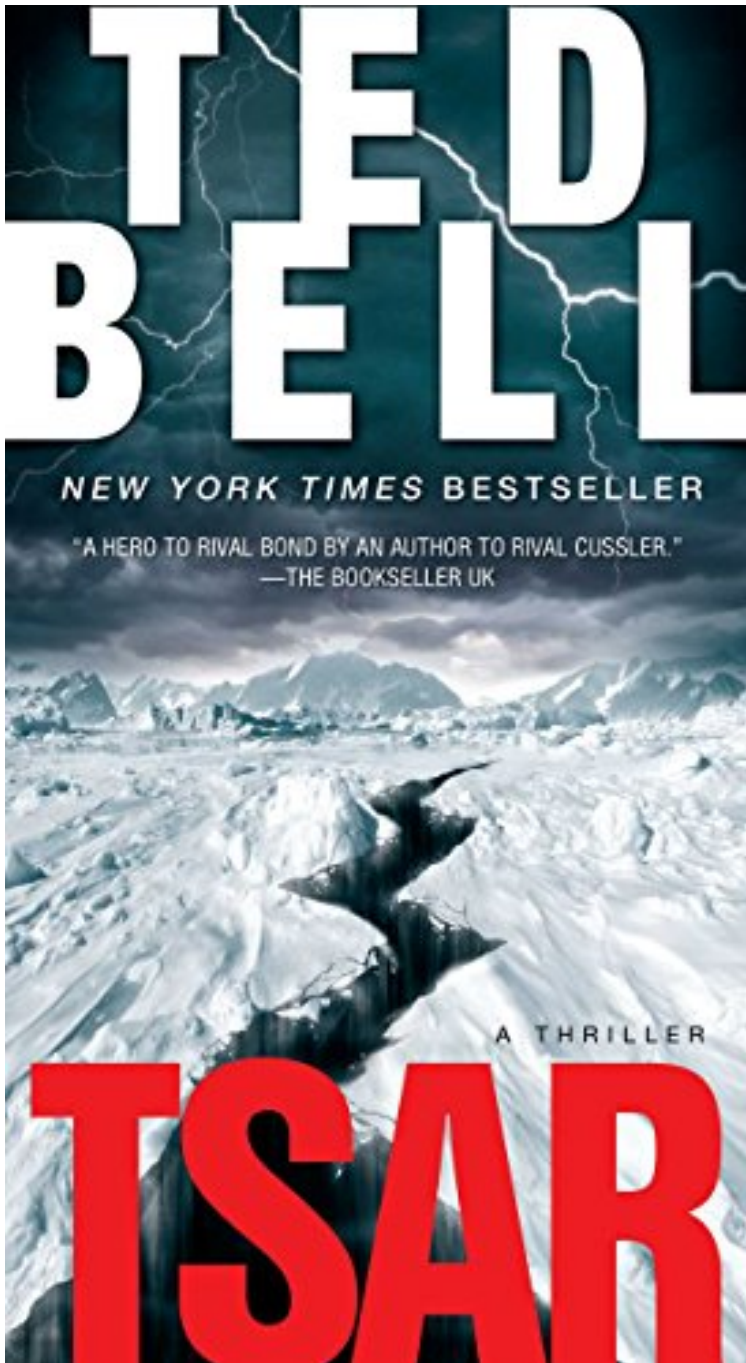


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Tsar: A Thriller



Par Ted Bell

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Par Ted Bell : Tsar: A Thriller before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tsar: A Thriller:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSwashbuckling spy Alex Hawke returns in New York Times bestselling author Ted Bell's most explosive tale of international suspense to date.There dwells, somewhere in Russia, a man so powerful no one even knows his name. His existence is only speculated upon, only whispered about in

American corridors of power and CIA strategy meetings. Though he is all but invisible, he is pulling strings and pulling them hard. For suddenly, Russia is a far, far more ominous threat than even the most hardened cold warriors ever thought possible. The Russians have their finger on the switch to the European economy and an eye on the American jugular. And, most importantly, they want to be made whole again. Should America interfere with Russia's plans to "reintegrate" her rogue states, well then, America will pay in blood. In Ted Bell's latest pulse-pounding and action-packed tour de force, Alex Hawke must face a global nightmare of epic proportions. As this political crisis plays out, Russia gains a new leader. Not just a president, but a new tsar, a signal to the world that the old, imperial Russia is back and plans to have her day. And in America, a mysterious killer, known only as Happy the Baker, brutally murders an innocent family and literally flattens the small Midwestern town they once called home. Just a taste, according to the new tsar, of what will happen if America does not back down. Onto this stage must step Alex Hawke, espionage agent extraordinaire and the only man, both Americans and the Brits agree, who can stop the absolute madness borne and bred inside the modern police state of Vladimir Putin's 'New Russia'. Extrait Tsar

1 BERMUDA, PRESENT DAY War and peace. In Alexander Hawkes experience, life usually boiled down to one or the other. Like his namesake late father, a hero much decorated for his daring Cold War exploits against the Soviets, Hawke greatly favored peace but was notoriously adept at war. Whenever and wherever in the world his rather exotic skill set was required, Alex Hawke gladly sallied forth. Cloak donned, dagger to hand, he would jubilantly enter and reenter the eternal fray. He was thirty-three years old. A good age, by his accounts, not too young and not too old. A fine balance of youth and experience, if one could be so bold. Alex Hawke, let it first be said, was a creature of radiant violence. Attack came naturally to him; the man was all fire. Shortly after his squalling birth, his very English father had declared to Kitty, his equally American mother, He seems to me a boy born with a heart ready for any fate. I only wonder what ballast will balance all that bloody sail. He was normally a cool, rather detached character, but Alex Hawkes simmering blood could roil to a rapid boil at very short notice. Oddly enough, his true nature was not readily apparent to the casual observer. Someone who chanced to meet him, say, on an evenings stroll through Berkeley Square would find him an amiable, even jolly chap. He might even be whistling a chirrupy tune about nightingales or some such. There was an easy grace about the man, a cheery nonchalance, a faint look of amusement uncorrupted by self-satisfaction about the eyes. But it was Hawkes What the hell grin, a look so freighted with charm that no woman, and even few men, could resist, that made him who he was. Hawke was noticeable. A big man with a heroic head, he stood well north of six feet and worked hard at a strict exercise regimen to keep himself extremely fit. His face was finely modeled, its character deeply etched by the myriad wonders and doubts of his inner experience. His glacial blue eyes were brilliant, and the play of his expression had a flashing range, from the merriment and charm with which he charged his daily conversation to a profound earnestness. His demeanor quickly could assume a tragic and powerful look, which could make even a trivial topic suddenly assume new and enlightening importance. He had a full head of rather untamable jet-black hair, a high, clear brow, and a straight, imperious nose. Below it was a strong chin and a well-sculpted mouth with just a hint of come-hither cruelty at the corners. Picture a hale fellow well met whom men wanted to stand a drink and whom women much preferred horizontal. HED BEEN DOZING on a pristine Bermuda beach for the better part of an hour. It was a hot day, a day that was shot blue all through. The fluttering eyelids and the thin smile on Hawkes salt-parched lips belied the rather exotic dream he was having. Suddenly, some noise from above, perhaps the dolphinlike clicking of a long-tailed petrel, startled him from his reverie. He cracked one eye, then the other, smiling at the fleeting memory of sexual bliss still imprinted on the back of his mind. Erotic images, fleshy nymphs of pink and creamy white, fled quickly as he raised his head and peered alertly at the brightness of the real world through two fiercely narrowed blue eyes. Just inside the reef line, a white sail shivered and flipped to leeward. As he watched the graceful little Bermuda sloop, the sail turned to windward again, and from across the water he distinctly heard a sound he loved, the ruffle and snap of canvas. No question about this time and place in his life, he thought, gazing at the gently lapping surf: my blue heaven. Here on this sunlit mid-Atlantic isle, peace abounded. These, finally, were the blue days he had longed for. His most recent red period, a rather dodgy affair involving a madman named Papa Top and armies of Hezbollah jihadistas deep in the , was mercifully fading from memory. Every new blue day pushed those fearful memories deeper into the depths of his consciousness, and for that he was truly grateful. He rolled over easily onto his back. The sugary sand, like pinkish talc, was warm beneath his bare skin. He must have drifted off after his most recent swim. Hmm. He linked his hands behind his still damp head and breathed deeply, the fresh salt air filling his

lungs. The sun was still high in the azure Bermuda sky. He lifted his arm to gaze lazily at his dive watch. It was just after two o'clock in the afternoon. A smile flitted across his lips as he contemplated the remainder of the day's schedule. He had nothing on this evening save a quiet dinner with his closest friend, Ambrose Congreve, and Congreve's fiancée, Diana Mars, at eight. He licked the dried salt from his lips, closed his eyes, and let the sun take his naked body. His refuge was a small cove of crystalline turquoise water. Wavelets slid up and over dappled pinkish sand before retreating to regroup and charge once more. This tiny bay, perhaps a hundred yards across at its mouth, was invisible from the coast road. The South Road, as it was called, had been carved into the jagged coral and limestone centuries earlier and extended all the way along the coast to Somerset and the Royal Naval Dockyard. Fringed with flourishing green mangrove and sea-grape, Hawke's little crescent of paradise was indistinguishable from countless coves just like it stretching east and west along the southern coast of Bermuda. The only access was from the sea. After months of visiting the cove undisturbed, he had begun to think of the spot as his own. He had even nicknamed it Bloody Bay because he was usually so bloody exhausted when he arrived there after a 3-mile swim. Hawke had chosen Bermuda carefully. He saw it as an ideal spot to nurse his wounds and heal his battered psyche. Situated in the mid-Atlantic, roughly equidistant between his twin capitals of London and Washington, Bermuda was quaintly civilized, featured balmy weather and a happy-go-lucky population, and it was somewhere few of his acquaintances, friend or foe, would ever think to look for him. In the year before, his bout of nasty scrapes in the jungles had included skirmishes with various tropical fevers that had nearly taken his life. But after six idyllic months of marinating in this tropic sea and air, he concluded that he had never felt better in his life. Even with a modest daily intake of Mr. Gosling's elixir, called by the natives black rum, he had somehow gotten his six-foot-plus frame down to his fighting weight of 180. He now had a deep tan and a flat belly, and he felt just fine. In his early thirties, he felt twenty if a day. Hawke had taken refuge in a small, somewhat dilapidated beach cottage. The old house, originally a sugar mill, was perched, some might say precariously, above the sea a few miles west of his current location. He had gotten into the very healthy habit of swimming to this isolated beach every day. Three miles twice daily was not excessive and not a bad addition to his normal workout routine, which included a few hundred situps and pullups, not to mention serious weight training. His privacy thus ensured, his habit at his private beach was to shed his swimsuit once he had arrived. He had made a ritual of stripping it off and hanging it on a nearby mangrove branch. Then a few hours sunning au naturel, as our French cousins would have it. He was normally a modest man, but the luxuriant feeling of cool air and sunlight on parts not normally exposed was too delightful to be denied. He had gotten so accustomed to this new regime that the merest idea of wearing trunks here would seem superfluous, ridiculous even. And what? He stared with disbelieving eyes. What the bloody hell was that? From Publishers Weekly In bestseller Bell's rousing fifth thriller (after *Spy*), Alex Hawke fights the leaders of a new and invigorated Russia, where Vladimir Putin has been locked up in a lethal prison built over a massive radioactive waste site. Evil mastermind Count Ivan Korsakov (aka the Dark Rider) is determined to return Mother Russia to her rightful place in the world order by reacquiring her former colonies, after which he intends to conquer Europe and reign as the new tsar. The only thing standing in his way is Hawke, who, as series fans well know, is more than up to the task of thwarting those who try to take over the globe. Life throws Hawke a curve when he finds himself falling in love with the astoundingly beautiful Anastasia, who just happens to be Korsakov's daughter. As always, Bell pulls out all the stops with terrific action scenes, fiendish murders, diabolical villains, dramatic rescues and all the cool weaponry the reader could possibly hope for. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.