



Attempting Normal

By Marc Maron

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NATIONAL BESTSELLER

Marc Maron is “a master of spinning humor out of anguish” (*Bookforum*), even when that anguish is pretty clearly self-inflicted. In *Attempting Normal*, he threads together twenty-five stories from his life and near-death, from his first comedy road trips (with a fugitive junkie comic with a missing tooth) to his love affair with feral animals (his cat rescues are bloody epics) to his surprisingly moving tales of lust, heartbreak, and hope. The stories are united by Maron’s thrilling storytelling style—intensely smart, disarmingly honest, and explosively funny. Together, they add up to a hilarious and moving tale of failing, flailing, and finding a way.

Praise for *Attempting Normal*

“I laughed so hard reading this book.”—**David Sedaris**

“Funny . . . surprisingly deep . . . laced with revelatory insights.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“Superb . . . A reason that [it] is a superior example of an overcrowded genre—the comedian memoir—is Mr. Maron’s hardheaded approach to his history, the wisdom of experience.”—*The New York Times*

“Marc Maron is a legend because he is both a great comic and a brilliant mind. *Attempting Normal* is a deep, hilarious megashot of feeling and truth as only this man can administer.”—**Sam Lipsyte**

Praise for Marc Maron and *WTF*

“The stuff of comedy legend.”—*Rolling Stone*

“Marc Maron is a startlingly honest, compelling, and hilarious comedian-poet. Truly one of the greatest of all time.”—**Louis C.K.**

“I’ve known Marc for years and I can tell you first hand that he’s passionate, fearless, honest, self-absorbed, neurotic, and screamingly funny.”—**David Cross**

“Revered among his peers . . . raw and unflinchingly honest.”—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Devastatingly funny.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“For a comedy nerd, this show is nirvana.”—**Judd Apatow**

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Editorial Review

Review

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From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Marc Maron is a stand-up comedian and host of the podcast *WTF with Marc Maron*. He has appeared in his own comedy specials on Comedy Central, HBO, and Netflix, and his sitcom, *Maron*, airs on IFC. He lives in Los Angeles.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Chapter 1

The Situation in My Head

I had a bad run-in with myself on a plane recently. I had just flown from Dublin to Chicago and hadn't slept much. I was strung out. Tired. Tweaky. I changed planes in Chicago to fly to Los Angeles. Things were vibrating and I was edgy. I was in the exhaustion zone, feeling the kind of tired you can't sleep off because you can't sleep, because your blood is pumping caffeinated dread and loathing.

I was seated at the front of coach in an aisle seat, directly behind the first-class dividing wall and the flight attendant service area. It's my favorite seat on a plane. I like watching people get on the plane so I can judge them. I like judging. I didn't see any real problems among the passengers who awkwardly clumped onto the plane, but I definitely felt like I was in a better place than some of them, which helped take the edge off my mood. Judging works.

We took off. The flight attendants were strapped in almost directly in front of me, facing me. I always scan their faces for fear. I rarely see it. When I do see something dark flicker across their faces, it usually seems like it has nothing to do with the job. More likely something personal that followed them onto the plane. But then again, what do I know. I project. Then I judge.

The crew seemed pleasant. One woman in particular seemed genuinely nice: blond hair, about fifty, pretty in the classic California way. I always wonder when I see older flight attendants if they've been at it since the seventies, when things were crazy. Did she ever have sex in a cockpit? Did she survive a crash? Get tied up in a hijacking? Did she ever have sex in a bathroom with a passenger? With the pilot? I like to give my flight attendants a bit of backstory. I decided she was an out-of-control instigator of major in-flight mayhem back in the day. She got through it disease-free and didn't end up in rehab. She started a family, her husband had a drug problem he couldn't kick and left her, but she did all right. The husband had a lot of money, so she's good. Humble and wise. She lives in Topanga with a few big dogs. Her kids are in college. Only a few people know her from her old life and one of them is the pilot on the flight I am on. That's who I made the flight attendant up to be.

Once we were up in the air I was crawling out of my skin. I couldn't sleep and had definitely had enough of flying. I needed to walk around and judge. I walked down the aisle toward the back of the plane in hopes of going to the bathroom. I didn't really have to go but sometimes it's just nice to lock yourself in the bathroom of a plane and take a few minutes to look in the mirror. I reached the door of the bathroom and the little lock indicator said Vacant, but there was a man standing in front of the door. Hanging out, I guess. He was a Middle Eastern-looking man, olive-skinned with Semitic features—a dubious shade of brown. I looked at him and gave him a raised-eyebrow grunt, asking if he was waiting. He looked me right in the eye but didn't speak for a moment. Then he shook his head no. It was a simple gesture, but seemed ominous and cryptic. I couldn't understand why he was standing there. In retrospect he was probably just doing what I was doing. Stretching, moving around. But in that moment, when I looked into his eyes, fear shot through me. I was sure that this guy was up to something. He had that look in his eye. Scheming, driven, full of will and sacrifice. He was clearly Palestinian or Saudi and we were all in trouble. The worst of it was that I was sure I was the only one on the plane who knew that something truly awful was about to happen. I knew and he knew I knew. I could see it in that quick glance he shot me letting me know that he wasn't going into the bathroom. No, he was going into the cockpit. It was that kind of look.

I didn't go into the bathroom. I lingered around in the rear flight attendant station thinking, watching, figuring out what had to be done. The suspicious-looking, dubious-shade-of-brown man started making his way down the aisle. I decided to follow him. I found out very quickly that it's hard to discreetly follow someone on an aircraft. I gave him about ten steps, then I started pacing behind him down the aisle toward the front of the plane. He walked right through the division between the classes, from coach into business. I stopped in the service area, afraid to cross the class line, and watched him disappear behind the curtain. I was

completely panicked. I knew he was heading for the cockpit. I hadn't figured out what his plan was but I knew we were all in trouble and no else knew. I had to save us. I pulled the curtain back and focused intently on the man moving toward the front of the plane. I can only imagine what my face looked like or what kind of panic vibrations were peeling off me as I stood there trying to figure out a plan, my brain working the angles.

"Is everything okay, sir?"

It was the flight attendant, the one who'd been through some shit and come out on the other side. I turned. She looked concerned. Some part of me knew I couldn't spill everything, that she wouldn't understand if I just babbled out everything I knew. So this came out of my mouth:

"Uh, well, there's . . . a situation. In my head."

"Maybe you should sit down, sir," she said, concerned, like I was the one with a problem.

"Um. I think we . . . okay. Yeah, okay," I said, letting go of my horrible knowledge and the impending crisis for a moment. "I'll sit down. But . . . okay."

I sat down in my seat, my brain still feverishly running scenarios. I knew what was happening. I saw it in my mind. The dubious-shaded-brown man was already in the cockpit. He had on a pair of rubber gloves that had been soaked in an ancient toxin that he had achieved immunity to by exposing himself to it in small doses over the last year. He had already touched the neck of the pilot and copilot, who were in full cardiac arrest with a pinkish white foam coming out of their mouths as they gasped and writhed in their final throes. The man was moments away from taking control of the plane, plummeting us to a lower altitude, and putting us on a flight path into the target of his choice.

I don't make pretty pictures. Sometimes I wish my imagination were fueled by something other than panic and dread. But I don't have control over my gift. It has control over me and I am dragged by it more often than not, away from the idyllic land of normal and onto the jagged shores of self-destruction. Imagining the worst has always been a great comfort to me. If there is turbulence there is an imminent crash. If she doesn't pick up the phone, she is fucking someone. If there is a lump it is a tumor. By thinking like this I protect myself from disappointment. And if anything other than the worst-case scenario unfolds, what a pleasant surprise! The problem is that I am always walking around preparing for and reacting to the horrors of what my brain is making up, living as if every potential terror and every defeat were already happening—because in my mind, it always is. I think if I could just create a series of characters to enact all the heinous possibilities my brain manufactures to insulate me from joy, then I would be using my creativity in a safer way. I see maybe an animated series or perhaps several epic paintings, large canvases. I'm talking the whole wall of the gallery big.

I don't like animation and I'm not a painter. All I can do is imagine these horrors and share them with you.

I sat in my seat powerless, waiting for the plunge. I was squinting hard and clutching the armrests when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I opened my eyes to see the entire flight crew standing over me. The one who seemed to be the leader, a hard-looking woman, asked, "Are you all right, sir? Do you need medical attention?" The kind flight attendant had betrayed me and now stood behind the monster in an apron who was interrogating me. I wondered how I became the problem. If they only knew what was about to happen they would be thanking me for being the one person perceptive enough to see it. I was actually hoping that we'd lurch into a sudden descent at that moment. I was hoping that they would all go flying toward the back of the plane,

screaming and thumping along the ceiling. Then they'd know I was right.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Connie Cornish:

A lot of people always spent their particular free time to vacation or go to the outside with them loved ones or their friend. Do you realize? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity that's look different you can read the book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book you read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a reserve. The book Attempting Normal it is very good to read. There are a lot of people that recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space to create this book you can buy often the e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not too costly but this book provides high quality.

William Johnson:

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