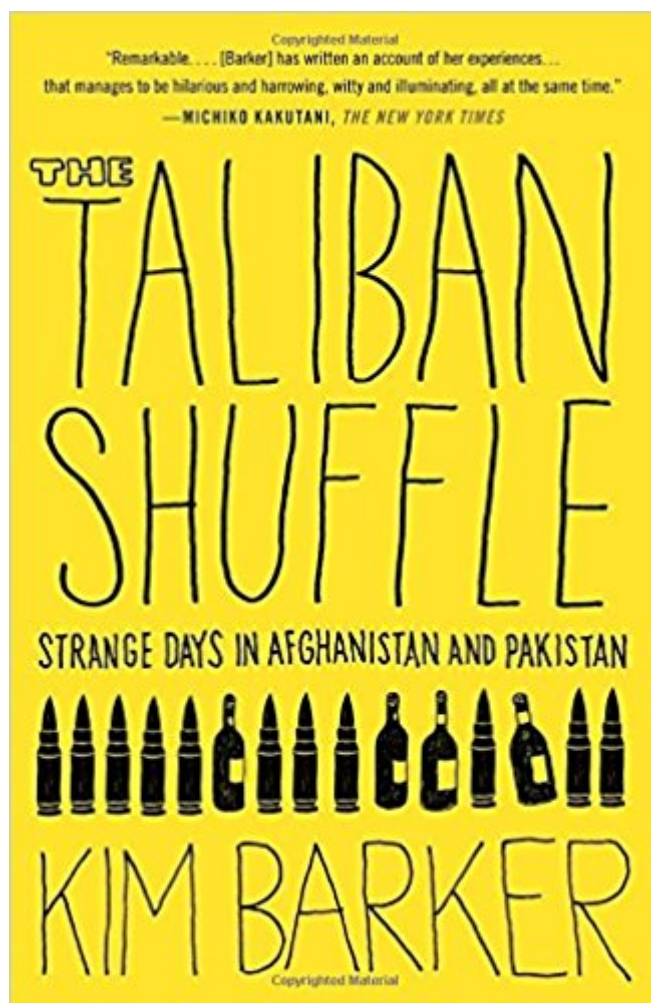


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The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days In Afghanistan And Pakistan



Synopsis

Now a Major Motion Picture titled *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* starring Tina Fey, Margot Robbie, Martin Freeman, Alfred Molina, and Billy Bob Thornton. When Kim Barker first arrived in Kabul as a journalist in 2002, she barely owned a passport, spoke only English and had little idea how to do the “Taliban Shuffle” between Afghanistan and Pakistan. No matter her stories about Islamic militants and shaky reconstruction were soon overshadowed by the bigger news in Iraq. But as she delved deeper into Pakistan and Afghanistan, her love for the hapless countries grew, along with her fear for their future stability. In this darkly comic and unsparing memoir, Barker uses her wry, incisive voice to expose the absurdities and tragedies of the “forgotten war,” finding humor and humanity amid the rubble and heartbreak.

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Customer Reviews

Kim Barker was The Chicago Tribune’s South Asia Bureau Chief from 2004 to 2009, much of which she spent living in and reporting from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The *Taliban Shuffle* comprises her recollections of these years, but make no mistake: this is not your parents’ war correspondent’s memoir. In fact, to hear this charismatic debut author tell of life in war-torn Kabul during these years, you’d think it was a more-or-less non-stop party. Journalism is famously known as a business for which “if it bleeds, it leads,” and with a fresh war raging in Iraq, Barker initially faced long stretches of relative quiet. As a result, an absurd, often promiscuous subculture grew up among her fellow reporters. (Think *M*A*S*H* with a dash of *Catch-22*.) Of course, it wasn’t all fun, games, and the

occasional heavy petting. Barker's reporting eventually brings her into contact with warlords, fundamentalists, and drug kingpins, and she does get blood on her hands (quite literally). As the action heats up and the Taliban begins slowly to regroup, she finds herself reporting on and fending off a host of unsavory types, from anonymous gropers in crowded streets to former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who woos her shamelessly, breaking all manner of internationally recognized rules of professional decorum. After five years of these "Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan," Barker finally returns to the States with a one-of-a-kind memoir, a true story that's rife with both black humor and brutal honesty about the absurdities of war. --Jason Kirk --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

War correspondent Barker first started reporting from Afghanistan in 2003, when the war there was lazy and insignificant. She was just learning to navigate Afghan culture, one caught between warring factions, and struggling to get space in her newspaper, the Chicago Tribune. Lulled into complacency, everyone from the U.S. military to the Afghan diplomatic corps to the Pakistani government stumbled as the Taliban regrouped. Very frank and honest, Barker admits a host of mistakes, including gross cultural ignorance that often put her in danger even as she found Afghanistan similar in some ways to Montana, her home state, what with "bearded men in pickup trucks stocked with guns and hate for the government." She reports a string of characters: an amorous Pakistani former prime minister, a flashy Afghan American diplomat, an assortment of warlords, drug lords, fundamentalists, politicians, and fellow correspondents struck by wanderlust and plagued by messy personal lives -- all of them against a backdrop of declining war coverage in declining American newspapers. A personal, insightful look at covering an ambivalent war in a complicated region. --Vanessa Bush --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

3.5 STARS if that were possible. Many, like me, probably will pick this book up after watching the movie Whiskey, Tango, Foxtrot with Tina Fey. From that perspective I was both disappointed AND rewarded. If you've read other non-fiction accounts in the many political and military hotspots around the world, then you will most likely enjoy what is recounted here. If on the other hand 99% of what you read is fiction and you generally like to keep it light, I doubt this book will be your thing. I fall firmly into the former category and love books by journalists who are willing to go right to the edge in order to make sure the world doesn't ignore what's important. I believe Kim Barker did her best to be one of these journalists, but sadly wasn't taken as seriously (because of being a woman)

both on the ground and back home where journalism of this kind was drying up. COMPARISONS: The movie is much more linear and the scripting/story arc greatly tightened up. Plus it's funnier. On the other hand this book is so much more interesting and three dimensional than the movie, which in reality takes only about 1/3 of the book as it's source material. It also puts much more emphasis on the romantic and sexual relationships of the author, which in the book hardly happen at all. The movie almost makes these as primary plot movers, and it's obvious that they were all little more than tangential to Ms. Barker in her real life. Towards the end of the book she basically admits that writing the book was as much a form of PTSD self-therapy as anything else. That doesn't invalidate the writing at all, but it does point out that it's not the sort of book that has a "story" or over-arching theme to follow. It's just like a lot of life and meaning isn't always easy to wring out of it. In that light, the book is definitely uneven at times, and rambles all around. But it is also honest and inciteful, and an important voice against the apathy and dumbing down of US foreign journalism. It's partly an indictment against the lazy and often deadly approach the US takes to its foreign policy, though this judgment is not partisan, nor does it let the countries in question off the hook. It's because she ends up loving Afghanistan that she becomes so disillusioned by it's leaders and competing factions.

Bought the book after seeing the movie "Whiskey, Tango, Foxtrot". I enjoyed the movie but the book gives a much deeper look into the whole issue of the what the US is doing in Afghanistan and the surrounding area. I didn't gather any specific solution being proposed by the author - which I appreciated - but I came away with a feeling that I'm not sure we as a nation know what the objective is there. How will we know when we have arrived? Barker illustrates the complexity of tribal and national interactions, a dynamic that I know I didn't have an appreciation for.

I discovered Barker's book after Tina Fey's movie based on it, titled Whisky Tango Foxtrot. To my surprise the book was totally different than the movie. Probably that's why many readers got disappointed by the book if they saw the movie first. While the movie is simply hilarious, it doesn't tell people's stories that Barker told in the book. Instead it focuses on Kim's sexual relationships of the author, which in the book hardly happen at all. The Taliban Shuffle is memoir of her time working as a foreign correspondent in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. She's blunt, she's funny and it feels like a report of things a journalist should write in order to make sure the world doesn't ignore what's important, but can't in an official newspaper. If you just

don't understand these countries and that whole neighborhood, this is the book for you.

this book provides very good insight into the chaos of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is written with a so-so first person style. However, it gave me considerable information about the disastrous situation in this part of the world and how the United States has again been dragged into a war where there can be no winners and where the national leaders have only a very selfish agenda for survival and becoming rich. Should be read by anyone interested in the situation in these countries.

An excellent read, if you wonder how journalists star in local news and end up covering stories in active war zones at the other end of the globe. And especially if you've already enjoyed the movie Whiskey Tango Foxtrot starring Tina Fey as Kim Barker, the author of this book. There are almost always many more interesting insights in the book than in the movie script taken from the book, since the script has to distill a lifetime down into 90 minutes. That is so in this case.

The book is very good, the film was a little different. It was amusing in parts but you were always aware that the journalists were in a dangerous situation. The Author obviously made a lot of good, trustworthy friends in Afghanistan. There are always 2 sides to every nationality and she showed us both.

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