

"A terrifically tense thriller."

—RILEY SAGER,
author of *Final Girls*



LAYOVER

USA Today Bestselling Author of *SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER*

DAVID BELL



BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Joshua expresses a lot of disenchantment with his job and the state of his life. Do you understand why he feels this way when he's only in his twenties?
- 2.** Were you surprised that Joshua invites Morgan to have a drink with him in the airport after knowing her for such a short time?
- 3.** Joshua and Morgan quickly open up to each other at the airport bar. Is there something about the anonymity of airports and planes that allows people to confide in one another in a way they wouldn't in other places? Have you ever had a similar experience?
- 4.** Were you surprised when Joshua changes his plans and follows Morgan onto her plane? Why do you think he does this? Have you ever done something that impulsive?
- 5.** Kimberly Givens is determined to find out what happened to Giles, even as she tries to balance being a divorced mom with her work as a police officer. Do you think Kimberly juggles these competing responsibilities effectively?
- 6.** Joshua is very honest with Renee and tells her what he's doing when he goes to find Morgan. Why do you think he tells her the truth?
- 7.** Simon desperately wants to get back the ring that belonged to his mother. He also says he wants to find his brother's body and give it a proper burial. Which do you think is more important to him?
- 8.** Joshua works for his dad and turns to him when he needs help. What do you think of their relationship?
- 9.** Do you understand why Morgan feels closer to Valerie than she does to her biological mother?
- 10.** Joshua deceives the police in order to see Morgan one more time—and hopes to learn the truth about the crimes for which she's been accused. Why do you think he wants to do that?
- 11.** In the airport, Morgan finally tells Joshua about everything that has happened. Were you surprised by her honesty? Were you surprised by what she tells him?
- 12.** Joshua reunites with his father at the end of the novel, and they plan a trip together. Why do you think Joshua wants to spend time with his dad now?

Q & A with

DAVID BELL



How would you describe *Layover*?

Layover is a fast-paced thriller about a man who meets a beautiful woman in an airport, shares a drink and a kiss with her, and then, after she abruptly departs, learns she's a missing person.

Where did the idea for *Layover* come from?

When I'm on a book tour, I spend a lot of time in airports. Waiting and waiting. And what do writers do in public? They observe people. A couple of years ago I was in the Nashville airport, waiting for a flight, and I saw a man and a woman having an intense conversation in the airport bar. Suddenly, the woman stood up, kissed the man passionately, and then left for a gate. I assumed they were a couple who had known each other for a long time, but then I overheard the man tell the bartender that he'd just met the woman in the airport that day. I knew there was a story there . . . and so *Layover* was born.

Why did you set this book in an airport? What is about airports?

Airports are strange places. When I'm in one, I feel like I'm suspended. I'm not in the city I'm going to. I'm not in the city I'm in. Sometimes they're all you see of a city. But they're artificial, almost like a mall or a museum. Sometimes it feels as though anything can happen in an airport and it doesn't have to affect the rest of your life. You can drink, eat, shop, talk to people, but it feels strangely disconnected from the rest of your life. When these two characters meet in *Layover*, they open up to each other because the airport feels like a place to share secrets without consequences.

How has the novel-writing experience changed from your first book, *Cemetery Girl*? What have you learned?

In a way, it gets harder *and* easier. It's harder because I've used a lot of ideas and plot twists already, so I have to keep pushing myself to come up with more and better ideas. It's easier only in the sense that I have a lot of experience to fall back on. *Layover* is my ninth novel, so when I get stuck, I can look back and say, "I've done it before. I can do it again." More than anything, I think I've learned to tell a leaner, faster-paced story. That's what thriller readers want.

Who was your favorite character to write, and why?

I really enjoyed all the characters. It's quite a collection of interesting people. But Morgan was the most interesting. She's full of mystery and secrets. And she kept revealing those secrets up to the last pages of the book. I didn't know what she was up to most of the time, and I was writing the book!

You have been a professor of English and creative writing for fourteen years. How has working in the “academy” affected how you see writing psychological thrillers?

Every day I teach writing I learn something about my own writing. Being in the classroom keeps me on my toes and forces me to always be thinking about my own writing and ways I can improve it. If I’ve learned anything, it’s that people love great stories with vivid, three-dimensional characters.

Why would you encourage readers to take *Layover* on their next flight?

It’s a fast-paced story. You might be able to knock out the whole thing on a long flight. As an added bonus, you’ll be looking around at all the people in the airport and on the plane with you. You’ll be wondering if any of them are on the run. If any of them have deep, dark secrets they’re hiding. I bet someone is. Heck, maybe you’re the one with the secret.

What do you hope readers take away from this novel?

First and foremost, I want them to be entertained. I want them to pick this book up and not be able to put it down. Beyond that, I want them to think about how everyone has a secret. Everyone has problems and complications in their lives. Sometimes we put our heads down and try to pass by others and not get involved. Joshua is a guy who makes the choice to get involved in a stranger’s life, and while it makes for a wild ride, he’s better off in the end.

Do we have the ability to change the course of our lives, how we want to live our lives, as Josh thinks about in the book?

Of course I believe that. The older we get and the more complicated our lives become, the harder that can be. But I do believe we can find ways to change our own lives and the lives of others for the better. We only get one go-round, so we might as well use it wisely.

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ACTIVITY

The book deals with What-ifs: what if Joshua had studied illustration in school? How would his life be changed? How do you think your life would be different if you made different choices back then? Or would you make the same choices?