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Jahar's World

He was a charming kid with a bright future. But no one saw the pain he was hiding or the monster he would become.

by JANET REITMAN

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Our hearts go out to the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing, and our thoughts are always with them and their families. The cover story we are publishing this week falls within the traditions of journalism and Rolling Stone's long-standing commitment to serious and thoughtful coverage of the most important political and cultural issues of our day. The fact that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is young, and in the same age group as many of our readers, makes it all the more important for us to examine the complexities of this issue and gain a more complete understanding of how a tragedy like this happens. —THE EDITORS

Peter Payack awoke around 4 a.m. on April 19th, 2013, and saw on his TV the grainy surveillance photo of the kid walking out of the minimart. The boy, identified as "Suspect #2" in the Boston bombing, looked familiar, thought Payack, a wrestling coach at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. On the other hand, there were a million skinny kids with vaguely ethnic features and light-gray hoodies in the Boston area, and half the city was probably thinking they recognized the suspect. Payack, who'd been near the marathon finish line on the day of the bombing and had lost half of his hearing from the blast, had hardly slept in four days. But he was too agitated to go back to bed. Later that morning, he received a telephone call from his son. The kid in the photo? "Dad, that's Jahar."

"I felt like a bullet went through my heart," the coach recalls. "To think that a kid we mentored and loved like a son could have been responsible for all this death. It was beyond shocking. It was like an alternative reality."

People in Cambridge thought of 19-year-old Dzhokhar Tsarnaev – "Jahar" to his friends – as a beautiful, tousle-haired boy with a gentle demeanor, soulful brown eyes and the kind of shy, laid-back manner that "made him that dude you could always just vibe with," one friend says. He had been a captain of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin wrestling team for two years and a promising student. He was also "just a normal American kid," as his friends described him, who liked soccer, hip-hop, girls; obsessed over *The Walking Dead* and *Game of Thrones*; and smoked a copious amount of weed.

Payack stared at his TV, trying to reconcile Dzhokhar, the bomber accused of unspeakable acts of terrorism, with the teenage boy who had his American nickname "Jahar" inscribed on his wrestling jacket. He'd worn it all the time.

That afternoon, Payack spoke with CNN, where he issued a direct appeal. "Jahar," he said, "this is Coach Payack. There has been enough death, destruction. Please turn yourself in."

At that precise moment, just west of Cambridge, in suburban Watertown, Jahar Tsarnaev lay bleeding on the floor of a 22-foot motorboat dry-docked behind a white clapboard house. He'd been wounded just after midnight in a violent confrontation with police that had killed his 26-year-old brother, Tamerlan. For the next 18 hours, he would lie quietly in the boat, as the dawn broke on a gray day and thousands of law-enforcement officials scoured a 20-block area in search of him. He was found just after 6 p.m., though it would take nearly three more hours for FBI negotiators to persuade him to surrender.

The following morning, Payack received a text from one of the agents with the FBI's Crisis Negotiating Unit. He'd heard Payack's televised appeal, told him he'd invoked the coach's name while speaking with Jahar. "I think it helped," the agent said. Payack was relieved. "Maybe by telling Jahar that I was thinking about him, it gave him pause," Payack says. "Maybe he'd seen himself going out as a martyr for the cause. But all of a sudden, here's somebody from his past, a past that he liked, that he fit in with, and it hit a soft spot."

When investigators finally gained access to the boat, they discovered a jihadist

screed scrawled on its walls. In it, according to a 30-count indictment handed down in late June, Jahar appeared to take responsibility for the bombing, though he admitted he did not like killing innocent people. But "the U.S. government is killing our innocent civilians," he wrote, presumably referring to Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. "I can't stand to see such evil go unpunished. . . . We Muslims are one body, you hurt one, you hurt us all," he continued, echoing a sentiment that is cited so frequently by Islamic militants that it has become almost cliché. Then he veered slightly from the standard script, writing a statement that left no doubt as to his loyalties: "Fuck America."

In the 12 years since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, there have been more than 25 plots to strike the United States hatched by Americans, most of which were ill-conceived or helped along by undercover operatives who, in many cases, provided their targets with weapons or other materials. A few – including the plots to blow up the New York subway system and Times Square – were legitimate and would have been catastrophic had they come to fruition. Yet none did until that hazy afternoon of April 15th, 2013, when two pressure-cooker bombs exploded near the marathon finish line on Boylston Street, killing three people, including an eight-year-old boy. Close to 300 more were injured by flying shrapnel, with many losing a leg, or an arm, or an eye; a scene of unbelievable carnage that conjured up images of Baghdad, Kabul or Tel Aviv.

An uneasy panic settled over Boston when it was revealed that the Tsarnaev brothers were not, as many assumed, connected to a terrorist group, but young men seemingly affiliated with no one but themselves. Russian émigrés, they had lived in America for a decade – and in Cambridge, a city so progressive it had its own "peace commission" to promote social justice and diversity. Tamerlan, known to his American friends as "Tim," was a talented boxer who'd once aspired to represent the United States in the Olympics. His little brother, Jahar, had earned a scholarship to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and was thinking about becoming an engineer, or a nurse, or maybe a dentist – his focus changed all the time. They were Muslim, yes, but they were also *American* – especially Jahar, who became a naturalized U.S. citizen on September 11th, 2012.

Since the bombing, friends and acquaintances of the Tsarnaevs, as well as the FBI and other law-enforcement officials, have tried to piece together a narrative

of the brothers, most of which has focused on Tamerlan, whom we now know was on multiple U.S. and Russian watch lists prior to 2013, though neither the FBI nor the CIA could find a reason to investigate him further. Jahar, however, was on no one's watch list. To the contrary, after several months of interviews with friends, teachers and coaches still reeling from the shock, what emerges is a portrait of a boy who glided through life, showing virtually no signs of anger, let alone radical political ideology or any kind of deeply felt religious beliefs.

At his arraignment at a federal courthouse in Boston on July 10th, Jahar smiled, yawned, slouched in his chair and generally seemed not to fully grasp the seriousness of the situation, while pleading innocent to all charges. At times he seemed almost to smirk – which wasn't a "smirk," those who know him say. "He just seemed like the old Jahar, thinking, 'What the fuck's going on here?'" says Payack, who was at the courthouse that day.

It had been the coach who'd helped Jahar come up with his nickname, replacing the nearly impossible-to-decipher *Dzhokhar* with a simpler and cooler-sounding rendering. "If he had a hint of radical thoughts, then why would he change the spelling of his name so that more Americans in school could pronounce it?" asks one longtime friend, echoing many others. "I can't feel that my friend, the Jahar I knew, is a terrorist," adds another. "That Jahar isn't, to me."

"Listen," says Payack, "there are kids we don't catch who just fall through the cracks, but this guy was seamless, like a billiard ball. No cracks at all." And yet a deeply fractured boy lay under that facade; a witness to all of his family's attempts at a better life as well as to their deep bitterness when those efforts failed and their dreams proved unattainable. As each small disappointment wore on his family, ultimately ripping them apart, it also furthered Jahar's own disintegration – a series of quiet yet powerful body punches. No one saw a thing. "I knew this kid, and he was a good kid," Payack says, sadly. "And, apparently, he's also a monster."

Though Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was raised largely in America, his roots are in the restive North Caucasus, a region that has known centuries of political turmoil. Born on July 22nd, 1993, he spent the first seven years of his life in the mountainous Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, where his father, Anzor, had grown up in exile. Anzor is from Chechnya, the most vilified of the former

Soviet republics, whose people have been waging a near-continuous war since the 18th century against Russian rule. Dzhokhar's mother, Zubeidat, is an Avar, the predominantly Muslim ethnic group of Chechnya's eastern neighbor, Dagestan, which has been fighting its own struggle for independence against the Russians since the late 1700s. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chechen nationalists declared their independence, which resulted in two brutal wars where the Russian army slaughtered tens of thousands of Chechens and leveled its capital city, Grozny. By 1999, the violence had spread throughout the region, including Dagestan.

Though Islam is the dominant religion of the North Caucasus, religion played virtually no role in the life of Anzor Tsarnaev, a tough, wiry man who'd grown up during Soviet times, when religious worship in Kyrgyzstan was mostly underground. In Dagestan, where Islam had somewhat stronger footing, many women wear hijabs; Zubeidat, though, wore her dark hair like Pat Benatar. The couple met while Anzor was studying law and were married on October 20th, 1986. The next day, their first child, Tamerlan, was born. Three more children would follow, all of them born in Kyrgyzstan, where Anzor secured a job as an investigator in the prosecutor's office in the nation's capital, Bishkek.

It was a prestigious position, especially for a Chechen, but Anzor had larger ambitions. He hoped to take his family to America, where his brother, Ruslan, an attorney, was building an upper-middle-class life. After Russia invaded Chechnya in 1999, setting off the second of the decade's bloody wars, Anzor was fired from his job as part of a large-scale purge of Chechens from the ranks of the Kyrgyz government. The Tsarnaevs then fled to Zubeidat's native Dagestan, but war followed close behind. In the spring of 2002, Anzor, Zubeidat and Jahar, then eight, arrived in America on a tourist visa and quickly applied for political asylum. The three older children, Ailina, Bella and Tamerlan, stayed behind with relatives.

During their first month in America, Jahar and his parents lived in the Boston-area home of Dr. Khassan Baiev, a Chechen physician and friend of Anzor's sister, who recalled Anzor speaking of discrimination in Kyrgyzstan that "went as far as beatings." This abuse would be the premise of the Tsarnaevs' claim for asylum, which they were granted a year later. In July 2003, the rest of the family joined them in Cambridge, where they'd moved into a small, three-bedroom-apartment at 410 Norfolk St.; a weathered building with peeling paint on a block

that otherwise screams gentrification.

There are just a handful of Chechen families in the Boston area, and the Tsarnaevs seemed a welcome addition. "They had wonderful children," recalls Anna Nikeava, a Chechen who befriended the Tsarnaevs shortly after they arrived. "They were very soft, like cuddly kittens, all four kids, always hugging and kissing each other." And the parents, too, seemed to adore each other, even while Anzor, who spoke broken English, worked as a mechanic, making just \$10 an hour. For the first year, the Tsarnaevs received public assistance. But they never seemed to struggle, Anna says. "They were very much in love and enjoying life. They were fun."

Chechen families are very traditional – Anna, a warm and talkative woman in her late forties, tells me that in her country, "Ladies don't wear pants, you have to wear a skirt," and marrying outside the culture is taboo. The Tsarnaevs were atypical in that regard. Zubeidat was a "very open, modern lady" with a taste for stylish jeans, high heels and short skirts. "She had the tattooed eyebrows, permanent makeup, very glamorous," says Anna. "And her children were always dressed up nicely too."

Zubeidat adored her children, particularly Tamerlan, a tall, muscular boy she compared to Hercules. Jahar, on the other hand, was the baby, his mother's "dwog," or "heart." "He looked like an angel," says Anna, and was called "Jo-Jo" or "Ho."

"He was always like, 'Mommy, Mommy, yes, Mommy' – even if his mom was yelling at him," says Anna's son Baudy Mazaev, who is a year and a half younger than Jahar. "He was just, like, this nice, calm, compliant, pillow-soft kid. My mom would always say, 'Why can't you talk to me the way Dzhokhar talks to his mother?'"

There were five or six Chechen boys of roughly the same age in their circle, but Baudy and Jahar were particularly close. Now a student at Boston University, Baudy remembers family get-togethers in the Tsarnaevs' cramped, top-floor apartment, where Jahar and Tamerlan shared a small room with a bunk bed; in an even smaller room, their sisters shared just a mattress. There was never room for everyone around the tiny kitchen table, so the boys would engage in epic games of manhunt, or play video games on the giant TV in the living room, while their parents ate and socialized. Anzor was famous for his booming laugh,

which Jahar inherited – "It was so loud, the whole room would know if he was laughing," says Baudy.

Jahar idolized his older brother, Tamerlan – all the children appeared to – and as a child, he followed his brother's example and learned to box. But it was wrestling that became his primary sport, as was also true for Baudy, a squarely built kid who competed in a higher weight class than the slender, 130-pound Jahar. "It's a Chechen thing," says Baudy. "When I went to Chechnya to see my cousins, the first thing they ask is, 'You want to wrestle?'"

Baudy is fiercely proud of his heritage, and Jahar, who shares a name with Chechnya's first president, Dzhokhar Dudayev (one of Anzor's personal heroes), had similar "Chechen pride." He embraced the national Chechen symbol, the wolf; learned traditional dances; and could speak Chechen as well as Russian. He even talked about marrying a Chechen girl. "He would always talk about how pretty Chechen girls were," says Baudy, though, to his knowledge, Jahar had never met one, aside from the sisters of some of their friends.

There were many, many Jahars in Cambridge: children of immigrants with only the haziest, if idealized, notions of their ethnic homelands. One of the most liberal and intellectually sophisticated cities in the U.S., Cambridge is also one of the most ethnically and economically diverse. There are at least 50 nationalities represented at the city's one public high school, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, whose motto – written on walls, murals and school-course catalogs, and proclaimed over the PA system – is "Opportunity, Diversity, Respect." About 45 percent of its students live in public or subsidized housing, largely in the city's densely populated working-class neighborhoods. There are more affluent areas, and in them live the children of professors from nearby Harvard and MIT who also attend Rindge, "but not in tremendous numbers," says Cambridge schools superintendent Dr. Jeffrey M. Young. "What you do have is some actively engaged political families" – like those of the school's most famous alumni, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck – "and then there's the voiceless, who we try to encourage to have more of a voice."

All of the Tsarnaev children went to Rindge, as the school is known, but it was Jahar who assimilated best. Though he'd arrived in America speaking virtually no English, by high school he was fluent, with only a trace of an accent, and he was also fluent in the local patois. (Among his favorite words, his friends say,

was "sherm," Cambridge slang for "slacker.") Jahar, or "Jizz," as his friends also called him, wore grungy Pumas, had a great three-point shot and became a dedicated pot smoker – something a number of Cambridge teens tell me is relatively standard in their permissive community, where you can score weed in the high school bathrooms and smoke on the street without much of a problem. A diligent student, he was nominated to the National Honor Society in his sophomore year, which was also when he joined the wrestling team. "He was one of those kids who's just a natural," says Payack, his coach, who recalls Jahar as a supportive teammate who endured grueling workouts and runs without a single complaint. In his junior year, the team made him a captain. By then, everyone knew him as 'Jahar,' which his teammates would scream at matches to ensure the refs would never mispronounce his name.

"I could never quite get his name – Dokar? Jokar?" says Larry Aaronson, a retired Rindge history teacher (Jahar, he says, eventually told him to call him "Joe"). Aaronson, a longtime friend of the late historian Howard Zinn, also lives on Norfolk Street, down the block from the Tsarnaevs' home. "I asked him once where he was from, and he said Chechnya. And I'm like, 'Chechnya? Are you shitting me?'" says Aaronson. "I said, 'My God, how did you cope with all that stress?' And he said, 'Larry, that's how come we came to America, and how lucky that we came to Cambridge, of all places!' He just embraced the city, the school and the whole culture – he gratefully took advantage of it. And that's what endeared me to him: This was the quintessential kid from the war zone, who made total use of everything we offer so that he could remake his life. And he was gorgeous," he adds.

Jahar's friends were a diverse group of kids from both the wealthier and poorer sections of Cambridge; black, white, Jewish, Catholic, Puerto Rican, Bangladeshi, Cape Verdean. They were, as one Cambridge parent told me, "the good kids" – debate champs, varsity athletes, student-government types, a few brainiacs who'd go off to elite New England colleges. A diligent student, Jahar talked about attending Brandeis or Tufts, recalls a friend I'll call Sam, one of a tight-knit group of friends, who, using pseudonyms, agreed to speak exclusively to *Rolling Stone*. "He was one of the realest dudes I've ever met in my life," says Sam, who spent nearly every day with Jahar during their teens, shooting hoops or partying at a spot on the Charles River known as the "Riv." No matter what, "he was the first person I'd call if I needed a ride or a favor. He'd just go, 'I got you, dog' – even if you called him totally wasted at, like, two or three in the

morning."

"He was just superchill," says another friend, Will, who recalls one New Year's Eve when Jahar packed eight or nine people – including one in the trunk – into his green Honda Civic. Of course, he adds, the police pulled them over, but Jahar was unfazed. "Even if somebody caught him drinking," says his buddy Jackson, "he was the calm, collected kid who always knew how to talk to police."

He had morals, they all agree. "He never picked on anybody," says Sam, adding that much like his brother, Jahar was a great boxer. "He was better at boxing than wrestling – he was a beast." But while he could probably knock out anyone he wanted, he never did. "He wasn't violent, though – that's the crazy thing. He was never violent," says Sam.

"He was smooth as fuck," says his friend Alyssa, who is a year younger than Jahar. Girls went a little crazy over him – though to Jahar's credit, his friends say, even when he had crushes, he never exploited them. "He'd always be like, 'Chill, chill, let's just hang out,'" says Sam, recalling Jahar's almost physical aversion to any kind of attention. "He was just really humble – that's the best way to describe him."

Cara, a vivacious, pretty blonde whom some believe Jahar had a secret crush on, insists they were just friends. "He was so sweet. He was too sweet, you know?" she says sadly. The two had driver's ed together, which led to lots of time getting high and hanging out. Jahar, she says, had a talent for moving between social groups and always seemed able to empathize with just about anyone's problems. "He is a golden person, really just a genuine good guy who was cool with everyone," she says. "It's hard to really explain Jahar. He was a Cambridge kid."

Cambridge kids, the group agrees, have a fairly nonchalant attitude about things that might make other people a little uptight. A few years ago, for instance, one of their mutual friends decided to convert to Islam, which some, like Cara, thought was really cool, and others, like Jackson, met with a shrug. "But that's the kind of high school we went to," Jackson says. "It's the type of thing where someone could say, 'I converted to Islam,' and you're like, 'OK, cool.'" And in fact, a number of kids they knew did convert, he adds. "It was kind of like a thing for a while."

Jahar never denied he was a Muslim, though he sometimes played it down. He

fasted during Ramadan, which included giving up pot – an immense act of self-control, his friends say. "But the most religious thing he ever said was, 'Don't take God's name in vain,'" says Alyssa, who is Jewish. "Yeah," says Jackson, "he might have been religious, but it was the type of thing where unless he told you, you wouldn't know."

A few years ago, one Rindge wrestler, another Muslim, attended an informal lunchtime high school prayer group, where he spotted Jahar. "I didn't know he was Muslim until I saw him at that Friday prayer group," he says. "It wasn't something we ever talked about."

His friend Theo, who also wrestled with Jahar, thinks somewhat differently. "I actually think he had a real reverence for Islam," he says. There was one occasion in particular, a few years ago, when Jahar became visibly uncomfortable when James, the friend who'd converted, began speaking casually about the faith. "He didn't get mad, but he kind of shut him down," Theo recalls. "And it showed me that he took his religion really seriously. It wasn't conditional with him."

Yet he "never raised any red flags," says one of his history teachers, who, like many, requested anonymity, given the sensitivity of the case. Her class, a perennial favorite among Rindge students, fosters heated debates about contemporary political issues like globalization and the crises in the Middle East, but Jahar, she says, never gave her any sense of his personal politics, "even when he was asked to weigh in." Alyssa, who loved the class, agrees: "One of the questions we looked at was 'What is terrorism? How do we define it culturally as Americans? What is the motivation for it – can we ever justify it?' And I can say that Jahar never expressed to us that he was pro-terrorism at all, ever."

Except for once.

"He kind of did, one time to me, express that he thought acts of terrorism were justified," says Will. It was around their junior year; the boys had been eating at a neighborhood joint called Izzy's and talking about religion. With certain friends – Will and Sam among them – Jahar opened up about Islam, confiding his hatred of people whose "ignorance" equated Islam with terrorism, defending it as a religion of peace and describing jihad as a personal struggle, nothing more. This time, says Will, "I remember telling him I thought certain aspects of religion were harmful, and I brought up the 9/11 attacks."

At which point Jahar, Will says, told him he didn't want to talk about it anymore. Will asked why. "He said, 'Well, you're not going to like my view.' So I pressed him on it, and he said he felt some of those acts were justified because of what the U.S. does in other countries, and that they do it so frequently, dropping bombs all the time."

To be fair, Will and others note, Jahar's perspective on U.S. foreign policy wasn't all that dissimilar from a lot of other people they knew. "In terms of politics, I'd say he's just as anti-American as the next guy in Cambridge," says Theo. Even so, Will decided not to push it. "I was like, 'Wow, this dude actually *supports* that? I can't have this conversation anymore.'"

They never brought it up again.

In retrospect, Jahar's comment about 9/11 could be seen in the context of what criminal profilers call "leakage": a tiny crack in an otherwise carefully crafted facade that, if recognized – it's often not – provides a key into the person's interior world. "On cases where I've interviewed these types of people, the key is looking past their exterior and getting access to that interior, which is very hard," says Tom Neer, a retired agent from the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit and now a senior associate with the Soufan Group, which advises the government on counterterrorism. "Most people have a public persona as well as a private persona, but for many people, there's a secret side, too. And the secret side is something that they labor really hard to protect."

There were many things about Jahar that his friends and teachers didn't know – something not altogether unusual for immigrant children, who can live highly bifurcated lives, toggling back and forth between their ethnic and American selves. "I never saw the parents, and didn't even know he had a brother," says Payack, who wondered why Jahar never had his family rooting for him on the sidelines, as his teammates did. "If you're a big brother and you love your little brother, why don't you come and watch him in sports?"

Theo wondered, too. "I asked him about that once, and he told me that he'd boxed when he was younger, and he'd never lost a boxing match, so he didn't want his dad to see him lose." It sounded plausible: Jahar had an innate ability as a wrestler, but he never put in the time to be truly great. "It wasn't really on his list," says Theo. On the other hand, losing didn't seem to bother him, either.

"Other kids, when they lose they get angry – they think the ref made a bad call, and maybe they'll throw a chair. Or they'll cry, or sulk in a corner," says Payack. Jahar would simply walk off the mat with a shrug. "He'd just kind of have this face like, 'Oh, well, I tried.'"

On Senior Night, the last home match of the season, every Rindge senior wrestler is asked to bring a parent or relative to walk them onto the gym floor to receive a flower and have their picture taken. Jahar brought no one. "We had one of the coaches walk him out to get his flower," says Payack. This, too, didn't seem to bother Jahar – and even if it did, he never mentioned it. "With our friends, you don't need to confide in them to be close to them," says Jackson.

Jahar's family seemed to exist in a wholly separate sphere from the rest of his life. Jackson, who lived nearby, would occasionally see Anzor working on cars; several others knew of Jahar's sisters from their older siblings. And there were always stories about Tamerlan, who'd been a two-time Golden Gloves champion. But almost nobody met Tamerlan in person, and virtually no one from school ever went to the Tsarnaevs' house. "I mean never – not once," says Jackson. One friend of Jahar's older sister Bella would say that the apartment at 410 Norfolk "had a vibe that outsiders weren't too common."

There are a number of indications that the troubles in the Tsarnaev family went deeper than normal adjustment to American life. Anzor, who suffered from chronic arthritis, headaches and stomach pain, had an erratic temperament – a residual, he'd say, of the abuse he'd suffered in Kyrgyzstan – and struck one neighbor on Norfolk Street as a "miserable guy," who'd bark at his neighbors over parking spaces and even grab the snow shovels out of their hands when he felt they weren't shoveling the walk properly. Despite his demeanor, he was an intensely hard worker. "I remember his hands," says Baudy. "He'd be working on cars in the Boston cold, no gloves, and he'd have these thick bumps on his knuckles from the arthritis. But he loved it. He saw his role as putting food on the table."

Zubeidat, an enterprising woman, worked as a home-health aide, then switched to cosmetology, giving facials at a local salon and later opening a business in her home. "She never wanted to commit," says Baudy, who liked Jahar's mother but saw her as a typical striver. "She was trying to get rich faster – like, 'Oh, this is taking too long. We'll try something else.'"

But the money never came. By 2009, Anzor's health was deteriorating, and that August, the Tsarnaevs, who hadn't been on public assistance for the past five years, began receiving benefits again, in the form of food stamps and cash payouts. This inability to fully support his family may have contributed to what some who knew them refer to as Anzor's essential "weakness" as a father, deferring to Zubeidat, who could be highly controlling.

A doting mother, "she'd never take any advice about her kids," says Anna. "She thought they were the smartest, the most beautiful children in the world" – Tamerlan most of all. "He was the biggest deal in the family. In a way, he was like the father. Whatever he said, they had to do."

Tamerlan's experience in Cambridge was far less happy than Jahar's. Already a teenager when he arrived in America, Tamerlan spoke with a thick Russian accent, and though he enrolled in the English as a Second Language program at Rindge, he never quite assimilated. He had a unibrow, and found it hard to talk to girls. One former classmate recalls that prior to their senior prom, a few of Tamerlan's friends tried to find him a date. "He wasn't even around," she says, "it was just his friends asking girls to go with him." But everyone said no, and he attended the prom alone.

After graduating in 2006, he enrolled at Bunker Hill Community College to study accounting, but attended for just three semesters before dropping out. A talented pianist and composer, he harbored a desire to become a musician, but his ultimate dream was to become an Olympic boxer, after which he'd turn pro. This was also his father's dream – a champion boxer himself back in Russia, Anzor reportedly pushed Tamerlan extremely hard, riding behind him on his bicycle while his son jogged to the local boxing gym. And Tamerlan did very well under his father's tutelage, rising in the ranks of New England fighters. One of the best in his weight class, Tamerlan once told a fighter to "practice punching a tree at home" if he wanted to be truly great. But his arrogance undermined his ambitions. In 2010, a rival trainer, claiming Tamerlan had broken boxing etiquette by taunting his fighter before a match, lodged a complaint with the national boxing authority that Tamerlan should be disqualified from nationwide competition as he was not an American citizen. The authorities, coincidentally, were just in the process of changing their policy to ban all non-U.S. citizens from competing for a national title.

This dashed any Olympic hopes, as Tamerlan was not yet eligible to become a U.S. citizen. His uncle Ruslan had urged him to join the Army. It would give him structure, he said, and help him perfect his English. "I told him the best way to start your way in a new country – give something," Ruslan says. But Tamerlan laughed, his uncle recalls, for suggesting he kill "our brother Muslims."

Tamerlan had discovered religion, a passion that had begun in 2009. In interviews, Zubeidat has suggested it was her idea, a way to encourage Tamerlan, who spent his off-hours partying with his friends at local clubs, to become more serious. "I told Tamerlan that we are Muslim, and we are not practicing our religion, and how can we call ourselves Muslims?" she said. But Anna suspects there was something else factoring into the situation. Once, Anna recalls, Zubeidat hinted that something might be wrong. "Tamerlan told me he feels like there's two people living in him," she confided in her friend. "It's weird, right?"

Anna, who wondered if Tamerlan might be developing a mental illness, suggested Zubeidat take him to a "doctor" ("If I said 'psychiatrist,' she'd just flip," she says), but Zubeidat seems to have believed that Islam would help calm Tamerlan's demons. Mother and son began reading the Koran – encouraged, Zubeidat said, by a friend of Tamerlan's named Mikhail Allakhverdov, or "Misha," a thirtysomething Armenian convert to Islam whom family members believe Tamerlan met at a Boston-area mosque. Allakhverdov has denied any association with the attack. "I wasn't his teacher," he told the *New York Review of Books*. "If I had been his teacher, I would have made sure he never did anything like this." But family members have said Allakhverdov had a big influence on Tamerlan, coming to the house and often staying late into the night, talking with Tamerlan about Islam and the Koran. Uncle Ruslan would later tell *The Daily Mail* that Allakhverdov would "give one-on-one sermons to Tamerlan over the kitchen table, during which he claimed he could talk to demons and perform exorcisms."

Zubeidat was pleased. "Don't interrupt them," she told her husband one evening when Anzor questioned why Allakhverdov was still there around midnight. "Misha is teaching him to be good and nice."

Before long, Tamerlan had quit drinking and smoking pot, and started to pray five times a day, even taking his prayer rug to the boxing gym. At home, he

spent long hours on the Internet reading Islamic websites, as well as U.S. conspiracy sites, like Alex Jones' InfoWars. He told a photographer he met that he didn't understand Americans and complained about a lack of values. He stopped listening to music. "It is not supported by Islam," Tamerlan said. "Misha says it's not really good to create or listen to music." Then, in 2011, he decided to quit boxing, claiming it was not permitted for a Muslim to hit another man.

Zubeidat, too, had become increasingly religious – something that would get in the way of her marriage as well as her job at an upscale Belmont salon, where she broke for daily prayers and refused to work on male clients. She was ultimately fired, after which she turned her living room into a minisalon. One of her former clients recalls her wearing "a head wrap" in the house, and a hijab whenever she went outside. "She started to refuse to see boys who'd gone through puberty," recalls the client. "A religious figure had told her it was sacrilegious."

What really struck her client, beyond Zubeidat's zeal, were her politics. During one facial session, she says, Zubeidat told her she believed 9/11 was a government plot to make Americans hate Muslims. "It's real," she said. "My son knows all about it. You can read on the Internet."

It was during this period that Jahar told his friend Will that he felt terrorism could be justified, a sentiment that Tamerlan apparently shared. Whether or not Jahar truly agreed with his brother, their relationship was one where he couldn't really question him. In Chechen families, Baudy says, "Your big brother is not quite God, but more than a normal brother." When they were kids, Baudy recalls, Tamerlan used to turn off the TV and make them do pushups. Now he urged them to study the Koran.

"Jahar found it kind of a nuisance," says Baudy, and tried to shrug it off as best as he could. But he couldn't do much. "You're not going to get mad at your elders or tell them to stop doing something, especially if it's about being more religious." During one visit a few years ago, Baudy recalls, Tamerlan interrupted them on the computer to say that if they were going to be surfing the Internet, they should focus on their faith. He gave them a book – *Islam 101* – and instructed them to read. He gave the same book to James, the high school convert who, as a new Muslim, was one of the very few of Jahar's friends who came to the house. Tamerlan also taught James how to pray. "I guess they'd sit

there for hours," says Sam, who would hear about it afterward. Sam couldn't figure it out. "It was crazy because back a few years ago, Timmy was so like us, a regular dude, boxing, going to school, hanging out, partying all the time. But then he changed and became anti-fun."

By 2011, all remnants of "Timmy" seemed to be gone. When his close friend and sparring partner Brendan Mess began dating a nonpracticing Muslim, Tamerlan criticized Mess' girlfriend for her lack of modesty. And he also reportedly criticized Mess for his "lifestyle" – he was a local pot dealer. On September 11th, 2011 – the 10th anniversary of 9/11 – Mess and two of his friends were killed in a grisly triple murder that remains unsolved. Since the bombing, authorities have been vigorously investigating the crime, convinced that Tamerlan had something to do with it, though so far there's no hard evidence.

"All I know is Jahar was really wary of coming home high because of how his brother would react. He'd get really angry," says Will. "He was a really intense dude."

"And if you weren't Muslim, he was even more intense," says Sam, who notes that he never met Tamerlan in person, though he heard stories about him all the time from Jahar. "I was fascinated – this dude's, like, six-three, he's a boxer – I wanted to meet him," says Sam. "But Jahar was like, 'No, you *don't* want to meet him.'"

Jahar rarely spoke to his friends about his sisters, Ailina and Bella, who, just a few years older than he, kept to themselves but also had their own struggles. Attractive, dark-haired girls who were "very Americanized," as friends recall, they worshipped Tamerlan, whom one sister would later refer to as her "hero" – but they were also subject to his role as family policeman. When Bella was a junior in high school, her father, hearing that she'd been seen in the company of an American boy, pulled her out of school and dispatched Tamerlan to beat the boy up. Friends later spotted Bella wearing a hijab; not long afterward, she disappeared from Cambridge entirely. Some time later, Ailina would similarly vanish. Both girls were reportedly set up in arranged marriages.

Anna Nikeava was unaware the girls had even left Boston, and suspects the parents never talked about it for fear of being judged. "Underneath it all, they were a screwed-up family," she says. "They weren't Chechen" – they had not come from Chechnya, as she and others had – "and I don't think the other

families accepted them as Chechens. They could not define themselves or where they belonged. And poor Jahar was the silent survivor of all that dysfunction," she says. "He never said a word. But inside, he was very hurt, his world was crushed by what was going on with his family. He just learned not to show it."

Anzor, who'd been at first baffled, and later "depressed," by his wife's and son's religiosity, moved back to Russia in 2011, and that summer was granted a divorce. Zubeidat was later arrested for attempting to shoplift \$1,600 worth of clothes from a Lord & Taylor. Rather than face prosecution, she skipped bail and also returned to Russia, where she ultimately reconciled with her ex-husband. Jahar's sisters, both of whom seemed to have escaped their early marriages, were living in New Jersey and hadn't seen their family in some time.

And Tamerlan was now married, too. His new wife, Katherine Russell, was a Protestant from a well-off family in Rhode Island. After high school, she'd toyed with joining the Peace Corps but instead settled on college at Boston's Suffolk University. She'd met Tamerlan at a club during her freshman year, in 2007, and found him "tall and handsome and having some measure of worldliness," one friend would recall. But as their relationship progressed, Katherine's college roommates began to worry that Tamerlan was "controlling" and "manipulative." They became increasingly concerned when he demanded that she cover herself and convert to Islam.

Though Katherine has never spoken to the press, what is known is that she did convert to Islam, adopting the name "Karima," and soon got pregnant and dropped out of college. In June 2010, she and Tamerlan were married; not long afterward, she gave birth to their daughter, Zahira. Around this time, both her friends and family say, she "pulled away." She was seen in Boston, shopping at Whole Foods, cloaked and wearing a hijab. She rarely spoke around her husband, and when alone, recalls one neighbor, she spoke slowly with an accent. "I didn't even know she was an American," he says.

Jahar, meanwhile, was preparing for college. He had won a \$2,500 city scholarship, which is awarded each year to about 40 to 50 Cambridge students; he ended up being accepted at a number of schools, including Northeastern University and UMass Amherst. But UMass Dartmouth offered him a scholarship. "He didn't want to force his parents to pay a lot of money for school," says Sam, who recalls that Jahar never even bothered to apply to his

fantasy schools, Brandeis and Tufts, due to their price tags. A number of his friends would go off to some of the country's better private colleges, "but Jizz rolled with the punches. He put into his head, 'I can't go to school for mad dough, so I'm just going to go wherever gives me the best deal.' Because, I mean, what's the point of going to a school that's going to cost \$30,000 a year – for what? Pointless." His other friends agree.

A middling school an hour and a half south of Boston, UMass Dartmouth had one distinguishing feature – its utter lack of character. "It's beige," says Jackson. "It's, like, the most depressing campus I've ever seen." Annual costs are about \$22,000.

Jahar arrived in the fall of 2011 and almost immediately wanted to go home. North Dartmouth, where the university is based, is a working-class community with virtually nothing to boast of except for a rather sad mall and a striking number of fast-food joints. It has a diverse student population, but their level of curiosity seemed to fall far below his friends' from Rindge. "Using my high-school essays for my english class #itsthateasy," Jahar tweeted in November 2011. "You know what i like to do? answer my own questions cuz no one else can."

"He was hating life," says Sam. "He used to always call and say it's mad wack and the people were corny." His one saving grace was that one of his best friends from Rindge had gone to UMass Dartmouth, too – though he would later transfer. "All they would do was sit in the car and get high – it was that boring," says Sam.

On the weekends, campus would empty out and Jahar came home as often as he could. But home was no longer "home," as his parents were gone. Many of his closest friends were gone as well. Tamerlan, though, was always around. "Pray," the older brother told the younger. "You cannot call yourself a Muslim unless you thank Allah five times a day."

Much of what is known about the two years of Jahar's life leading up to the bombing comes from random press interviews with students at UMass Dartmouth, none of whom seemed to have been particularly close with Jahar; and from Jahar's tweets, which, like many 18- or 19-year-olds', were a mishmash of sophomoric jokes, complaints about his roommate, his perpetual lateness, some rap lyrics, the occasional deep thought ("Find your place and your purpose

and make a plan for the future") and, increasingly, some genuinely revealing statements. He was homesick. He suffered from insomnia. He had repeated zombie dreams. And he missed his dad. "I can see my face in my dad's pictures as a youngin, he even had a ridiculous amount of hair like me," he tweeted in June 2012.

Jahar had begun his studies to be an engineer, but by last fall had found the courses too difficult. He switched to biology and, to make money, he dealt pot – one friend from his dorm says he always had big Tupperware containers of weed in his fridge.

As he had at Rindge, Jahar drifted between social groups, though he clung to friends from high school who also attended UMass Dartmouth. But he soon gravitated to a group of Kazakh students, wealthy boys with a taste for excellent pot, which Jahar, who spoke Russian with them, often helped to provide. By his sophomore year, even as he gained U.S. citizenship, he abandoned his American Facebook for the Russian version, Vkontakte, or VK, where he listed his world view as "Islam" and his interests as "career and money." He joined several Chechnya-related groups and posted Russian-language-joke videos. "He was always joking around, and often his jokes had a sarcastic character," says Diana Valeeva, a Russian student who befriended Jahar on VK. Jahar also told Diana that he missed his homeland and would happily come for a visit. "But he did not want to return forever," she says.

Tamerlan's journey the past two years is far easier to trace. Though no more Chechen than his brother, Tamerlan was also – as his resident green card reminded him – not really an American. Islam, or Tamerlan's interpretation of it, had become his identity. He devoured books on Chechnya's separatist struggle, a war that had taken on a notably fundamentalist tone since the late 1990s, thanks to a surge of Muslim fighters from outside of the Caucasus who flocked to Chechnya to wage "holy war" against the Russians. It is not uncommon for young Chechen men to romanticize jihad, and for those who are interested in that kind of thing, there are abundant Chechen jihadist videos online that reinforce this view. They tend to feature Caucasian fighters who, far from the lecturing sheikhs often found in Al Qaeda recruitment videos, look like grizzled Navy SEALs, humping through the woods in camouflage and bandannas. Tamerlan would later post several of these videos on his YouTube page, as well as "The Emergence of Prophecy: The Black Flags from Khorasan," a central part

of Al Qaeda and other jihadist mythology, which depicts fierce, supposedly end-times battles against the infidels across a region that includes parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

But Brian Glyn Williams, a professor of Islamic studies at UMass Dartmouth and an expert on terrorism and the politics of Chechnya, believes that Tamerlan's journey – which he calls "jihadification" – was less a young man's quest to join Al Qaeda than to discover his own identity. "To me, this is classic diasporic reconstruction of identity: 'I'm a Chechen, and we're fighting for jihad, and what am I doing? Nothing.' It's not unlike the way some Irish-Americans used to link Ireland and the IRA – they'd never been to Northern Ireland in their lives, but you'd go to certain parts of Southie in Boston, and all you see are donation cans for the IRA."

For Jahar, identity likely played into the mix as well, says Williams, who, though he never met Jahar at UMass Dartmouth, coincidentally corresponded with him during his senior year of high school. One of Williams' friends taught English at Rindge, and "he told me he had this Chechen kid in his class who wanted to do his research paper on Chechnya, a country he'd never lived in." Williams agreed to help Jahar. "The thing that struck me was how little he actually knew," he says. "He didn't know anything about Chechnya, and he wanted to know *everything*."

Whether Jahar gained much from his studies – or even did much of it – is unknown. Tamerlan, having devoured all the books he could find, was preparing to take the next step. In January 2012, he traveled to Dagestan, where he spent six months. Dagestan has been embroiled in a years-long civil war between Muslim guerrillas and the (also Muslim) police, as well as Russian forces. Bombs go off in the streets regularly, and young men, lured by the romance of the fight, often disappear to "go to the forest," a euphemism for joining the insurgency. Tamerlan, too, seemed to have wanted to join the rebellion, but he was dissuaded from this pursuit by, among others, a distant cousin named Magomed Kartashov, who also happened to be a Dagestani Islamist. Kartashov's Western cousin, who came to Dagestan dressed in fancy American clothes and bragging of being a champion boxer, had no place in their country's civil war, he told Tamerlan. It was an internal struggle – **in an interview with *TIME* magazine, associates of Kartashov's referred to it as "banditry"** – and had only resulted in Muslims killing other Muslims. Kartashov urged Tamerlan to

embrace nonviolence and forget about Dagestan's troubles. By early summer, Tamerlan was talking about holy war "in a global context," one Dagestani Islamist recalls.

In July 2012, Tamerlan returned to Cambridge. He grew a five-inch beard and began to get in vocal debates about the virtues of Islam. He vociferously criticized U.S. policy in the Middle East. Twice over the next six or eight months, he upset services at a local mosque with a denunciation of Thanksgiving, and also, in January 2013, of Martin Luther King Jr.

The boys' uncle Ruslan hoped that Jahar, away at school, would avoid Tamerlan's influence. Instead, Jahar began to echo his older brother's religious fervor. The Prophet Muhammad, he noted on Twitter, was now his role model. "For me to know that I am FREE from HYPOCRISY is more dear to me than the weight of the ENTIRE world in GOLD," he posted, quoting an early Islamic scholar. He began following Islamic Twitter accounts. "Never underestimate the rebel with a cause," he declared.

Though it seems as if Jahar had found a mission, his embrace of Islam also may have been driven by something more basic: a need to belong. "Look, he was totally abandoned," says Payack, who believes that the divorce of his parents and their subsequent move back to Russia was pivotal, as was the loss of the safety net he had at Rindge.

Theo, who goes to college in Vermont and is one of the few of Jahar's friends to not have any college loans, can't imagine the stress Jahar must have felt. "He had all of this stuff piled up on his shoulders, as well as college, which he's having to pay for himself. That's not easy. All of that just might make you say 'Fuck it' and give up and lose faith.

Wick Sloane, an education advocate and a local community-college professor, sees this as a widespread condition among many young immigrants who pass through his classrooms. "All of these kids are grateful to be in the United States. But it's the usual thing: Is this the land of opportunity or isn't it? When I look at what they've been through, and how they are screwed by federal policies from the moment they turn around, I don't understand why *all* of them aren't angrier. I'm actually kind of surprised it's taken so long for one of these kids to set off a bomb."

"A decade in America already," Jahar tweeted in March 2012. "I want out." He was looking forward to visiting his parents in Dagestan that summer, but then he learned he wouldn't receive his U.S. passport in time to make the trip. "#Imsad," he told his followers. Instead, he spent the summer lifeguarding at a Harvard pool. "I didn't become a lifeguard to just chill and get paid," Jahar tweeted. "I do it for the people, saving lives brings me joy." He was living with Tamerlan and his sister-in-law, who were going through their own troubles. Money was increasingly tight, and the family was on welfare. Tamerlan was now a stay-at-home dad; his wife worked night and day as a home-health aide to support the family.

Tamerlan had joined an increasing number of Cambridge's young adults who were being priced out due to skyrocketing real-estate prices. "It's really hard to stay in Cambridge because it's becoming so exclusive," says Tamerlan's former Rindge classmate Luis Vasquez, who is running for a seat on the Cambridge City Council. "We feel like we're being taken over."

In August, Jahar, acutely aware of the troubles all around him, commented that \$15 billion was spent on the Summer Olympics. "Imagine if that money was used to feed those in need all over the world," he wrote. "The value of human life ain't shit nowadays that's #tragic." In the fall, he returned to North Dartmouth and college, where, with no Tamerlan to catch him, he picked up his life, partying in his dorm and letting his schoolwork slide.

"Idk why it's hard for many of you to accept that 9/11 was an inside job, I mean I guess fuck the facts y'all are some real #patriots #gethip," Jahar tweeted. This is not an uncommon belief. Payack, who also teaches writing at the Berklee College of Music, says that a fair amount of his students, notably those born in other countries, believe 9/11 was an "inside job." Aaronson tells me he's shocked by the number of kids he knows who believe the Jews were behind 9/11. "The problem with this demographic is that they do not know the basic narratives of their histories – or really any narratives," he says. "They're blazed on pot and searching the Internet for any 'factoids' that they believe fit their highly de-historicized and decontextualized ideologies. And the adult world totally misunderstands them and dismisses them – and does so at our collective peril," he adds.

Last December, Jahar came home for Christmas break and stayed for several weeks. His friends noticed nothing different about him, except that he was desperately trying to grow a beard – with little success. In early February, he went back to Rindge to work with the wrestling team, where he confided in Theo, who'd also come back to help, that he wished he'd taken wrestling more seriously. He could have been really good had he applied himself a bit more.

At 410 Norfolk St., Tamerlan, once a flashy dresser, had taken to wearing a bathrobe and ratty sweatpants, day after day, while Jahar continued to explore Islam. "I meet the most amazing people," he tweeted. "My religion is the truth."

But he also seemed at times to be struggling, suggesting that even his beloved Cambridge had failed him in some way. "Cambridge got some real, genuinely good people, but at the same time this city can be fake as fuck," he said on January 15th. Also that day: "I don't argue with fools who say Islam is terrorism it's not worth a thing, let an idiot remain an idiot."

According to a transcript from UMass Dartmouth, reviewed by *The New York Times*, Jahar was failing many of his classes his sophomore year. He was reportedly more than \$20,000 in debt to the university. Also weighing on him was the fact that his family's welfare benefits had been cut in November 2012, and in January, Tamerlan and his wife reportedly lost the Section 8 housing subsidy that had enabled them to afford their apartment, leaving them with the prospect of a move.

Why a person with an extreme or "radical" ideology may decide to commit violence is an inexact science, but experts agree that there must be a cognitive opening of some sort. "A person is angry, and he needs an explanation for that angst," explains the Soufan Group's Tom Neer. "Projecting blame is a defense mechanism. Rather than say, 'I'm lost, I've got a problem,' it's much easier to find a convenient enemy or scapegoat. The justification comes later – say, U.S. imperialism, or whatever. It's the explanation that is key."

For Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the explanation for his anger was all around him. And so, dissuaded from his quest to wage jihad in Dagestan, he apparently turned his gaze upon America, the country that, in his estimation, had caused so much suffering, most of all his own.

In early February, soon after losing his housing subsidy, Tamerlan drove to New

Hampshire, where, according to the indictment, he purchased "48 mortars containing approximately eight pounds of low-explosive powder." Also during this general period, Jahar began downloading Islamic militant tracts to his computer, like the first issue of the Al Qaeda magazine *Inspire*, which, in an article titled "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom," offered detailed instructions on how to construct an IED using a pressure cooker, explosive powder from fireworks, and shrapnel, among other readily available ingredients.

Jahar returned home for spring break in March and spent time hanging out with his regular crew. He brought his friend Dias Kadyrbayev home with him, driving Dias' flashy black BMW with the joke license plate TERRORISTA. He hung out with a few friends and went to the Riv, where they lit off fireworks; he met other friends at a local basketball court, one of his usual haunts. He looked happy and chill, as he always did, and was wearing a new, brown military-style jacket that his friends thought was "swag." "And that was the last time I saw him," says Will.

What went on in the apartment at 410 Norfolk during March and early April remains a mystery. "It's hard to understand how there could be such disassociation in that child," says Aaronson, who last saw Jahar in January, presumably before the brothers' plan was set. "They supposedly had an arsenal in that fucking house! In the house! I mean, he could have blown up my whole fucking block, for God's sakes."

According to the indictment, the brothers went to a firing range on March 20th, where Jahar rented two 9mm handguns, purchased 200 rounds of ammunition and engaged in target practice with Tamerlan. On April 5th, Tamerlan went online to order electronic components that could be used in making IEDs. Friends of Jahar's would later tell the FBI that he'd once mentioned he knew how to build bombs. But no one seemed to really take it all that seriously.

"People come into your life to help you, hurt you, love you and leave you and that shapes your character and the person you were meant to be," Jahar tweeted on March 18th. Two days later: "Evil triumphs when good men do nothing."

April 7th: "If you have the knowledge and the inspiration all that's left is to take action."

April 11th: "Most of you are conditioned by the media."

The bombs went off four days later.

On the afternoon of April 18th, Robel Phillipos, a friend of Jahar's from Cambridge as well as from UMass Dartmouth, was watching the news on campus and talking on the phone with Dias. He told Dias, who was in his car, to turn on the TV when he got home. One of the bombers, he said, looked like Jahar. Like most of their friends, Dias thought it was a coincidence and texted Jahar that he looked like one of the suspects on television. "Lol," Jahar wrote back, casually. He told his friend not to text him anymore. "I'm about to leave," he wrote. "If you need something in my room, take it."

According to the FBI, Robel, Dias and their friend Azamat met at Pine Dale Hall, Jahar's dorm, where his roommate informed them that he'd left campus several hours earlier. So they hung out in his room for a while, watching a movie. Then they spotted Jahar's backpack, which the boys noticed had some fireworks inside, emptied of powder. Not sure what to do, they grabbed the bag as well as Jahar's computer, and went back to Dias and Azamat's off-campus apartment, where they "started to freak out, because it became clear from a CNN report . . . that Jahar was one of the Boston Marathon bombers," Robel later told the FBI.

But no one wanted Jahar to get in trouble. Dias and Azamat began speaking to each other in Russian. Finally, Dias turned to Robel and asked in English if he should get rid of the stuff. "Do what you have to do," Robel said. Then he took a nap.

Dias later confessed that he'd grabbed a big black trash bag, filled it with trash and stuffed the backpack and fireworks in there. Then he threw it in a dumpster; the bag was later retrieved from the municipal dump by the FBI. The computer, too, was eventually recovered. Until recently, its contents were unknown.

The contents of Jahar's closely guarded psyche, meanwhile, may never be fully understood. Nor, most likely, will his motivations – which is quite common with accused terrorists. "There is no single precipitating event or stressor," says Neer. "Instead, what you see with most of these people is a gradual process of feeling alienated or listless or not connected. But what they all have in common is a whole constellation of things that aren't working right."

A month or so after the bombing, I am sitting on Alyssa's back deck with a group

of Jahar's friends. It's a lazy Sunday in May, and the media onslaught has died down a bit; the FBI, though, is still searching for the source of the brothers' "radicalization," and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, capitalizing on the situation, has put Tamerlan, dressed in his crisp, white *Saturday Night Fever* shirt and aviator shades, in the pages of its most recent *Inspire*. Jahar has a growing and surprisingly brazen fan club – #FreeJahar – and tens of thousands of new Twitter followers, despite the fact that he hasn't tweeted since before his arrest.

Like so many of his fans, some of Jahar's friends have latched onto conspiracy theories about the bombing, if only because "there are too many unanswered questions," says Cara, who points out that the backpack identified by the FBI was not the same color as Jahar's backpack. There's also a photo on the Internet of Jahar walking away from the scene, no pack, though if you look closely, you can see the outline of a black strap. "Photoshopped!" the caption reads.

Mostly, though, his friends are trying to move on. "We're concerned with not having this tied to us for the rest of our lives," says Alyssa, explaining why she and Sam and Jackson and Cara and Will and James and Theo have insisted I give them pseudonyms. Even as Jahar was on the run, his friends started hearing from the FBI, whose agents shortly descended upon their campuses – sometimes wearing bulletproof vests – looking for insight and phone numbers.

"You're so intimidated, and you think if you don't answer their questions, it looks suspicious," says Jackson, who admits he gave up a number of friends' phone numbers after being pressed by the FBI.

Sam says he thinks the feds tapped his phone. All of the kids were interviewed alone, without a lawyer. "I didn't even know I could have a lawyer," says Jackson. "And they didn't tell me that anything I said might be used against me, which was unfair, because, I mean, I'm only 19."

But the worst, they all agree, is Robel, who was interviewed four times by the FBI, and denied he knew anything until, on the fourth interview, he came clean and told them he'd helped remove the backpack and computer from Jahar's dorm room. Robel is 19 but looks 12, and is unanimously viewed by his friends as the most innocent and sheltered of the group. He is now facing an eight-year prison sentence for lying to a federal officer.

"So you see why we don't want our names associated," says Sam. "It's not that we're trying to show that we're not Jahar's friends. He was a *very* good friend of mine."

Jahar is, of course, still alive – though it's tempting for everyone to refer to him in the past tense, as if he, too, were dead. He will likely go to prison for the rest of his life, which may be his best possible fate, given the other option, which is the death penalty. "I can't wrap my head around that," says Cara. "Or any of it."

Nor can anyone else. For all of their city's collective angst and community processing and resolutions of being "one Cambridge," the reality is that none of Jahar's friends had any idea he was unhappy, and they really didn't know he had any issues in his family other than, perhaps, his parents' divorce, which was kind of normal.

"I remember he was upset when his dad left the country," says Jackson. "I remember he was giving me a ride home and he mentioned it."

"Now that I think about that, it must have added a lot of pressure having both parents be gone," says Sam.

"But, I mean, that's the mystery," says Jackson. "I don't really know." It's weird, they all agree.

"His brother must have brainwashed him," says Sam. "It's the only explanation."

Someone mentions one of the surveillance videos of Jahar, which shows him impassively watching as people begin to run in response to the blast. "I mean, that's just the face I'd always see chilling, talking, smoking," says Jackson. He wishes Jahar had looked panicked. "At least then I'd be able to say, 'OK, something happened.' But . . . nothing."

That day's *Boston Globe* has run a story about the nurses at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital who took care of Jahar those first few days after his capture. They were ambivalent, to say the least, about spending too much time with him, for fear of, well, liking him. One nurse said she had to stop herself from calling him "hon." The friends find this story disgusting. "People just have blood in their eyes," says Jackson.

One anecdote that wasn't in the article but that has been quietly making its way around town, via one of his former nurses, is that Jahar cried for two days straight after he woke up in the hospital. No one in the group has heard this yet, and when I mention it, Alyssa gives an anguished sigh of relief. "That's good to know," she says.

"I can definitely see him doing that," says Sam, gratefully. "I hope he's crying. I'd definitely hope . . ."

"I hope he'd wake up and go, 'What the fuck did I do the last 48 hours?' " says Jackson, who decides, along with the others, that this, the crying detail, sounds like Jahar.

But, then again, no one knows what he was crying about.

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<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/jahars-world-20130717>