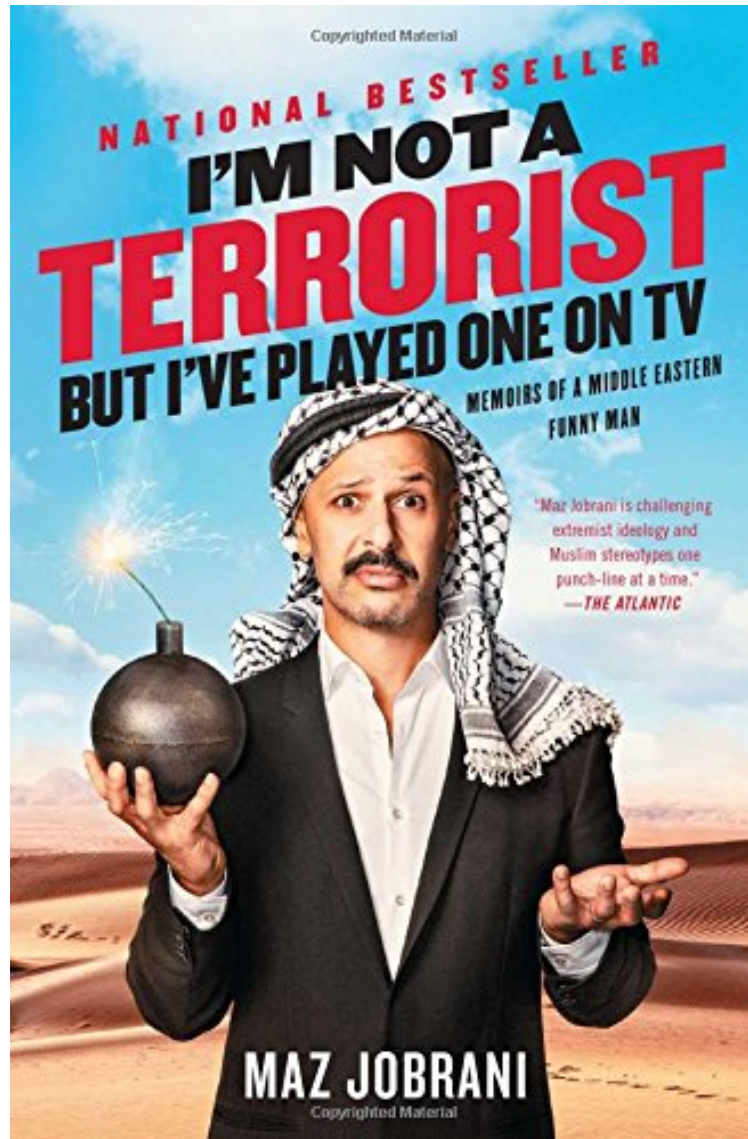


[Free download] I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One On TV: Memoirs of a Middle Eastern Funny Man

I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One On TV: Memoirs of a Middle Eastern Funny Man

Maz Jobrani

*ebooks / Download PDF / *ePub / DOC / audiobook*



DOWNLOAD



+

READ ONLINE

#755221 in Books Maz Jobrani 2016-02-16 2016-02-16Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.37 x .70 x 5.50l, .0 #File Name: 147674999X240 pagesI m Not a Terrorist But I ve Played One On TV Memoirs of a Middle Eastern Funny Man | File size: 25.Mb

Maz Jobrani : I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One On TV: Memoirs of a Middle Eastern Funny Man before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One On TV: Memoirs of a Middle Eastern Funny Man:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Hysterically funny, intellectually honest, delightfully enlightening. By Andrea Robinson Absolutely hysterical book! It's also informative, thought-provoking, and illuminating. We're all one species of human sharing this planet -- why are we so misinformed about each other? As someone who's traveled and spent time in the Middle East, I can relate to the struggles that Maz and other comedians of Middle Eastern descent face from a public who can't tell the difference between Persians and Arabs, much less grasp that people are basically the same all over the world. We humans mostly all worry about the same things -- what are we going to make for dinner, how can we get the kids to school on time, how can we pay the rent, etc. The vast majority of humanity wants to have a good life and is against terrorism no matter what religion they practice or what country they come from. Maz has done us all a huge favor by bringing some light into the subject of heritage and prejudice. In a really funny way, he and his friends are reminding us that we're all the same. Have fun with this book! "I'm Persian ... like the cat! Meow!" 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Just what I expected By Kindle Customer I pre-ordered this book as I'm a big fan of Maz. A lot of what he does in his shows was detailed throughout and the "how's why's" neatly explained. I wasn't expecting a great read, and for me at least I pretty much got what I was expecting. Not as well written or engaging as other books I've read, but then they man is a comic, not a writer. Held my attention and being married to an Iranian, could so appreciate the descriptions of his family. More than one scene certainly caused me to lol. All in all, felt I got my money's worth and am glad I bought and read this book 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Read it in one sitting, and loved it By S. Meyer I really enjoyed this book. You can't help but to feel that he's an old friend after reading it because he writes in a very friendly style. His stories about travels to the Middle East to do comedy shows informs us that that part of the world is full of ordinary people just like us, with the same hopes and dreams, and sense of humor too. He lovingly pokes fun at his mom and dad's eccentricities, and talks about trying his best to fit in as a kid in a CA town during the height of the Iran hostage crisis. I read it in one sitting and now my wife is reading it and laughing out loud as I write this review.

“A funny, insightful memoir” (Kirkus Reviews) about growing up Iranian in America, and the quest to make it as an actor in Hollywood without having to wear a turban, tote a bomb, or get kicked in the face by Chuck Norris. After he emigrated with his family to the US during the Iranian Revolution, Maz Jobrani spent most of his youth trying to fit in with his adopted culture—learning to play baseball and religiously watching Dallas. But none of his attempts at assimilation made a difference to casting directors, who only auditioned him for the role of kebab-eating, bomb-toting, extremist psychopath. When he first started out in show business, Maz endured suggestions that he spice up his stand-up act by wearing “the outfit,” fielded questions about rising gas prices, and was jeered for his supposed involvement in the Iran hostage crisis. In fact, these things happened so often that he began to wonder: Could I be a terrorist without even knowing it? And when all he seemed to be offered were roles that required looking menacingly Arabic, he wondered if he would ever make it in America. This laugh-out-loud memoir chronicles a lifetime of both killing it and bombing on stage, with “plenty to say about matters of race, assimilation, embarrassing family members, life in America for brown-skinned people before and after 9/11, the vagaries of international pop culture, and making it in big, dumb, fizzy, sometimes beautiful America” (The New York Times).

“Jobrani has plenty to say about matters of race, assimilation, embarrassing family members, life in America for brown-skinned people before and after 9/11, the vagaries of international pop culture and making it in big, dumb, fizzy, sometimes beautiful America.” —The New York Times “Maz Jobrani is challenging extremist ideology and Muslim stereotypes, one punchline at a time.” (The Atlantic) “I didn’t even know Maz was Persian. I thought he was Mexican. You learn so much when someone writes a book about themselves. Now read it so you can understand why Maz is hands down my favorite bald headed, goateed, Persian comedian named Maz.” —Whitney Cummings, stand-up comedian and creator of Two Broke Girls “I have witnessed hundreds of thousands of people come to my club, and adore Maz. I highly recommend this book. It’s an incredible story about an incredible comedian. You will love it!” —Jamie Masada, Owner, The World Famous Laugh Factory “Maz Jobrani is no Jabroni. If you don't read his book I will find you, put you in a camel clutch, and break your neck! Oh, and his book is funny too.” —The Iron Sheik, WWE Champion and Social Media God “A heartfelt and laugh-out-loud hilarious memoir about growing up an immigrant in America. Maz Jobrani is not just one of the funniest comics out there. He's a keenly perceptive voice on what it even means to be American.” —Reza Aslan, author of Zealot and No god but God “The struggles and successes of ‘the Persian Eddie Murphy.’ Iranian-American comedian, actor and first-time author Jobrani tells a fish-out-of-water story. . . . A funny [and] insightful memoir” —Kirkus s About the Author Maz Jobrani is a founding member of The Axis of Evil Comedy Tour. He performs stand-up comedy around the world, including in Europe, Australia, and the Middle East where he performed in front of the King of Jordan. Maz starred in the films Friday After Next, 13 Going on 30, and The Interpreter. He was a series regular on ABC’s Better Off Ted, and he has guest starred on Curb Your Enthusiasm, 24, True Blood, and Shameless, to name a few. Jobrani is currently a regular panelist on NPR’s “Wait Wait Don’t Tell Me.” He has also given two TED talks, which can be viewed at TED.com. He has performed his stand-up on The Tonight Show, Comedy Central, and Showtime and is starring in the indie

comedy feature, Jimmy Vestvood: Amerikan Hero, which he cowrote and produced. I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One on TV is his first book. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. I'm Not a Terrorist, but I've Played One on TV Dallas, Texas I was born in Iran and grew up in America. That makes me a Middle Eastern American. The only thing more intimidating for a Middle Eastern guy than going to Texas is going to Texas to meet Chuck Norris. Talk about the official Heartland of America. When it comes to terrorists, Chuck has a 100 percent kill rate, usually televised at two o'clock in the morning. One of my first big breaks was to star as a terrorist in that Chuck Norris movie I mentioned in the Introduction. Yes, I was blessed with greatness early on. So off I went to Dallas to meet him. Most of what I knew about Dallas I learned from stereotypes picked up in my childhood. When I first came to America in the late 1970s, I didn't know much about American sports. I was only six at the time and had played soccer back in Iran. I had never heard of American football. So once I began to settle in I started to learn how this foreign game was played. "I get the part at the beginning where the guy kicks the ball. Why does the other guy catch it? Is he the goalkeeper? Why is he being chased by all the other guys? Does he owe them money? Why is everyone dressed in tights? These are the biggest and meanest ballerinas I've ever seen. Why are they hitting each other so hard? Do they have anger issues? I know why they're angry. Because their ball isn't round. Balls are supposed to be round. Who makes an oblong ball? You have no idea which way it's going to bounce. I'd be pissed, too! Whoa, whoa, whoa—who are the girls dancing on the sidelines? How do they fit in? You mean they get paid just to cheer? What a country!" Once these concerns had been properly addressed, my friend Sam—another Iranian kid who'd been in the United States for a while—led me to my first favorite sports team: the Dallas Cowboys. This was the late seventies, so the best teams in the NFL were the Dallas Cowboys and the Pittsburgh Steelers. Unaware of what the Cowboys stood for, I became a fan and only later found out that I was rooting for what was known then as "America's Team." What better way to become an American, I thought, than to be a fan of the most Americanny American of teams that ever existed. Plus, they have hot cheerleaders! In recent years, the Cowboys have fallen from this pedestal as they have been afflicted with drug, sex, and violence scandals—which would be okay if they were winning. (Doing coke with a hooker in a motel and shooting people makes you un-American if the squad cannot maintain a winning record and make the playoffs at least every other year.) At any rate, when I was a kid, loving the Cowboys was like loving John Wayne and hot dogs. It made you American even if your papers said you were an alien—a legal alien, but an alien nonetheless. The Cowboys became my first exposure to what I thought represented the heartland of the country.

Iranians Love Soaps As a result, I became fascinated with Texas, specifically the city of Dallas. My next exposure to the American Southwest came in the form of the television show Dallas, which the women in my family watched every week. Back in Iran, American film and TV were huge. My grandmother had a crush on the Six Million Dollar Man and she knew I loved him, too. She would tell me all the time that he had come over the night before and that I had fallen asleep just before he got there. She called him her "friend." "My ferend vas here last night just after you fall asleep." "Which friend?" "Eh-Steve Austin." Iranians cannot pronounce words that have back-to-back consonants. So Steve becomes Eh-Steve, traffic becomes te-raffic, gangster becomes gang-ester, and so forth. We also pronounce w's as v's. Thus my grandmother would say "ve" instead of "we." "You mean the Six Million Dollar Man?" "Yes, I call him Eh-Steve. Ve are on the first name basis." "Did you at least take a picture with him?" "He's too fast! He make dat sound and run away before I get chance. Na-na-na-na-na! Next time." All the women in my family were obsessed with American television. From Dallas to Dynasty, we followed these characters' lives closely until they became our extended family. As a result, one thing that escaped my parents was the idea of what might be appropriate for a kid to watch. If they were watching the Ewings on Dallas or the Carringtons on Dynasty they never thought: Is all this sex and scandal okay for an eight-year-old to watch? Whereas my American friends' parents might not let them watch Dallas because of its mature themes and late time slot, my parents didn't care. I don't think immigrant parents really understand the ratings system. They think that PG (Parental Guidance) means that a movie will give "parental guidance" to your kid while you go shopping for gold jewelry, chandeliers, and marble counters at the mall. So you can drop them off for a few hours and they will watch the movie while the movie is watching them. I even remember my aunt turning on The Exorcist and not thinking twice while we sat next to her as Linda Blair's head did a 360 and puked out green vomit. Who lets their eight-year-old watch The Exorcist? It's possible they misunderstood and thought the movie was about exercising. When they saw my prepubescent face, all contorted and scared, they developed a callous attitude: "Look at this lazy child of ours. You are big pussy! You are afraid of exercising? You need to vatch that movie again. You're looking a bit chubby." Every week the women in my family would follow the soap opera revolving around the Ewings and their oil empire. I don't know what drew my family to the Ewings, but I suppose our affluence and coming from a country rich in oil might have had something to do with it. Once Dallas got old they started watching Dynasty—more rich people surrounded by scandal. My grandmother didn't speak much English, but she religiously watched and understood all these soap operas better than the rest of us. Sometimes when I was home sick from school, she would take care of me and turn on General Hospital and tell me all the details of every story line. "Dat guy married to dat girl, but she doesn't know he not really deh guy, but his evil tvin. Deh real guy kept hostage in basement vhile the evil tvin try to get all of de money ferom deh girl. Dat von der is deh girl's fader who is a really good guy and a philanthropist. Ve like him, Maz." "How do you get all that?" "Because I'm not idiot." "But

you barely speak English.” “Yes, but I understand love. I understand dese people. Ve are the same.” I would watch these shows and I even became such a Joan Collins fan that I read one of her sister’s books. How an eight-year-old Iranian boy from Marin County got his hands on a Jackie Collins book is a mystery. My parents could barely read the back of a toothpaste tube in English, much less a whole novel. I think one of my aunts or my older sister had picked it up so I decided to give it a read, which made me yearn to be older immediately. I remember thinking, Wow! Adults have so much sex and scandal and money! I can’t wait to grow up! Buying Dog Food for a Stripper The Ewings and the Cowboys, Joan Collins and her literary sister—these were the people I thought of when I thought of Texas. My first time going to Dallas was to do the Chuck Norris movie, and I remember asking some of the locals how things worked. “Where do people go out in Dallas? What’s the thing to do at night?” “Strip clubs.” “Okay, but where do the locals go out? Where do J. R. and Bobby Ewing hang out?” “You mean Larry Hagman and Patrick Duffy?” “Sure, I guess.” “They’re actors. They probably hang out in Los Angeles somewhere.” “I just came from Los Angeles.” “Maybe you’ll see them when you go back.” “I guess I’ll go to a strip club then. Just to see if they’re hanging out there.” Quickly my glamorous image of Dallas dissipated and reality set in. Don’t get me wrong, there’s a lot of cultural stuff to do in Dallas—like going to the Book Depository where Lee Harvey shot JFK. However, when you ask local dudes what a dude from Los Angeles should do to experience authentic Dallas nightlife, four out of five will tell you to go to a strip club. Middle Eastern men are stereotypically known to be macho—IROC-Z, gold chain, Drakkar Noir, manly men. (Basically like Italians, but using words that have the KHHHHH sound.) Some of these men might still exist with multiple wives they don’t talk to, kids they don’t play catch with, and girlfriends they take to clubs for bottle service. However, in this modern age where women have stepped up to run companies and men have been encouraged to talk to therapists about their feelings, most of the Middle Eastern men I know no longer fit the stereotype. My Middle Eastern friends change diapers, ask permission of their wives to watch a football game with friends, and shuttle kids around in SUVs. And in keeping with the image of the modern Middle Eastern male, I’m going to come right out and say it: I HATE STRIP CLUBS! I know some of the old-school macho Middle Eastern men are dropping this book right now saying, “Okay, dats it. I’ve had enough! Vhat kind of fancy pansy bullshit is dis? KHHHHHHH.” I’m sorry to say, it’s the truth. I know some men love strip clubs, and even the nineteen hijackers from September 11 were reported to have gone to some on the nights before they attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. As if I didn’t hate these guys enough, hearing that they went to strip clubs gave me even more reason to despise them. Why would they go? I thought their ultimate goal was to obtain seventy-two virgins. I’m going out on a limb here, but my guess is there aren’t a lot of virgins at strip clubs. And while we’re on the topic of the seventy-two virgins as a motivation to kill yourself, which I have a tough time believing, my question is, why would these idiots want virgins in the first place? I’ve been with a few virgins in my life. It’s not fun. I’m not too proud to admit it—I was once a virgin myself. I can tell you I had no idea what I was doing in my virgin days. So why someone would kill themselves to be with seventy-two inexperienced women is beyond me. You’d think they’d want someone who could show them a good time, expose them to questionable rashes, get them to swing on chandeliers, somersault onto the bed into perfect splits, slide down fireman’s poles, that kind of stuff. Before I ever went to a strip club, I always thought they’d be like Disneyland for adults. I thought you would enter to see the forbidden, experience sensuality, and revel in mystery. I soon came to realize that it was nothing like that, but more like a bus stop with naked women begging you for twenties. Which, by the way, would make taking the bus much more interesting. I think city officials should really consider hiring strippers to work bus stops—could help encourage public transportation. I’m just saying. I know that some women reading this are rolling their eyes. “Yeah right, you don’t like strip clubs. That’s a bunch of crap.” But I swear, there are a lot of men who feel uncomfortable in these places. Here’s the best way I can explain it. There is a stereotype that women love shopping and the only thing they love more than shopping is shopping for shoes. Now, imagine trying on a bunch of beautiful, hot, sexy shoes but only having them spin around on your feet and then watching them go slip onto someone else’s feet. You don’t get to take them home; you don’t get to keep them. You could, for another twenty bucks, try them on again, but there’s a bouncer standing close by making sure you don’t rub the shoes while you try them on. Yes, in this analogy there are shoe bouncers. Oh, and there’s a two-drink minimum while you’re trying on these shoes, even if you’re not thirsty. As you can see, this could be really frustrating. One of the tricks of strip clubs you figure out fast is that all of the songs are shortened. So whereas you might get a lap dance with a stripper on a song like Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” which is six minutes long, at a strip club it would last closer to two minutes. The song would finish and you’d turn to your friend: “Was that six minutes? That didn’t feel like six minutes.” “I don’t know, bro, I’m drunk.” “We must be having so much fun that six minutes passed in two minutes. Let’s get another dance.” “I’m with you, bro.” “Okay good—this next song is Pink Floyd’s ‘Shine on You Crazy Diamond,’ which fortunately is seventeen minutes long. This is going to be a quality lap dance.” Two minutes later: “Was that seventeen minutes? That didn’t feel like seventeen minutes.” The other thing you experience is a false sense of your own attractiveness. All these hot young women are walking up to you asking if you want to hang out with them. Wow, I think this new blazer I bought makes me look really hot because all of these scantily clad, beautiful women in lingerie keep staring at me. As Sally Field would say, “I can’t deny the fact that you like me, right now, you like me!” Turns out that right then they just really liked my credit card, which at that time in my comic career was

maxed out. I once talked to a stripper for a while and the conversation came around to the fact that she needed a sugar daddy. She was telling me about her rent problems and how she had a little dog she needed to feed and the whole time I was thinking, I wonder how many months' rent I could cover with my credit card that might have \$250 left before it hits the limit. Maybe I could at least pay for a bag of dog food for her dog. I wonder if that gives me a shot with this girl. I know this is a story about Dallas, but to be completely honest the dog food conundrum occurred at a strip club in Los Angeles. There are so many Persians in Los Angeles and we have a reputation for being well-off financially, so perhaps this girl was thinking that I was a sheikh or a shah or at least a chiropractor—for some reason there's an inordinate number of Persian chiropractors in Los Angeles. I think it's because it's an easy way to consider yourself a doctor and impress people while also being able to charge insurance companies and make the kind of money to be able to afford a Mercedes-Benz, which every self-loving Persian owns—preferably in black with a personalized license plate like CHIRODK which could be read as Chiro Dick but is actually meant to be read as Chiro Doc. But back to Dallas. My costar on the Chuck Norris film, who was also a Middle Easterner playing a terrorist, talked me into going to a strip club, since that seemed to be the place most recommended by the locals. At the time I was dating a girl who would later become my wife and I felt bad going to the strip club and not telling her even though I honestly didn't want to go. At some point I gave in to my guilt and decided to call her to tell her where I was. "Honey, it's me. I have something very important to tell you." "What?" "I've just realized that I really, really love you." "That's nice to hear, Maz. What made you come to this conclusion?" "Well I'm at a strip club and I was talking to this stripper and I realized I had zero desire to get a lap dance from her. Then later, during the lap dance, the only person I was thinking about was you and I thought I'd call and let you know that I'm at a strip club and thinking about you." "Where are you?" "At a strip club. Even though a Jimi Hendrix song came on—and Jimi has something like a fifteen-minute blues riff in this one, which is one of the most efficient songs to get a lap dance to—I decided to call you instead." Click. "Honey? Hello? You don't like Jimi Hendrix?" That was not the end of the stripper saga for my wife and me. Years later, my son Dhara came to a show at the Comedy Store in L.A. called The Naughty Show. I didn't think twice before taking him because I just had to stop in and do a set. It's like fifteen minutes, round-trip. As I'm waiting to go up they have a pole dancer come out and do a dance. I'm in the back getting ready to go on and not thinking at all that my four-year-old is out in the audience watching a stripper do a pole dance. A few weeks later out of nowhere he mentions it. "Daddy, why was that lady dancing on a pole?" I realized I had become my parents, letting my little Iranian-Indian-American kid see things he was not supposed to see, like J. R. Ewing, and strippers. "Um, she was actually an off-duty fireman. She was practicing going up and down the pole to save people." I hope I didn't mess him up too bad. But mostly I hope he never tells my wife. Fighting Chuck Norris I was heading into this fantastic stripper and cowboy land to face down its favorite son in a battle for—well, a battle for the attention of television viewers awake at two o'clock in the morning on a Tuesday. This was before September 11, but even back then Hollywood supported the stereotype of Iranians and other Middle Easterners as members of an evil cabal. My earliest acting roles cast me in the way that I was, of course, paranoid that my fellow Americans saw me—as a terrorist. I was working then as an assistant at an advertising agency, and while I did not want to take these roles promoting a stereotype that I knew to be false, I felt I had to in order to build my career. I also wanted what most Americans wanted—to quit my day job. If that meant yelling "Allah o akbar!" at the climax of an action scene, right before the good guys killed me, so be it. One of my early parts was in that movie starring Chuck Norris. As a Middle Eastern male, when you're in a Chuck Norris movie of the week you know you're going to die. You will never see a movie with Chuck and Hassan becoming besties and saving the world together. "Hey Chuck—you get these guys and I'll get the other guys and see you back at the base. Allah o akbar!" Those words will never be spoken in a Chuck Norris movie because audiences watch those movies to see Chuck Norris roundhouse kick anyone or anything that does not comply with Chuck Norris's worldview. They don't want Chuck Norris to get a Middle Eastern partner. They don't want Chuck Norris to be tolerant of other ethnicities and cultures. So when I got the call about auditioning for a Chuck Norris film, I knew it was for a bad guy. The movie was titled—wait for it—The President's Man: A Line in the Sand. If you ever get the chance to watch this movie, don't. I played the role of a physicist who worked for an Osama bin Laden type who had come to Chicago to do what all Middle Eastern characters do in Chuck Norris films—attempt to blow up buildings, then suffer a fury of Chuck Norris roundhouse kicks to the face. Again, this was before September 11. I was torn. On the one hand, playing a terrorist and promoting this stereotype. On the other hand, quitting my day job. I found a compromise: I would bring humanity to the role and in the process move my career forward and be one step closer to quitting my day job. Maybe I could tweak my delivery of words such as, "I will kill you in the name of Allah!" What if I said those lines but made them more humane by posing them as a question? "I will kill you in the name of Allah?" "Would you mind if I killed you in the name of Allah?" "If I had to kill you in the name of anyone, is it okay to do so in the name of, oh, I don't know . . . Allah?" This Chuck Norris movie would be my ticket to stardom. Who knows, maybe I'd even win an Emmy for it. Actors have a little trick where we give characters backstory, imagining their lives before the present moment in order to more accurately tap into the persona. I decided I would bring depth to this character, really show the sophisticated American viewing public that watches movies at two o'clock in the morning on Tuesdays what made this guy tick. I dug deep to understand how my character had developed up until the point that Chuck Norris would

kick him in the face—something along the lines of how he had been a kid in Afghanistan when the Russians attacked and killed his parents with arms supplied by the Great Satan, which furthered his hatred maybe not directly in regards to Chuck Norris, but Chuck Norris–related things, such as America. As you can see my logic was all twisted because if the Russians killed his parents, why would they use weapons from America? America was their enemy. None of this made sense. I showed up at my wardrobe fitting feeling good about how I would portray this terrorist. Then the wardrobe lady handed me my outfit, which included a shirt, pants, and . . . a turban? Wait a second. I was playing an Afghan in America who wants to blow up a building. Afghans in America do not wear turbans. And Afghans in America planning to blow up buildings definitely do not wear turbans (unless they're hiding the bomb under the turban, in which case the turban could come in really handy). "I've done my research," I begged the wardrobe lady. "I'm trying to bring humanity to this role. Don't you see? Russians killed his parents!" She tilted her head, confused. "Then why does he want to kill Americans?" "I don't know! Maybe he's just angry and wants to take it out on anyone. Or maybe he couldn't get a ticket to Moscow so he came to Chicago." She shrugged. "Either way, this is the outfit the producers said to wear." "But it doesn't make sense." "And your story does?" "Good point, but I still think he wouldn't wear the turban." She shrugged again. "I'll let the producers know." The next day when I showed up at my trailer, I looked in my closet to find a shirt, pants, and . . . a scarf. "I see you spoke with the producers and they saw it my way. I appreciate that. And I will gladly wear this scarf instead. Thank you." "That's not a scarf. That's the turban. You just gotta roll it up on your head." "Are you kidding me? Did you even talk to the producers?" "Yep! And they want you to wear the turban." I spent the morning discussing it with anyone who would listen. "My character would want to blend in." "The turban is so cliché." "He had a rough childhood." "He's just misunderstood, really." "He'd rather be in Moscow!" Everyone nodded, but they were all in cahoots and certain that the turban was cinematic gold. Come to find out, everyone who works on a Chuck Norris film is somehow related to Chuck Norris. The director was Chuck's kid. The executive producer was Chuck's brother. All of the Norrises had decided—probably at Norris Sunday supper over giant bowls of meat—that the bad guy would be easier for the audience to recognize at two o'clock on a Tuesday morning if he was wearing a turban. Worse than furious, I was humiliated. Why did I think I could bring humanity to this character? It was a Chuck Norris movie, after all. Adding insult to injury, it was a Chuck Norris movie in which Chuck Norris played a college professor. But I was still looking forward to the fight scene between Chuck and me, a moment that I hoped would become iconic in the Norris oeuvre. On the day we were set to shoot the fight scene, Norris showed up and had a word with his son. Why this never came up when all the Norrises had gathered around to craft this masterpiece in the first place we'll never know, but Chuck decided rather than fighting me, it would be much easier just to shoot me. In my head I had choreographed this amazing fight scene where Chuck and I would go blow for blow, then he would eventually pull on my turban and it would unravel, making me spin and get dizzy. Chuck would give my character the final roundhouse kick to the face, and I would be immortalized on film. Instead, he just had me run toward him with a machine gun in my hand and he took out a pistol and shot me. Nice and quick. No time to milk it. Good-bye Emmy! By the time the film was ready, September 11 had occurred. I was mortified that they might release it but fairly certain they would not. Then, a couple months after 9/11, I read that Chuck Norris had actually come out and pushed to release the movie, claiming it was a patriotic film because the terrorists got what they deserved. I was worried people would see me in the streets and think I was an actual terrorist: "Hey, ain't that the sumbitch hassling Chuck Norris the other night on channel eight? Let's get him!" I wrote letters to Chuck and CBS, asking them to not run the movie, but I heard nothing back. Soon I saw it on my TV listings and steeled myself to watch. The good news was that it was so, so bad, I couldn't get past the first ten minutes. I found reason to hope that very few people would be able to bear watching long enough to get to my scenes. I thought to myself, Someone should shoot me not for being a terrorist, but for agreeing to do this movie. Lights, Camera, You Go! After that I told my agents no more terrorist parts, no matter what. After all, 99.99 percent of Middle Eastern people are not terrorists, and by playing one on television I was promoting this stereotype. So I said, "That's it, never again." Then the show 24 called. They said they had a part for a terrorist. "No!" I told them. "But," they continued, "he changes his mind halfway through the mission!" "Ahhh, the ambivalent terrorist! I suppose it doesn't hurt to play just ONE more," I said. "I mean, this guy's a terrorist with a heart of gold. I'll bring humanity to the role. And then quit my day job. Emmy Awards, take two." Even my family and friends were getting tired of watching me die. It's exhausting bragging to people that you were hired to star in a movie or show and alerting them to when the program will air, all the while knowing that the story will climax with your death. After the episode of 24 aired, my mother called to discuss my burgeoning film career. "Vhy you keep dying?" "What do you mean why do I keep dying? This is the movies. That's how they write it, Mom." "Vhy don't you kill dem von time?" "I can't just kill them. There are scripts, wardrobes, directors, other actors. I can't just start doing my own thing." "Sure you can. When they say 'lights, camera,' you go on camera. Don't wait for 'action,' you little pussy. That movie you were in vith Chuck Norris—I vatch again the other day. There vas plenty of opportunities to kill him, but he kill you instead." It was not just me who was sick of dying. It was my mother, too. And that's when I took my final stand and stopped taking these parts. I have not played or auditioned for another terrorist role in more than ten years. My management knew about my choice and although they supported it, there were times they just wanted to triple-check that I was still standing strong. One time

my agent called and said, “I’m about to pass on an audition for a big film for you but just wanted to make sure you’re cool with it.” “What’s the audition?” “Three words—United. Ninety. Three.” “It’s about the flight on nine-eleven?” “Yep.” “Any good guys?” “Yeah, but they’re all white.” “I guess it’s a pass.” Sometimes I’d see the advertisements for these films—big billboards posted around Los Angeles—and think, Am I shooting myself in the foot? But then the films would come out and I would spend my hard-earned American money to see them and remember how uncomfortable I would have felt portraying an Arab terrorist. Especially after the good feeling I had when I took a stand all those years ago. So I haven’t worked in ten years, but at least I feel good about myself. Okay, truth be told, I have worked. I’ve played cab drivers, donut shop owners, falafel stand cooks, and even doctors. Yes, an actual doctor. One who didn’t try to hijack the hospital. Hey, don’t judge—breaking stereotypes takes time. Years ago I ended up on the Colbert Report, where my position on the matter came up during our interview. “You refuse to audition for a part of a terrorist?” Stephen Colbert asked. “That’s right.” “Well, I agree. That’s insulting,” he said. “At this point in your career you should be offered the role of a terrorist.” “I’d rather just not do them.” “Why not?” “The reason is, being of Middle Eastern descent, I feel there’s more to Middle Eastern people, and you can see terrorism on the news all the time.” “But someone has to play the terrorists out there. We need the terrorist figure in movies to focus our rage.” “But you can focus your rage at the news that shows the terrorists,” I said. “Then who should play the terrorist? Would you want to see white actors in Arab face?” “Or Latinos,” I suggested. “They kind of look Middle Eastern.” “They could pass,” Colbert agreed. “They could pass.” A couple years later I got the part of an Arab-American Secret Service agent in the movie *The Interpreter*, with Nicole Kidman and Sean Penn. This was a big win for me because I thought I had no chance in hell of getting the part. I auditioned for Sydney Pollack on tape, which means that you don’t even go into an audition room. You just film yourself and mail it in. Even when they called me and told me I had the part I thought that maybe they had picked another guy and gotten me mixed up with him. I know this happens with other minorities where people say all Asians look alike or all black people look alike, so why not with Middle Easterners? It’s even happened to me in the past where people have confused me with my fellow Middle Eastern–American comedian Ahmed Ahmed, who is Egyptian and looks nothing like me (meaning he has hair and a small nose). So I thought that maybe Pollack and friends had seen some other Middle Eastern actor and thought, Hey, they all look the same, so just call the dude named Maz. He’ll do. The first day I went to work on the film in New York I had a simple scene where I’m supposed to say a few lines to myself as I sit in my car, watching a suspect through binoculars. We did one take and Sydney Pollack’s voice came over the walkie-talkie they put in the car with me. “Do it again, but make it even more casual.” Take two and Pollack’s voice: “This time, try a little more emphasis.” Take three: “You’re trying too hard. Just throw it away.” Take four: “Breathe, relax, and say the lines.” At this point I’m melting, thinking, They’re going to fire me and I’ll have to go back to playing terrorists. I knew they had the wrong guy! They wanted Ahmed! I can call him right now! Maybe I’ll quit and become a chiropractor. I just hope no one’s taken the license plate CHIRODK. By take seven we got it. And Pollack even came around and was joking with me by the end. The really cool thing with *The Interpreter* was that there was actually a scene where I’m on the bus, following the same suspect I was watching from my car before, and the bus explodes. I get off just before the explosion and survive. So it was one of the first times I had played a character who not only wasn’t involved in the act of terrorism, but he actually survived it. It was a bright day in the Jobrani family. “You not die!” my mother said. “You didn’t kill anyvon like I told you, but at least you not die. Remember, lights, camera, you go!”