



## **Borderline**

*Allan Stratton*

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Life's not easy for Sami Sabiri, especially since his dad stuck him at a private boys' school where he's the only Muslim kid. But it's about to get a whole lot worse.

When Sami catches his father in a lie, he gets suspicious. Unfortunately, he's not the only one. In a whirlwind, the FBI and RCMP descend, and Sami suddenly finds his family at the centre of an international terror plot. Everything he's ever known comes into question as Sami fights to keep his world from unravelling.

*Borderline* is an action-packed page-turner about loyalty and identity, starring a funny and gutsy 15-year-old determined to save his father, his family and his life.

## **Borderline Details**

Date : Published March 31st 2010 by Harper Teen (first published March 9th 2010)

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Author : Allan Stratton

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## From Reader Review Borderline for online ebook

### Garth Mailman says

In the news is a young man who has returned to Canada where he grew up claiming it isn't his fault his parents were Russian Spyies. [The sins of the father.]

Sami is the only Muslim kid in a white-bread American Suburb saddled with the first name Mohammed, an orthodox father who calls him to prayer in the middle of playtime with his buddies, the kid who has to pretend to drink beer. His salvation is his next-door neighbour Andy who takes it all in stride and makes him his best friend.

This story will resonate with anyone who was ever bullied for being different. What makes it worse is the fact that the bully's parents and the school vice principal back him up.

His father's false arrest is simply more proof of racial profiling at its worst. The war on terror is a war on fear and fear leads even governments to fearful things.

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### Sara Shalash says

Whoa. What an intense read! Being a Muslim girl, I have to say that Borderline was the closest representation of Islam that I've read about. It wasn't perfect, but it was close to it. It was nice having so much in common with the main character. I haven't read anything about this subject and I'm sure not many have you either.

Sami is forced to attend an all boy academy after having some trouble at his old school. Although he keeps his two buddies with him, everyone else makes fun of him. He sticks out like a sore thumb. Sami is really confused about his identity and who he is. He never had a really close relationship with his dad. Everything is going pretty normal, aside from his dad's sneaky behavior. After the blink of an eye he witnesses his dad being dragged out of the house for being accused of being a terrorist. Sami doesn't know what to believe. The family is flipped upside down.

Sami was such a strong character. I loved seeing things through his eyes. I was so proud of him, he was a great son and friend. I was very glad to see his transformation throughout the book. He went from being lost to being proud of who he was. I mean imagine having a father being watched and accused of being a terrible person by about the whole country. Along with everyone else, I even automatically assumed he was guilty. But there is always more parts to the story. It was crazy to watch how the family was treated. The mother lost her job and Sami was even asked if he wanted to drop out of the academy. Cameras were everywhere and everything was bugged within reach of their house.

There were a couple of complaints that I had. The beginning was kind of slow, but it definitely picked up during the second half when more of the action begin. Boy did I love the action parts, it was very intense. And I wasn't the biggest fan of the writing.

Those little complaints didn't take away from the story at all. I thought that this was a very important book and it was quite enjoyable. It taught me not to judge anyone and that there is always more to a story. You

usually don't get to see what really happens during these situations, but now you can. Mystery, thrill, a life lesson- it's all there. I would definitely recommend this one to anyone (:

Taken from my book review blog at Along For the Ride

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### **Creaturecare8 says**

Well... it was better than I expected since book club books are pretty bad nowadays.

I was able to guess who Tariq Hassan was and why they were convicted, but that's probably because I watch a bunch of terrible movies. Otherwise, it was pretty interesting. The only problem was that I felt that everything was very abrupt and I hoped that maybe it could have been a more elaborate plan.

It just seemed like Stratton had this idea that wasn't quite complete.

Otherwise, it wasn't too far off the line. It was realistic and not too incriminatory.

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### **Int'l librarian says**

I almost stopped reading this book at least three times, when the plot hit its unbelievable peaks. A gang of students torture a classmate in the bathroom, a teacher breaks up the attack, and the gang is able to twist the story and blackmail the teacher into retiring? A US teenager sneaks into Canada to uncover a terrorist, and convinces his two goofball buddies to join him? The FBI conducts its own raid of the teenager's home – his father is implicated in the terrorism after all – assaults the teen and destroys the family's home in the process?

Just like our hero Sami Sabiri, I didn't give up. Sami keeps struggling, and I had to find out what would happen. In the biggest surprise, the conclusion almost succeeds in explaining away the ridiculousness. Not quite, but it's a tribute to Stratton that he came so close. He also provides an interesting perspective on the conflict some teens face to balance peer pressures and Islamic family culture.

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### **avril says**

Borderline is a book I would easily recommend to anyone. I think any teen can find one particular detail they can relate to. Sami, the protagonist of the story, isn't necessarily an outcast but isn't exactly lonely. He's bullied, but he has his friends Andy & Marty by his side who are loyal and humorous when they need to be. His family life is held together pretty well until it all crashes down as Sami questions his father. The book is easy to start & finish and it leaves you think of the injustices of our society.

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### **Mrs. Nicole says**

Sami Sabiri is the only Muslim teen in his high school. Being raised by ultra conservative parents makes him

feel like an outsider. When Sami's father starts to become more distant and even cancels a father-son weekend trip to Toronto Sami envisions the worst. Then the FBI shows up at the Sabiri house and accuses Sami's father of being part of a terrorist organization. Sami must risk it all to save his father, his family, and their reputation. Very realistic and exciting.

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### **Kassandra (A Spectacular Reader) says**

This book was okay. The most interesting part was when he confronted the guy, (although I find his friends buying his explanation to why they should go to Canada very unrealistic) and the big reveal was interesting. The way things ended seemed realistic to me.

idk about law and governments, but shouldn't you get some sort of penalty for lying to the government? Wouldn't falsely testifying to the government be similar to hindering investigations and wasting resources? Like at least a fine or something? If they could prove that he intentionally lied...

The insecurity about the main character's identity as a Muslim was kind of realistic, but at the same time he came off as a coward to me. I get it if a person doesn't want to be all religious, but you could at least respect another family member's decision. I didn't like his lack of a spine around his friends (and everyone else). I got the vibe that he didn't want to do what his friends did, but never did he say no to them, he just gave into peer pressure every time. And then there were the bullies; he just silently went through it every time they abused him. When he finally stood up to them, it played out unrealistically and cliché. The insecurity, bullying and peer pressure are things that Muslim teens experience, so while it's realistic and relatable with to some point, he's not a character that I'd like.

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### **Allan Stratton says**

Hi,

I'm the author of BORDERLINE -- and I love meeting readers. If you have any questions about the book, please email me here or through my website [www.allanstratton.com](http://www.allanstratton.com)

BORDERLINE is a coming-of-age mystery/thriller/suspense centered around a gutsy, funny, Muslim teen whose dad is accused of being part of an international terrorist plot. To save his family, Sami must risk everything to discover the truth about his father's secrets. It's a story about parents and children, family and friendship, identity, the courage to fight for truth, and the conflict between staying true to oneself and fitting in.

I wrote it because of a couple of questions in my own life: My mom left my dad when I was a baby and I soon realized that the dad I knew was different than the dad my brother and sister knew. I asked myself -- Who is Dad really. And, if I can't know my own dad, how can I know anybody?

Also, when I was eight I was certain that when I grew up I'd be accused of a murder I didn't commit, and be found guilty and hung. Pretty sunny thought for an eight-year-old, hah? My concerns about injustice have stayed with me always.

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## **P5richie says**

### Borderline

In the book “Borderline” by “Allan Stratton” which a story about a nerding Kid named Sami living in upstate New York who is trying to fit in despite being the only muslim kid in his entire prestigious private school. But as the story continues Sami’s suspicions start to rise about his Dad’s constant trip to toronto. Sami’s suspect an affair but that suspicion is but to rest when the FBI barges in arresting Sami’s dad as a part of an international terrorist investigation. Being this time was post 9/11 there it had been a very prejudiced time for americans toward muslims and people for the middle east which Sami’s Dad was both. Along with this conflict there is a sup-plot, where we see one of Sami’s teachers Mr. Bernstein who is a gay history teaching about the history of discrimination. Mr Bernstein is a witness to Sami’s bullying problem and tries to always step in and help whenever he can. This book is just another example of how people need to be more open minded and hopeful for other people and not keep sticking to these affol stereotypes.

After reading “Borderline” I really enjoyed reading the story and the topics it touches on. The main idea of this story is a very corvasal topic that people are facing everyday with racism and stereotyping. Sami’s Dad getting arrested is a clear example of this type of controversial topic coming into play. Were people who do not know the full story and decide to make assumption like arresting Sam’s dad in Borderline. This Book was a good way to show people to not stereotype.

I would recommend this book to anyone that is interested in the types of topic that we see in the news today, things like labeling and stereotyping others because of their differences.

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## **Kristin says**

v. v. nice tautly paced....makes-you-think-about-the-world-we-live-in thriller. recommend highly...esp for teen boys...and a truly positive portrayal of a strong male muslim teen character, who is true to his faith and really wants to do the right thing.

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## **Rebecca McNutt says**

*Borderline* seemed to me at first to just be a book about a kid going to a school he doesn't like, but it quickly builds up with exciting crimes and conspiracies. Sami has to decide whether to not get involved or he has to help his father.

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## **B says**

How Sami, a Muslim American high schooler, deals with the arrest of his father for being accused of terrorism. His father has done some unexplainable things but Sami believes in his innocence and is determined to bring out the truth. A good contemporary story.

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## Richie Partington says

20 December 2009 BORDERLINE by Allan Stratton, Harper Teen, March 2010, 320p., ISBN: 978-0-06-145111-9; Libr. ISBN: 978-0-06-145112-6

"Roll you down the line boy, drop you for a loss,  
Ride you out on a cold railroad and nail you to a cross."  
-- Petersen/Lesh "Unbroken Chain"

"Sometime after midnight, I eventually drift off. I wake up at four, drenched in sweat. For the first time since I can remember, I have this need to pray. I wash my hands, face, and feet in the laundry tub. Lay a blanket on my bedroom floor as a prayer rug. Face Mecca, and begin to bow, kneel, prostrate myself, praying in Arabic for God's blessing.

"I've prayed the first chapter of the Qur'an so many times, I've stopped hearing the words. But now, in the predawn dark, they ring clear. Each syllable connects me to a power bigger than myself, a world of others praying the same words. My forehead tingles. I'm not alone."

The progression of events in Allan Stratton's absorbing new coming-of-age tale BORDERLINE -- particularly what befalls fifteen year-old Mohammad Sami "Sammy" Sabiri at the Theodore Roosevelt Academy for Boys -- is at times so outrageous and unspeakably evil that there may be skeptics who will argue that such behavior on the part of school administrators and law enforcement authorities could not take place in America today. But those who know their American history will likely respond by citing scores of textbook examples revealing this tale involving Muslim hate mongering in twenty-first century America to be just one more link in a long chain of unfortunate blemishes on the face of our so-called sweet land of liberty.

"Then I think of what our imam says: 'Show me what a man attacks, and I'll show you his sin.'"

BORDERLINE, set in Rochester, New York, is an eye-opening mystery and adventure story involving what happens before and after the FBI tears apart Sammy's home and arrests his father as a member of an international terrorist conspiracy ring. Sammy has always known his father to be an overly strict but good man. But he just doesn't know what to think -- or what the real truth about his father might be -- because, shortly before the FBI raid, he uncovers his own evidence that his father has blatantly lied to him about a business trip to Toronto. The anti-Muslim sentiments that we see Sammy and his parents frequently encountering prior to the surprise raid seduce us into presuming that Sammy's father is being railroaded. But is he really innocent? It turns out that Sammy will find it necessary to take some crazy risks, putting his own safety on the line in order to uncover the truth about his father's involvement in the alleged plot.

"We can't choose what life throws at us. But we can choose what we do about it. Our choices are who we are. And who we are -- that, no one can take away from us."

We live in a country where the swiftboating strategy employed in the last election contest against our President was a whisper campaign claiming that he, Barack Obama, is a really a Muslim; that he is one of Them rather than one of Us. Hate mongering in America is nothing new, of course. Whether identified by the color of the face, the slant of the eye, the sound of the name, the choice of the partner, or the manner in which freedom of religion is practiced, there always seems to be those in America who are ready and willing

to mark the next group whose turn they believe it is to become the focus of hate and suspicion; to be the next Them.

"And so it goes and so it goes  
And so it goes and so it goes  
But where it's goin' no one knows"  
-- Nick Lowe

What I pray for is that it won't always have to be this way.

Richie Partington, MLIS  
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Moderator [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/middle\\_...](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/middle_...) <http://slisweb.sjsu.edu/people/facult...>

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### **Karen says**

Clean, clear writing with believable characters and good plot.

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### **Jo says**

This was a fast paced thriller which really held my interest. I loved the fact that we get to see from the POV of an Arab-American family. It showed the prejudice that these families live with and was a little bit about bullying as well. Sami was a great conflicted character. He wanted to honor his religion but fit in as well. How does a teen do that in today's society that picks on the one who is different? Stratton does a great job of showing his conflict. I think the value of the book lies in forcing the reader to confront those prejudices about others who may worship differently.

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