

Dating My Terrorist

by Con Chapman

Claim: A never-previously wed, college-educated woman over age 40 has a better chance of being killed by a terrorist than of getting married.

Status: False.

Snopes.com



It was last Thanksgiving when my family started to gang up on me about still being single. It wasn't my fault I spent four years to get two master's degrees in comparative literature; it took me two years to compare Stendhal to Eudora Welty, then two more to compare Welty to Stendhal.

"You gonna go back for a third?" my Uncle Tommy asked.



"Master's degrees are like potato chips to her," my mother said. "She liked the first one so much she can't stop." This is what passes for humor with my parents.

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"A big girl like you—you should be married," Tommy said

"It's too late," Aunt Jean said. "I read in the paper she's more likely to be killed by a terrorist than get married."

There was silence for a moment as everyone took in the enormity of that statistic.

"That's an urban myth," I said in my defense. "*Newsweek* got the study wrong."

"How do you know?" my mother asked.

"*The Daily Beast* bought them for a buck."

"So?" mom said.

"That's almost four bucks off the newsstand price," Tommy said.

"That means they were talking through their hats," I said. "I'll be fine."

"Maybe you should consider dating your terrorist," my dad said to me. "Most terrorists, I think their problem is they can't get a date. They wouldn't be so angry all the time if they got a little canoodling in." Dad's always been the practical one in the family; instead of getting emotionally upset by Islamofascists' avowed intent to establish a caliphate under shariah law in America, he takes two steps back from a problem, looks at it from a different angle, and comes up with an incorrect solution.

"I don't want her dating a terrorist," mom said. "I can't even stand fireworks on the 4th of July, much less improvised explosive devices."

Dad just shrugged his shoulders. I think how the two of them have managed to stay together for 43 years is they take opposite sides of every question, then ignore each other.



“You're not getting any younger,” Tommy said. I swear he was a professor of logic in a prior life, but now he's just retired.

“He's right, you know,” Aunt Jean said. “Your biological clock is ticking.”

“Actually, it's not,” I said. “It has a sweep second hand.”

To get everybody to shut up I agreed to go out on *one* date with my terrorist, but that was it. Anything more and he'd have to be a pretty special guy. I mean, who wants to date a guy who every time he goes to the ATM machine has to be cleared through the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List? The sighs of exasperation from the people behind you in line as you rattle that off are enough to make your hair get frizzy.

I found out from the federal government that my terrorist is Ramadan Al-Hoorie, but he insists that I call him “Al” right after he introduces himself. I'm a little uncomfortable with this sort of casual familiarity—perhaps one reason why I never seem to “fit in” at fern bars and potluck suppers.

“Have you been a terrorist for long?” I ask after the hostess seats us. Focus on the other person is what my dating “coach” Debbie always tells me.

“Let’s see, what is this—1436 After Hijrah. I guess since early 1433, late 1432, somewhere in there.”

I’m sipping a white wine spritzer, and I can see it’s irritating him. “Intoxicants are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork!” he finally snaps.

“Did you just make that up?” I ask.

“It is from the Koran.”

“It could be worse,” I say. “At least I’m not drinking a Cosmopolitan.”

His lips curl with distaste, but it looks like he’s going to let it pass without going all jihad on me.

“So tell me a little bit about yourself,” I say, flashing my lashes like Scheherazade in 1,001 Arabian Nights.

“Well, I like candlelight dinners, quiet nights at home and walks on the beach with the special 6 or 7 women in my life.”

“Wait,” I said, “I thought you were my terrorist and mine alone.”



He bristled a bit, then softened, like a toothbrush held under running water before you put Crest PRO-HEALTH Clinical Gum Protection Toothpaste on it. I should know, since I'm getting a little long in the tooth literally as well as figuratively.

"I am a man of the world, and have known several women before you," he said without a trace of embarrassment. "Also quite a few beardless boys and downy-cheeked youth."

"Same sex?"

"I'm a guy's guy kind of guy," he said sheepishly.

It seemed to me that I'd heard enough to be able to tell mom, dad and the whole family that I'd given the guy a shot, but that it wasn't meant to be between my terrorist and me.

"Well, this has been fun," I said as I gulped the last sip of my spritzer. "Why don't we both think about it and . . . if something happens—it happens. *Que sera, sera.*"

"Is that an offshoot of *al Qaeda*?"

"No—didn't you hear my 'u'? It's a crappy song by Doris Day."

"Who is this Doris Day?" he asked.

"She's the woman Oscar Levant was talking about when he said 'I knew her before she was a virgin.'"

"Levant? You mean the eastern Mediterranean littoral between Anatolia and Egypt?"



“No, Levant, the frequent guest on The Tonight Show with Jack Paar.”

He took all this in, and seemed to file it away in his mind. Under “d” for Day and “l” for Levant. “So it is possible for a woman once deflowered to become virginal again?” he asked.

“Sure,” I said. “How else could they promise 72 virgins to each martyr?”

