge that summer, Tamerlan had visibly changed. His face was covered by a thick beard. Gone were the silver boots and trademark fur hat, replaced by dark clothing and a white prayer cap worn by Muslims. His prayers in the corner of the Wai Kru gym, which once took minutes, now lasted up to half an hour. His visits to the gym were rare.

"When he came back he had really dialed up the religion thing," recalled his Wai Kru training partner, who declined to be identified. "The days of joking about his appearance, the Eurotrash, that kid was gone. In his place was a quite intense individual, one very focused on the heavy bag."

So, too, Tamerlan's anger over America's foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq had escalated several notches. At home, he railed angrily about Muslims being killed overseas. When he talked on the phone to associates overseas, and even to friends and his brother in the apartment, he often spoke in Russian, far more than he ever had before. When Katie asked why, Tamerlan said the people he was talking to did not speak English.

"What could she do," said a family friend who asked not to be identified. "She was a woman of the Muslim faith. Her husband did what he did."

Even the Cambridge mosque, which had once provided Tamerlan solace, now seemed to be a source of agitation. In November, a few weeks before Thanksgiving, a guest imam said during prayers that it was all right to celebrate some secular holidays, such as Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July. Tamerlan leapt to his feet and angrily declared that the imam was wrong. Several elders in the church sat down with Tamerlan after the service.

*Jonathan Wiggs/Globe Staff*Ismail Fenni was one of several elders who spoke with Tamerlan after his two angry outbursts inside the Cambridge mosque. After the second outburst in January 2013, members of the congregation called out to him to "leave, leave now."

"He was listening, but he was pretty emotional," said Ismail Fenni, the acting imam, who is one of the mosque's elders who was present. "He was standing by his views."

Not long after that, Tamerlan had a similar outburst at the Al-Hoda market, a Middle Eastern grocery that specializes in halal meats, as prepared according to Muslim law. Last November, when assistant manager Abdou Razak posted a sign advertising halal turkeys for Thanksgiving, Tamerlan stormed into the store demanding to know, "why we were pushing Muslims to

celebrate this holiday when it was just for Americans," said Razak. "I said, 'You know my opinion. I am an American.' "

At the mosque, Tamerlan erupted aggressively a second time at a Friday prayer service in January shortly before Martin Luther King Jr. Day, accusing the imam of being a "hypocrite." Others in the room told Tamerlan to stop, calling out, "Leave. Leave now," until finally Tamerlan stormed out of the building.

Larking, too, found his young friend changed in several ways on his return. Much more serious than he had been, Tamerlan insisted that Larking grow a beard, "to honor the prophet Mohammed." Larking complied. He also pressed Larking to remove his wedding ring, saying that most Muslims did not wear gold, but Larking refused. The last time Larking and Tamerlan sat together in the rear of the mosque, Tamerlan once again mentioned the voices in his head. This time, as Larking recalled it, he seemed afraid.

"He said, 'Someone is in my brain, telling me stuff to do,' " recalled Larking. "He said he was trying to ignore it but it was hard to do. Whatever it was he was being told to do, he didn't want to do it."

Back home on Norfolk Street, things had gone quiet. Several months before Tamerlan left for Dagestan, Zubeidat announced that she too was going back to Russia to tend to a sick brother. When she left, Katie took over her job at the Larkings.

Making matters worse, the Tsarnaevs were about to lose their home, their one point of stability in a rocky decade in America. Herlihy, the landlady, decided she needed more rent for the place and told Tamerlan that he needed to move out by June. Tamerlan, she said, "was shaken" but agreed.

And so the Tsarnaev family's days were numbered on Norfolk Street. Their home, however, had long been emptied of the hopes and ambitions the family had brought with them. On the stairs there were just Zahira and Tamerlan's shoes now. Jahar, now attending UMass Dartmouth, was not around much. The heavy afternoon silence was broken only by calls from Katie, worried about her daughter during her long shifts at work. When Tamerlan came into the empty apartment there was only the computer screen to keep him company.

Back when he returned to Cambridge in August, Tamerlan had launched a YouTube account using the username, muazseyfullah — his nickname from Dagestan, Muaz, coupled with the Arabic phrase "The Sword of God" — and launched a series of strident Islamic postings. In one, called "Terrorists," a speaker wearing camouflage flanked by armed men wearing masks holds an assault rifle and says in Russian, "There will always be a group of people who will stick to the truth, fight for that truth … and those who won't support them will not win."

One article that both the Tsarnaev brothers apparently read closely, which appeared in the summer 2010 issue of Inspire, Al Qaeda's online English-language journal, was called "Make a Bomb in The Kitchen of Your Mom." The article provided detailed instruction on how to make a bomb in a pressure cooker using easily obtained flammable materials and shrapnel. The bomb is

then attached to an electrical source with "the wires sticking out of the hole in the lid of the cooker." The article offers several final safety tips, including this: "Put your trust in Allah and pray for the success of your operation. This is the most important rule."

And then the bomb is ready to go.

Dzhokhar

Dzhokhar, the youngest, was drawn to risk and spiraled into infamy

By Patricia Wen

Jahar's parents had deemed him the brains of the family, destined to be the first to earn a US college degree. Instead he drifted onto a path that ended with his capture in a boat in a Watertown backyard.

Chapter 1

On the road to trouble

He was just another face in the crowd near Copley Square on that unseasonably warm April day, cheering on the runners like everyone else, hanging with a college pal. At the 2012 Boston Marathon, Dzhokhar "Jahar" Tsarnaev wanted to be part of the city's signature athletic event, not to destroy it.

With classes canceled for Patriots Day, the UMass Dartmouth freshman and his best friend Steve had headed up to Boston to join the throng. They arrived too late to see the indomitable Kenyans sweep the top spots, but in plenty of time to help rally the pack down the home stretch, to munch on pizza, savor the sunshine and — as often with Jahar — smoke a joint.

He had two essays due by noon the next day, but he was in no rush to get to that. It was time to enjoy a piece of one of Boston's oldest traditions and happiest days.

"We were just chilling," Steve said.

Jahar's soft features and mop of hair — unremarkable then, infamous now — only added to his relaxed aura. But it was a facade. Jahar was that day no ordinary college boy but a young man in the midst of a troubling transformation. The high school honor student and wrestling team captain from Cambridge was foundering in his studies and increasingly drawn to trouble. He had, soon after arriving on the Dartmouth campus, established himself as a high-volume pot dealer, pulling in about $1,000 in cash a week, and sometimes more, according to several college friends of his who spoke to the Globe. The money gave him the thrill of financial independence, and helped pay for indulgences previously out of reach — his love of designer shoes, trips to pricey New York City clubs, and other extras like Ciroc vodka and psychedelic drugs.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in a photo from the Cambridge Rindge and Latin Yearbook.

Jahar was also one to court danger, and even occasionally carried a gun to protect his stash. There was a brazenness about him, but also an undeniable charm. He was the one friends relied on to sweet-talk campus police out of nailing them for drug use or other violations. He was on a downward trajectory at school, to be sure, but seemed nonchalant, or in denial, about it. Certainly, he lied about it.

This wasn't the way it was supposed to be for the youngest child in the Tsarnaev clan. His burly older brother Tamerlan had, as an amateur boxer, carried the family's hopes for athletic distinction. Jahar was to be the scholar. His parents had deemed him the brains of the family, destined to be the first to earn a US college diploma and become a high-earning professional. His father, a Chechen immigrant who fixed cars for a living, had boasted to friends that Jahar was Ivy League material.

Yet despite his keen mind, Jahar could never deliver academically once he got to college. No longer part of a wrestling team and high school that had supported him in critical ways that his family, consumed with its own problems, never did — Jahar began to drift. He focused on being the unofficial leader of a small group of friends who shared his budding interest in global affairs, in thrill-seeking adventures, in getting high.

Among them, Jahar was known as his own man, a leader not a follower, as he was often cast after the world saw the photos of him loping after Tamerlan, as the brothers rounded the corner onto Boylston, backpacks on their shoulders.

*Josie Jammet for the Boston Globe*Jahar didn't try very hard to conceal his drug-dealing, keeping a scale in his dorm room desk and bagging marijuana with the door open.

Chapter 2

A brash kind of freedom

On college move-in day, September 2011, Jahar arrived in a rush at the entrance of the Maple Ridge dorms, hours after most of his classmates, said Jason Rowe, his freshman roommate. Neither of Jahar's parents came with him, but a young man in his 20s did. It could have been Tamerlan, Jahar's older brother, the roommate said, but introductions were never made.

"He didn't help him take things out of his bag or anything," Rowe said. "He came in and then left."

Jahar unpacked his belongings, which included a prized collection of sneakers that he organized beneath his bed. His choice of wall decorations seemed to capture the range of his undergraduate ambitions: A poster of bikini-clad women on a beach. An image of Albert Einstein. He told his

roommate he would be majoring in engineering, one of the most rigorous concentrations on campus.

And, indeed, his lineup of five fall courses was fairly intense: principles of modern chemistry; pre-calculus; introduction to design; critical writing and reading; and elementary Spanish II, according to a school source who reviewed his academic record.

This state university in southeastern Massachusetts has been described as a place of opportunity for many first-generation college students, yet new arrivals often struggle to get adjusted.

Its massive concrete academic buildings — designed by the architect who created Boston's Government Center — can give the 700-acre campus a cold look. Finding a comfortable place in the student body can also be challenging. It is a transient group: Half of the 7,500 undergraduates are commuters and one in four freshmen do not return after their first year.

Still, Jahar soon found a social niche. He already had two close friends from his public high school, Cambridge Rindge and Latin, joining him: His best friend, Steve, a Muslim convert who was also close to the rest of the Tsarnaev family, and another close friend, Robel Phillipos. Soon Jahar joined an intramural soccer group, made other acquaintances playing video games and watching TV, and posted jokes on a new Twitter account.

Robel Philipos was just behind and to right of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (center with hand on chin) in a photo from the Cambridge Rindge and Latin Yearbook.

Soon these college friends got to know a side of Jahar that many saw in high school: He was, they said, generous with favors and compassionate if you had a bad day.

Jahar, for example, often helped friends get good deals on car repairs. He used his father's auto-repair connections in Cambridge to secure bargain rates for friends.

But mostly, Jahar's name got around campus because he was associated with a different venture: selling notably strong marijuana.

"He was known for having the best bud on campus," said a longtime friend of Jahar's from Cambridge, who was close to Jahar over the past several years. He, like many other friends who spoke to the Globe, asked to remain anonymous, or to be referred to by first name only, because they do not want their identities associated with the bombing and, after being interrogated by the FBI, want to avoid further dealings with law enforcement.

According to this friend and Steve, whom Jahar kept informed about his marijuana dealings, the pot-selling business grew quickly until he was earning about $1,000 a week, and often more. These friends also said from time to time Jahar carried a gun when packaging his weed. He was conscious of the value of his product and also often had large sums on his person.

In other ways, too, he was brazen about his pot-selling business, almost daring intervention by authorities. Jahar kept a scale in his desk, and would often bag marijuana on a table with the door open to strangers, said his roommate.

"He did it right in the open," Rowe said.

It was obvious to Rowe that Jahar was running a lucrative business. He said Jahar often returned from shopping trips in town with big bags.

"If he wanted to get something in the store or eat late at night, it wasn't an issue," said Rowe.

Steve said Jahar had often smoked weed in high school but never considered dealing it, for fear of getting caught and jeopardizing his standing on the wrestling team. He was the beloved captain who never missed a practice or a match.

Jahar was also remembered in high school as a fast driver, but in college he took his recklessness to new limits. A lit cigarette in hand, Jahar loved to imitate the racecar drivers he so admired and accelerate his 1999 green Honda Civic to nearly 120 miles an hour, according to several close friends. Once, when his car was jammed with passengers, he stuffed a friend in the trunk rather than leave him behind. Another stunt both impressed and slightly terrified his friends: Jahar sometimes turned corners with the steering wheel between his knees, leaving his hands free to roll a joint.

"He had no problem taking risks," Steve said.

*Josie Jammet for the Boston Globe*Jahar's friends relied on him to get them out of trouble with police at and around UMass Dartmouth, including a day they were smoking marijuana in a campus parking lot.

Chapter 3

Floating past trouble

Jahar's self-confidence and sense of fun drew friends to him, including two well-to-do students from Kazakhstan, Dias Kadyrbayev and Azamat Tazhayakov, who shared Jahar's love of sports cars, hip-hop music, and getting high. The three often spoke Russian together, and Jahar's roommate recalled seeing the trio play with BB guns. Jahar also attracted friends in college who shared his interest in tripping on psychedelic drugs, such as acid and mushrooms, according to several friends.

His inner circle in college was strikingly diverse; they were mostly foreign students or first-generation immigrants with roots in Africa, central Asia, or the Middle East.

Jahar's roommate, Rowe, described Jahar as the "leader" of this group of friends.

"He was always the one saying, 'Let's go do this.' He was just more forceful."

He also began to identify more closely with his ancestry, often reminding his friends that his family was among the oppressed Chechen Muslims, a group he depicted as brutally victimized by the Russians. In the spring of 2012, he posted on Twitter, "Proud to be from #chechnya."

Yet his friends often joked that Jahar was the most "white" among them.

As a sophomore at UMass Dartmouth, Dzhokhar enjoyed some weekends away in New York City, spending money at clubs and bars. He visited Manhattan's Times Square with two fellow UMass Dartmouth students, Dias Kadyrbayev, center, and Azamat Tazhayakov, left. The two Russian-speaking students came to Massachusetts from the Central Asian nation of Kazakhstan, and quickly became close friends with Jahar.

This aspect of Jahar's looks — combined with his good manners and flawless English, the language he had been speaking since arriving in the United States at age 8 — was perceived as a big asset whenever he and his friends had run-ins with police.

This happened one night at a campus parking lot while Jahar and some friends were "fishbowling," smoking weed inside a car with the windows closed to enhance the high. Minutes later, they heard a knock. A campus police officer stood outside.

As Jahar opened the window, thick clouds of smoke floated out.

"Are you guys smoking marijuana?" the officer asked.

Jahar nodded, then repeated respectful words like "officer" and "sorry" and "never again." Friends said Jahar always knew how to fake penitence.

The officer listened, then said, "OK, my problem then is that you're illegally parked, so please go."

He drove away, with his friends suppressing laughter.

Such confrontations with local and campus police were hardly rare. Friends said such close calls happened as often as twice a month over issues such as speeding, raucous partying, and possession of alcohol or drugs.

With Jahar as the designated spokesman with police, however, they never got into trouble, according to several friends.

"He's articulate. He can look like a privileged white kid from the west," said a longtime friend, referring to the more-affluent west side of Cambridge compared to the more working-class east side where Jahar lived.

Steve said Jahar was similarly spared punishment after he got into a physical altercation at an upper-class dorm party at UMass Dartmouth, which sent the male victim to the hospital for treatment. He said Jahar was questioned by someone at the school, but never got written up. Indeed, campus officials told the Globe Jahar had a clean record with them.

And despite his daring driving habits, Jahar was only cited once, in 2011, for ignoring a traffic sign. He later went to a Cambridge court to appeal the ticket. The official waived the $20 fine and checked the box for "NR" — meaning "not responsible." A college kid headed for trouble, bigger trouble than anyone could imagine, he was never held to account. If he acted at times like he never would be, he had reason.

*Darren Durlach/Globe Staff*Dzhokhar's sophomore year room at the Pine Dale Hall. He apparently did not spend lots of time at the start of 2013 in Room 7341 — shown here after janitors prepared it for this fall's incoming students — as he continued to fail his classes and began spending more time with off-campus friends and back in Cambridge.

Chapter 4

Slipping, and in denial

If partying was a priority, studies were not. As Jahar's wallet thickened with cash and his sense of invincibility grew, he was rarely spotted studying at the Carney Library or student lounges. His first term grades averaged a C-minus, which triggered an "academic warning" on his record. The next term, things didn't improve. He generally showed up for classes and his demeanor seemed engaged and respectful, but his test results indicated that he was barely paying attention.

"It's like the lights are on, but nobody's home," said instructor Frank Cabral, who had Jahar in his finite mathematics class in the spring semester. "He's friendly and personable, but academically lazy."

Cabral's class is a requirement for a business major, which Jahar thought he might pursue after dropping engineering as his focus. The professor said he invited struggling students like Jahar to come for special tutoring, but that Jahar attended only once or twice. A school source said Jahar ultimately failed Cabral's class, which is considered a fairly easy one.

Rather than seek help, Jahar hid his failures behind bravado.

*Darren Durlach/The Boston Globe*Dzhokhar's third-grade teacher and high school wrestling coach remember what he was like.

Friends say he often portrayed UMass Dartmouth as beneath his intellectual heft. On Twitter, he sent out a message in mid-November, saying "using my high-school essays for my english class #itsthateasy." In April, he wrote: "I dont go to class for a whole month and still manage to get a 97."

He also kept telling friends that he was planning to transfer to a better school. He cited as attractive possibilities Northeastern and UMass Amherst, two schools he claimed to have been admitted to but decided against because they offered less generous financial aid than UMass Dartmouth. The truth, according to university officials, was his applications had been rejected at both schools.

Jahar had actually begun to exhibit signs of academic decline in his latter years in high school. While he graduated with roughly a B average and was among 45 seniors honored with a $2,500 city scholarship for promising students, his grades had slid yearly. His freshman grades averaged a B-plus, but his senior year grades had slipped to a C-plus average.

His dismal college grades call into question whether he was actually academically — and emotionally — prepared for college. He apparently had never been diagnosed with any learning disabilities. His closest friends said he rarely disclosed personal problems. One consistent complaint that appeared on his Twitter postings was about chronic problems sleeping, including some nightmares.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, shown here in the Cambridge Rindge and Latin 2011 yearbook, earned accolades as captain of the wrestling team and a reputation as a generous kind-hearted student. While he graduated as a member of the National Honor Society and had a B average on his transcript, his academics slid gradually from his freshman to senior year.

Other postings sounded darkly philosophical, even if also contrary. "It's kind of like we're living in this time where good is evil and evil is good," he wrote. Another posting echoed a lyric in a Kanye West song, "Every thing im not makes me every thing I am."

By the time he travelled to Boston for the 2012 Marathon, Jahar had drifted to the edge of academic failure. Students at UMass with two consecutive semesters below a C average are put on academic probation; financial aid, as a result, is also in jeopardy.

Jahar was squarely in this danger zone. He ended up with Ds in two classes, Economics and Human Ecology, and failed two others.

As Jahar packed his belongings at the end of the school year and prepared to return to Cambridge, he kept his grades a secret from his friends.

He said goodbye to his roommate, then said they probably wouldn't see each other on campus next year. Jahar told him that he was transferring to UMass Amherst.

*Yoon S. Byun/Globe Staff*One of the family's few constants was their 800-square-foot apartment (center) in Cambridge.

Chapter 5

A stifling summer

The East Cambridge home Jahar returned to that summer was an unsettled one. His parents' marriage had crumbled; his father was gone. His brother Tamerlan had just returned from six months in Dagestan, a province in southern Russia, bringing with him a more volatile demeanor and a radicalized outlook.

Accompanying Jahar was his friend Steve, who spent much of that summer with the Tsarnaevs because he wasn't getting along with his parents. Steve said he witnessed nothing to suggest the brothers were planning a violent plot or even had an inkling of one.

What he recalled, in fact, was that Jahar and Tamerlan pursued very separate lives — Jahar was a summer lifeguard at Harvard's Blodgett pool who liked to stay out late with friends; Tamerlan was an unemployed husband and father who spent countless hours devoted to his Muslim faith and watching over his toddler daughter while his wife worked as a home health aide.

The 800-square-foot apartment had seen more crowded days, but still six people lived there, including their mother, Zubeidat, until she left at the end of the summer for Dagestan.

*Globe staff*Movers this summer hauled away items from the master bedroom, the largest of three bedrooms in the third-floor East Cambridge apartment.

It was a time of great family upheaval. Their father, Anzor, had moved to Dagestan after he and his wife divorced just as Jahar started college. Their two sisters, Bella and Ailina, were struggling single mothers who shared an apartment in New Jersey after their marriages fell apart.

Tamerlan, then 25 and nearly seven years older than Jahar, became the head of the Cambridge household. Steve recalled that Tamerlan often admonished Jahar about partying too much, and praying too little. He said Jahar respected his older brother, and sometimes agreed to join him at the local mosque. Still, Jahar never became particularly religious and was not shy about going his own way.

"Jahar was not afraid of Tamerlan," Steve said. "If Tamerlan didn't want him to go out, Jahar would say, 'Hey chill out, I'm going to see my friends.' "

One of Jahar's wrestling teammates who also went to UMass Dartmouth, Nawrass Abu-Rubieh, remembers being told by Jahar one day that summer, "I want to get out of this house."

Steve said he has to strain to think of anything suspicious that summer in the Tsarnaev home. He noticed two BB guns in the apartment, and recalled that the family owned another gun. He said that while Tamerlan was clearly consumed by the Internet, he does not know exactly what he was reading.

He said he and Jahar trolled the Internet for fun and occasionally scanned Muslim and political web sites, but insisted they did this only out of curiosity. When playing video games and watching shows, such as "Breaking Bad" and "Game of Thrones," only once did the conversation veer toward the topic of terrorism, Steve said.

*Globe staff*The two brothers — who are seven years apart — grew up sharing bunk beds in this small bedroom in East Cambridge. This summer after the bombings, movers emptied the apartment unit where the family had lived continuously since they arrived in the United States.

While watching the superhero movie "Thor," they came to a scene in which a law enforcement agent interrogates Thor about his superb military training. The agent raises the possibility he was trained in war-torn Chechnya. As Steve recalled, Jahar turned to him after that scene saying, "It's where I come from. The Western world — they think we're terrorists."

Jahar also sometimes talked about visiting Chechnya, but not until his US citizenship came through, which it did later that year. He wanted to travel on an American passport.

Jahar was also apparently open to his mother's suggestion that he consider an arranged marriage to a Chechen woman, though on at least one occasion he said he was opposed to the idea.

In July 2012, he posted on Twitter, "my moms tryina arrange a marriage for me aha she needs to #chillout I'll find my own honey."

*Peter Pereira/Standard Times via Associated Press*UMass Dartmouth students outside the Pine Dale Hall dormitory, where Dzhokhar Tsarnaev lived, as students were evacuated from campus on April 19, 2013, during the investigation by state and local officials.

Chapter 6

Spiraling toward the end

Jahar's return to the sprawling campus of UMass Dartmouth in the fall of 2012 restored the autonomy that he craved. But it had become, for him, a far lonelier place.

Steve was transferring to UMass Boston, and Robel would leave campus in December. The friends from Kazakhstan, Dias and Azamat, had moved 4 miles away to an apartment in New Bedford. Jahar had a new room in the Pine Dale dormitory with a newly assigned roommate.

As Jahar restarted his robust pot-selling business, he told friends he was desperate to leave UMass Dartmouth and now spoke of colleges in California or New York. He was also, despite his marijuana income, falling into financial trouble. His financial aid package was held up, largely because of his low grades. He owed about $20,000 and got a string of dunning notices.

As the cold chill of late autumn arrived, Jahar's family problems grew. His oldest sister, Bella, was arrested in New Jersey, on charges of marijuana distribution. His mother also had an outstanding warrant from a summer shoplifting charge.

His prideful facade remained intact, however. He boasted to Steve that he had bumped his fall-term sophomore-year grades to above a B average.

The truth was he failed three courses — chemistry and the environment, introduction to American politics, and general psychology — and got a B in his writing class. His average now hovered around a D-minus.

Yet college officials, remarkably, authorized Jahar to sign up for the spring term of 2013. It is unclear who did so or why, but under normal college procedures someone would have had to lift the "hold" that is placed on files of failing students like Jahar and only after being convinced the student had "special" circumstances that argued for leniency.

*Darren Durlach/The Boston Globe*In Dzhokhar's later college years, a pattern of risk taking paints a different picture of the young man that everyone thought was on the right track.

As one professor put it, Jahar's ability to keep his standing at school despite his grades probably only intensified his sense of intellectual superiority and invulnerability.

"He has a right to be contemptuous," said the professor, who asked to remain unnamed to avoid association with this case.

Still, starting in the winter of 2013, Jahar almost certainly knew his hopes of ever getting a college degree — and bringing honor to his family — were bleak, if not impossible. He had so prized his independence from his fractious clan, but had proved entirely unable to manage on his own. It's unclear why. Some who knew him think the loss of the sense of cohesion and caring he had known in high school, especially on the wrestling team, was more than he could handle. His wrestling coach, Peter Payack, thinks it could be.

"I think losing the wrestling team probably meant more than losing his mother and father," he said.

But regardless of the cause, Jahar was spiraling: And his thoughts were taking a darker — more politically radical — turn.

When Jahar started thinking that way is unclear. All that is plain is that he did, and that there were people in his life, Tamerlan notably, who might have encouraged him down that path.

Even as Jahar continued to party with friends in the early months of the year, spending hundreds of dollars at hotels, restaurants, and clubs in repeated trips to New York City, he was apparently spending more time in Cambridge in the apartment occupied by his brother and family, friends said.

Behind the scenes, he and Tamerlan were hatching their plot. Whose idea it was — and who orchestrated the scheme — is known only to Jahar, and perhaps to the police and prosecutors who have interrogated him.

Around this time, prosecutors say, Jahar downloaded onto his laptop several radical Muslim publications that focused on jihad and enemies of Islam. One contained a foreword by the late

Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born Al Qaeda propagandist who died in a drone strike two years ago and is alleged to have inspired at least two terrorist plots against Americans.

US Attorney's Office via Associated Press In its federal criminal complaint, the US Attorney's office showed fireworks, which federal agents recovered from inside a backpack belonging to Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, in a landfill in New Bedford.

Tamerlan, in early February, paid $200 in cash for fireworks, and the two spent $160 to rent guns for practice at a shooting range. If unemployed Tamerlan was short on cash, Jahar was not.

Jahar also used his laptop to download an article from an English-language Al Qaeda publication entitled, "Make a bomb in the kitchen of your mom." Over dinner this past spring, he casually told his Kazakh friends that he knew how to make a bomb, prosecutors said.

Soon, Jahar would be a face in the crowd on Boylston Street again. And this time, he would make sure, no one would forget.

*Sean Murphy/Massachusetts State Police via Associated Press*Dzhokhar Tsarnaev leaned over in the boat where he was found hiding by law enforcement authorities in Watertown.

Chapter 7

Awaiting judgment

With Tamerlan killed in the shootout that ended the brothers' five days of terror, Jahar is now alone to face charges of using weapons of mass destruction to kill three and injure some 260 others, as well as charges in the murder of police officer Sean Collier.

On the interior walls of a dry-docked boat in Watertown where a bloodied Jahar was found, the Cambridge teenager railed against America. As he thought he was dying, he wrote in pen, among other things, "We Muslims are one body, you hurt one you hurt us all."

Massachusetts State Police The boat in which Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was hiding in Watertown was seen in a Massachusetts State Police thermal image taken from a helicopter on April 19, 2013.

The death penalty remains a possibility for Jahar, now 20, as he is being held in a medical facility at the Fort Devens federal prison. His visits and phone calls are restricted to his immediate family and his legal team, which also includes a "mental health consultant," court records say. His mother, Zubeidat, who lives in Dagestan, said in a phone interview that she is in regular phone contact with Jahar and has been advised by his lawyers not to say anything more about him.

Three of Jahar's friends from UMass Dartmouth also face federal charges for obstructing the investigation. His best friend, Steve, who is not facing charges, said he still can't believe Jahar is a cold-hearted bomber.

Little is known of what Jahar makes of his plight or what, if any, defense, he has to offer.

Contrition or regret do not seem high on his mind these days, or at least did not on the day of his arraignment in July.

Before that proceeding, he sat in a holding cell and guards observed him through surveillance cameras. At one point, according to courthouse sources, Jahar lifted his hand toward the camera lens and flipped up his middle finger.

Soon after, he walked into the packed courtroom and gazed into the rows of spectators.

*Jane Flavell Collins via Associated Press*Courtroom sketch depicts Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev standing with his lawyer, Miriam Conrad, left, before Magistrate Judge Marianne Bowler, right, during his arraignment in federal court on July 10, 2013, in Boston.

His parents were not present; nothing new for Jahar at key moments in his life. They remained in Dagestan, telling reporters their sons are the victims of a massive conspiracy. His two sisters sat on benches nearby, one weeping. Some friends from Cambridge Rindge and Latin came to see him.

As the magistrate asked Jahar to plead to the first of the charges he faced, his high school friends expected to hear the Jahar they knew: the former wrestling team captain who knew how to speak respectfully, if sometimes disingenuously, to authorities.

But Jahar answered in a voice no one had ever heard from him before, speaking with the distinct accent of a new Russian immigrant.

"Not guilty," he said firmly, over and over again.