

MIDWAY

by
Barton Green

Two passengers on a plane; each one possessing more baggage than they collectively checked at the ticket counter. Although their lives are contradictory, the two discover they have more in common than adjoining seats; for both possess the missing piece to the other's puzzle. And if they can get passed their own self-imposed walls, maybe they'll survive the journey, too.

ACT ONE TEASER

WGA registered

INT. CHICAGO'S MIDWAY AIRPORT - TERMINAL D - DAY

Midway, the heart of Chicago, is alive with a constant flow of frantic, time-conscious travellers.

The wide pedestrian artery of TERMINAL D is an oscillating two-way channel of bag-toting pedestrians; pulsing either out into the city, or recirculating back into other chambers...

INT. GATE 11 - WAITING AREA - DAY

...where they impatiently pool, awaiting departure.

Scanning the rows of back-to-back chairs, we see a menagerie of waiting passengers sitting, sleeping, reading, talking - to each other, on cell phones, etc.

In the middle of this mayhem, we focus on BRADFORD GREY (late 30's), attempting to concentrate on the illuminated screen of his open LAPTOP. As he types, he appears tired, frustrated. Reading what he's just tapped out, his eyes brighten, as though hit with a sudden idea. But just as he drops his fingers back onto the keyboard ---

SAM (O.C.)

TRASH! The idea is just screwy...
You really think there's something
more, you know - after?

IN THE SEATS DIRECTLY BEHIND BRADFORD -

we see SAM, an early-twenties college student, trying to break the ice with an attractive woman, DANIS COURTNEY (early 30s). Pulling her nose from the dog-eared pages of her book "TUNNEL VISION", she turns to the young man, delighted by his interest.

DANIS (O.C.)

You mean, after LIFE? Well, all I
know is this woman's account goes
further than any other I've read.
Her journey didn't last minutes,
but hours.

SAM

Whoa... that's deep.

IN B/G

Bradford, overhearing the conversation, rolls his eyes, and attempts to re-focus on the laptop screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIS

Ever wonder what the Otherside is really like? To step across that threshold for just a five minute peek would be...

SAM

SOOO cool.

BRADFORD

(perturbed, under his breath)
Or, real-l-l-y hot.

Bradford gives up and closes his laptop.

HIS CELL PHONE RINGS. He checks the CALLER I.D.:
WINSTON PUBLISHING. He reluctantly answers.

BRADFORD (cont'd)

Bradford...

MARTIN (O.S.)

Mister Gray! How's my favorite ghost?

BRADFORD

Stuck in purgatory...I'm between LA and Manhattan on a layover at Midway. Don't think I'll get to Laguardia til after three.

MARTIN (O.S.)

He'll be gone by then! Can you e-mail the pages? Our nervous author wants to make sure you're going in the right direction with his book.

BRADFORD

Well, maybe if my name was on the cover of this one I'd feel a little more motivated.

MARTIN (O.S.)

Look, just finish this one. Even if its half the book the last one was, you'll be able to renegotiate from strength. Hell, I'll broker the deal myself.

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CONTINUED:

BRADFORD

How many best sellers do I have to write, Martin? The way things are going, if my plane went down today I swear someone else's name would end up on my tombstone.

MARTIN (O.S.)

(Tries to be funny)
Well at least then the title 'ghost writer' would actually apply...

Silence on the other end...

MARTIN (cont'd)

What is it, Brad?

Tense pause

BRADFORD

Just let me relax a little in my favorite window seat and I'll work on it. Meet ya in Baggage claim... WITH the pages.

MARTIN (O.S.)

That's what I wanna hear.

As he despondently tucks his cell phone into his jacket pocket, the voices behind him RESURFACE.

IN THE SEATS DIRECTLY BEHIND BRADFORD -

Sam inches closer, enamored with the pretty lady.

SAM

So... we're all here for a reason?

DANIS

Yeah. It just takes some of us a little longer to figure out what our path is...and which direction to go.

IN B/G

Bradford staring into space subconsciously nods in agreement.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

Flight 19 to Laguardia now boarding at gate 11.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The passengers begin to stir; including Bradford, zipping up his laptop. Danis and Sam likewise hoist their bags and back packs.

SAM

Figured out what YOU'RE here for?

DANIS

Maybe I was supposed to have this conversation with you.

SAM

(not-so-subtle come on)
If learning my purpose meant facing death, like your friend here, (points to book), or facing you; I know which one I'd choose.

DANIS

But you'd learn a lot more from Gurty Olsen.

Points to book.

DANIS (cont'd)

I envy her way with words. Writers seem to instinctively know at least part of their purpose; whatever they're here to experience, its a given that they're meant to share it with the rest of us.

IN B/G

Eavesdropping BRADFORD hoists his bags onto his shoulder and walks off, subtly shaking his head.

INT. GATE 11 - CORRIDOR TO PLANE

As Bradford slowly makes his way through the stampede for the plane, he becomes acutely aware of the SIGNS surrounding him: "DEPARTURE" "TERMINAL" "FINAL DESTINATION" the "TUNNEL". He slows to a stop. Its as if he doesn't want to get on the plane.

The mob passes him by.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GATE 11 - IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CROWD

Sam does his best to keep up with Danis. With each step towards the plane she appears more apprehensive, but determined.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Whoa! Wait up. You're gonna get to New York before the plane does.

DANIS

I just wanna get this over with.

SAM

(still flirting)
Sounds like you're on your way to break up with somebody.

DANIS

Did that already.

SAM

(hopeful)
So you gonna be in New York long?

DANIS

Just long enough to say goodbye.
Then I'm takin off on a big trip.

SAM

You up for some company?

She stops. Stares at Sam a moment then steps in close.

DANIS

Misery loves company. I was thinkin' bout paying Gurty Olsen a visit and asking her advice on the best places to visit when I get there.

Sam's smile slowly vanishes as he catches her meaning.

SAM

T-T-here? You mean...?

He points to the book peaking out of her bag.

SAM (cont'd)

(thinking fast)
Eh...where you sitting?

He pulls out his boarding pass.

Danis takes the book out of her bag and pulls out her ticket, doubling as a book marker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIS
I'm row 37 near the wing.

SAM
Ratts! I'm wa-a-y back near the
tail.

She runs her finger down the buttons of his shirt and smiles.

DANIS
Think about it. And I'll catch up
with you in Baggage Claim.

SAM
O-O-Kay.

He stands weak-kneed as she disappears into the crowd.

REVERSE ANGLE

As Danis turns, her now obviously fake smile melts into relief; as if to say, 'Good, I won't have to deal with him anymore.'

Walking on, realizing she is just a few steps from the plane, her look of relief fades back to apprehension. She is about to embark on a journey she's never taken before. And it takes all of her will power to step across the plane's threshold.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GATE 11 - CORRIDOR - PLANE ENTRANCE

Approaching the open doorway of the plane, Bradford likewise pauses. Then, as he crosses the threshold, he subtly touches the outer hull of the craft.

BRADFORD
(whispers)
No mechanical difficulties... no
human error... safe journey.

INT. AIRPLANE - COACH SECTION

Midway down the aisle weary Bradford finds his cushioned headrest occupied. Checking his boarding pass and seat number, he leans in and clears his throat.

BRADFORD (cont'd)
Excuse me -you're in my seat. 37-A,
by the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Holds up his boarding pass.

DANIS
(as if coming out of a daze)
Wha-? Sorry... I'm 37-C. I thought
'A' stood for aisle. My first time
on a plane... a little nervous.

Bradford forces a smile through his clinched teeth. Shoving his laptop hard into the overhead compartment, he closes his eyes for a moment and exhales a long cleansing breath.

BRADFORD
(resignation)
If it will make your maiden voyage
easier, keep the window. I'll take
the aisle.

DANIS
That's very kind.

He notices that her hands nervously twist and tug at a paper cocktail napkin.

Buckling himself in, he leans his head back closes his eyes and tries to shut out the world that always seems to out maneuver him.

After a blissful moment of silence... a voice

DANIS (cont'd)
Will we be leaving soon?

Her gaze is focused out the window apprehensively.

BRADFORD
(eyes still closed)
When you hear the hatch close and
the engines start revving...

She starts to breathe faster. Bradford peeks at her through a half-open eye.

BRADFORD (cont'd)
You okay?

DANIS
Little claustrophobic, too...

He opens both eyes, realizing he's not going to get any rest on this trip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADFORD

Maybe you could take something.

DANIS

Already took two more than I should. Maybe... if you talked to me... I'm Danis.

BRADFORD

(hesitant)
Bradford Grey.

DANIS

Sounds very distinguished. What do you do Bradford Grey?

BRADFORD

(reluctantly)
I get paid to put words on paper.

DANIS

(eyes brighten)
A writer? Have I read anything of yours?

BRADFORD

It's possible, although you'd be hard pressed to find my name without a magnifying glass.

DANIS

Why's that?

BRADFORD

I'm a ghost.

DANIS

(intrigued)
A ghost?

She leans towards him, fingering the crystal around her neck.

BRADFORD

I write for people who don't have the time or the talent, but have the name.

DANIS

Doesn't that bother you, letting others take the bows for your words?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADFORD

There was a time I complained that if I got hit by a truck, my name wouldn't even appear in my own obituary...that I wouldn't even get credit for dying.

IN B/G

We hear the THUMP-THUMP of the forward cabin hatch being closed and locked. The sound echoes down the aisle.

Danis jumps at the sudden noise. Struggling to remain calm she fidgets with her tattered cocktail napkin.

DANIS

(feigning composure)
Do you think that's how it's suppose to be?

BRADFORD

It's the ball and chain I have to drag... but I've learned to live with it.

DANIS

No I mean, do you really think we get credit for living and... dying?

He is speechless.

DANIS (cont'd)

It's just that I've been reading about the afterlife.

She reaches into her bag, produces the dog-eared paperback book and opens it. We see it is filled with underlined paragraphs and handwritten notes in the margins.

DANIS (cont'd)

This book has taught me so much about the limitations of this world and the boundless freedoms of the next. It describes a city of light surrounded by mountains, forests, rivers and oceans - a timeless, fascinating place where we continue to learn and grow.

For a moment there is silence between them.

In B/G the slow metallic whine of the engines begin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADFORD

You talk about that book like its
some kinda travel brochure.

DANIS

Well, I guess in a way... it is.

BRADFORD

(trying to lighten the mood)
So, plan on making that trip
anytime soon?

DANIS

I haven't decided yet.

His eyebrows raise.

The plane begins to taxi down the runway...

Sensing his surprise, she keeps her eyes on her book.

DANIS (cont'd)

You don't approve?

BRADFORD

Its not my call.. but...

DANIS

What?

BRADFORD

It's just that... if you can't deal
with this life, what makes you
think you can handle the next?

The plane starts accelerating down the runway.

DANIS

And letting other people take
credit for your talent... that's a
life? You call dragging that ball
and chain - dealing?

BRADFORD

I didn't say Life was easy...The
best of us have to work through
more issues than a morning edition
of talk radio... I just think
taking that trip before its time is
like... Getting your turn at bat,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADFORD (cont'd)
hitting a homer, but before you get
to first, you decide its too much
trouble to run the bases and you
dive back to home plate.

Sounds increase. Vibrations in the cabin build. The engine's
whine becomes a roar.....

Danis grips both arm rests, there is panic in her eyes.

DANIS
(on the verge of hyperventilating)
So...what your saying is...I should
just buckle up, sit back and enjoy
the ride...no matter how scary or
how claustrophobic it gets?!

Seeing her frantic state, he reluctantly places his hand
reassuringly over her white-knuckled grip.

BRADFORD
Nothing is ever as good as you
hope, or as bad as you think.

DANIS
But you have no idea what I have
had to endure so far. I don't know
how much more living I can take...
The book says that it doesn't
matter so much WHAT you do...

BRADFORD/DANIS
(simultaneously)
..But WHY you do it.

She turns and stares at him. Bradford turns away.

DANIS
You KNOW this book.

Her mind begins to race as fast as the jet engine's turbines.

Releasing the grip of her free hand, she scurries to open the
book to the inside title page...

CU OF PAGE

TUNNEL VISION
by Gurty Olsen

Her face drops as if disappointed.

Bradford, still looking away mutters...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADFORD

Bottom of last page...under her
bio.

CU OF PAGE

**Many thanks to Bradford Grey
for his help in writing this book.**

She looks up amazed.

DANIS

(dumfounded)
You! It was you!...YOU wrote THIS!

On the verge of tears.

Do you have any idea how these
pages have changed me?... It was
YOU that gave me the courage to
leave him and put me on this plane.

BRADFORD

No- no. It was Gurty. It was HER
experience that -

DANIS

(interrupting)
-- It was Bradford Grey's words
that brought her death to Life! You
are a brilliant writer! You need to
know that - believe that! Your
words helped me. Now let mine help
you...

The engines reach a deafening roar, as the nose of the craft
inches up, Danis doesn't seem to notice.

DANIS (cont'd)

I was meant to be here in THIS
seat, next to you. We were meant to
take THIS journey...together.

Looking past her, beyond his favorite window seat, to the
world outside the pressurized glass, Bradford realizes he is
now midway between earth and sky... midway between his
departure and destination, between first base and home plate,
between by-lines, deadlines

....and the giddy, boundless unknown.

(continued... in MIDWAY OVERVIEW) -blg