

They Met on a Plane

If a writer wanted his story to have a lot of dialogue-conversations, arguments, passionate exchanges of ideas - what better setting could he select but to have those exchanges take place during a ride in some vehicle in which his characters were confined for several hours or even days

That story line has been around for a long time; think back on the many movies you saw where it all happened in a vehicle on a trip. Murder on the Orient Express, Ship of Fools, Stage Coach, Wagon Train, Bus Stop?

Often I have found myself seated next to one whose sharing proved to be truly valuable. In 1957, flying out of Portland Ore. In route to Lackland AFB in San Antonio, I sat next to a handsome bright young man who was also bound for San Antonio to attend officers' training school for navigation.

I don't know if he ever got to fly, but for all I know he could have fought in the air war over Viet Nam. I just know I really got to like him. He was Eagle Scout material through and through, and I wished I could have gone to college for ROTC so I too could have become an officer and a gentleman, and not a lowly airman 3rd class grunt, bound for who knows where. But our talk had legs, and it convinced me that college would be my best option once I got out. And here I am, 65 years later, a retired college teacher musing about the turning points that shaped my destiny.

I've chosen this topic because of a riveting movie I saw lately on Postv, a channel specializing in wholesome family listings. This movie was titled "Another Perfect Stranger,"echoing its namesake, the popular movie called "Love With the Perfect Stranger." But this movie, starring Jefferson Moore and Ruby Marie Lewis, presents a deeper kind of love, personified by a fellow passenger, a stranger who proves to be truly unforgettable.

The movie's action takes place on a flight taken by a young lady, Sarah Komisky, who has lately broken up with her boyfriend. She is on her way to see if she has been accepted by an art institute in Portland. But she is a bit put out to learn that her seat is between two men. Only the one in the window seat is there and he immediately gets on the wrong side of Sarah by trying to share his faith with her.

We soon learn that Sarah is completely fed up with "God stuff" due to her mother's persistence in trying to witness to her. Sarah had also, we learn later, been a victim of date rape. Then a stranger sits down in the aisle seat. Somehow he has over-heard Sarah's spat with the window seat rider, and breaks the silence by saying, he doesn't blame her for not liking religion: "I don't either; it's all about procedure and rule keeping, and religious folks have given me a lot of grief and trouble as I think back on it, but I don't think you really dislike God. Religion is one thing, but God is very much another. He is more interested in relationship and getting to know you personally."

That first little chat with the stranger, removes Sarah's suspicion and opens the door to a talk which gradually reveals the astonishing wisdom of the stranger and hints at his true identity, finally revealed at the end of the flight. Here are a few clues that emerge during the flight:

For one thing, he utters not a single word of condemnation, even about his enemies. Then a little girl comes up and wants to play with him. His response reveals he loves kids and they adore him. Next he over-hears an exotic foreign language spoken by a couple across the aisle and chats with them in kind.

Then Sarah learns he has been a carpenter, a fisherman and a councilor and done some writing. Asked what kind of writing he most enjoys, he replies that he likes poetry, especially free verse, and quotes verses from Psalm 90: "Before the

mountains were brought forth or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.” (KJV)

Finally, the stranger reveals that he once had supper with Sarah’s mom when she was unmarried, pregnant and desperate. As they ate, he convinced her to keep the baby and truly believe how much God loves her. Then he shows her the nail prints in his wrists. He then shows those same scars to Sarah and adds, “By the way, you have been accepted by the art school.” She had been sketching his portrait all flight and it was perfect

As the plane unloads, the stranger moves to help an old lady bring her bags down from the over-head bins; Sarah readies her own bags, but when she looks for the stranger, he has vanished.

This movie reminded me of Hebrews 13:2 “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware.” (kjb) I hope I’ve persuaded you to see this fine movie. It could erase a lot of misconceptions.

Gene Pinkney/ 23-08-21- for the Daily News)