



When life veers off course, strangers
find comfort and lasting connection

THE INTERSECT

A NOVEL

BRAD GRABER



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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE INTERSECT

by Brad Graber

Brad Graber was thrilled to move to Phoenix in 2009, a friendly city with a diverse community. But the state of Arizona had its struggles, especially regarding immigration. The rich culture of Phoenix, set against the political and social issues of Arizona in 2010, is the backdrop to Graber's charismatic debut novel **THE INTERSECT** (*September 2016, ISBN 9780997604207, Original Trade Paperback*).

In **THE INTERSECT**, Graber uses his personal history, professional health care background, and the social issues of today, to paint a moving portrait of lives that connect in a deep and meaningful way. The novel weaves together the stories of disparate characters who are striving to survive in a world where the most lasting connection is made among strangers. Graber takes a close look at what it's like to be an older woman struggling to navigate the health care system while being swindled by her family; a gay man in a long term relationship thrown off-balance by early retirement; an illegal immigrant who considers himself to be an American, in a country that tells him otherwise; and a gay teen who has come out of the closet to a rejecting family.

THE INTERSECT opens with Daisy, a spry 75-year-old woman living on her own. When Daisy gets into a car accident and is whisked away for hip surgery, her stay in rehab threatens to transition to long-term care. Her nephew Jack and his second wife Enid nefariously garner power of attorney and, without Daisy's knowledge, sell her Biltmore home. Months later, Daisy returns to discover that a gay couple in their 50s, Dave and Charlie, have purchased the property. Charlie welcomes Daisy into the couple's guestroom, believing she's Dave's distant aunt from NYC, before discovering her circumstance. The men bond with Daisy, even as Dave and Charlie's relationship starts to take a turn when Dave quits his high-end career and spirals into a post midlife crisis.

Meanwhile, Ernie is a Mexican-born immigrant who was smuggled into the United States when he was a young child. He owns a handyman business and prides himself on being a model American, despite his illegal status. When Ernie stops by the house of a client, he finds the woman

held at knifepoint in an attempted robbery. When the police arrive, Ernie is falsely arrested and deported to Mexico, where his American grit helps him to succeed despite overwhelming odds.

These characters' stories become intertwined with those of a psychic, a physical therapist, and a lonely teen, and along with scheming love interests, the novel takes many dramatic twists. Lives become entangled: relationships are strained, secrets are revealed, personal identities are threatened, hearts are broken, and justice is sought.

Exploring today's hot-button issues of immigration, elder abuse, and teen homelessness, **THE INTERSECT** shows readers that strangers can make unexpected and lasting connections—even as they reveal the most vulnerable part of themselves.

About Brad Graber:

Brad Graber was born and raised in New York City. He obtained a B.A. in Biology from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and an M.H.A. from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. As a healthcare administrator, Brad has held a number of positions living in Highland Park, a suburb of Chicago; West Bloomfield, a suburb of Detroit; and Mill Valley, a suburb of San Francisco. Brad currently resides in Phoenix with Jeffrey, his spouse of 26 years, and their dog Charlie. Brad volunteers with non-profit organizations, most recently with Duet, which provides support for seniors. He has in the past volunteered with OnenTen.org, which supports GLBTQ youth. **THE INTERSECT** is Brad's first novel. For more information visit his website www.bradgraber.com or follow him on Twitter @jefbra1.

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By Brad Graber

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About Brad Graber, Author of **THE INTERSECT**



Brad Graber was born and raised in New York City. He obtained his B.A. in Biology from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and an M.H.A. from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

As a healthcare executive, Brad has held a number of management positions over the years. He was formerly a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and a Certified Medical Executive through Medical Group Management Association.

While he no longer works in healthcare, Brad actively volunteers with local non-profit organizations. He currently volunteers with Duet, an organization that provides support services to seniors, and has volunteered with One-n-Ten, an organization that works with GLBTQ youth.

Brad has lived in Highland Park, a suburb of Chicago, West Bloomfield, a suburb of Detroit, and Mill Valley, a suburb of San Francisco. He currently resides in Phoenix on the grounds of the Arizona Biltmore with his partner of twenty-six years, Jeff, and their dog Charlie. *The Intersect* is Brad's first novel. He's currently working on his second novel. Visit him at www.bradgraber.com or follow him on Twitter @jefbra1.

A Conversation with Brad Graber,

Author of **THE INTERSECT**

***The Intersect* is a novel about the interconnecting lives of strangers in Phoenix. What inspired you to write this novel? What attracted you to using Phoenix as a backdrop?**

When I moved to Phoenix in 2009, I was struck by the cultural diversity of the city. I had always thought of Arizona as a conservative place, and yet, I found myself surrounded by a warm and welcoming neighborhood. Meanwhile, there was a steady drumbeat in the media about illegal immigration and gay marriage which felt threatening and intolerant. It made we want to explore the challenges faced by contemporary characters – offering readers an insight into the lives of strangers who reach out – and enrich each other’s lives.

I’ve lived in a lot of cities throughout my life: Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Buffalo, and NYC. They’re all great places, but I think Phoenix is really underrated. And with Arizona State University’s presence, it’s really hip and happening.

Your novel starts off with a gay couple who are in their 50’s, Charlie and Dave, arriving in Phoenix from the Bay Area. Why did you decide to include a gay male couple in the story?

I wanted to explore why men stray, and how relationships can become quickly compromised. You don’t often read about mature gay relationships in contemporary fiction. Especially people who have been together twenty-plus years.

Daisy is an attractive 75-year-old woman with surprising secrets. Why did you write a novel with an elderly protagonist? What do you want readers to take away from her story?

There are not a lot of stories about older people out there. And I think the point about Daisy that is so touching is she’s at an age when she’s suddenly alone. Friends have either died off or moved away. She has no family to speak of. She relies on acquaintances to stay connected, like the security staff in her neighborhood. These are the people who are important in her life. When she breaks a hip, that’s when everything changes—and she realizes she’s essentially alone and at risk of becoming a long-term nursing home resident.

If we live long enough, we might find ourselves alone, and not necessarily by our choosing. That’s why friendships need to be intergenerational. Older adults have lots of wisdom to share, and hidden in those older bodies are people who were once young themselves. Daisy also has tremendous inner strength, and a willingness to change and grow. She welcomes others into her life. She takes chances. She innately understands that life isn’t what happens to you, but what you do to make it happen. She is no one’s victim.

Henry is a 15-year-old gay teen who is homeless, until he is taken in by a sympathetic woman. Why did you decide to write about a homeless gay teen?

With the Supreme Court’s decision on gay marriage, it’d be easy to think that the issues faced by the LGBTQ community have been resolved. But they haven’t. Kids still remain vulnerable.

Statistics indicate that 40 percent of kids living on the streets are GLBTQ. There are real struggles for kids who are thrown away. I wanted to shine a light on that issue.

Ernie is an undocumented immigrant who is deported to Mexico. Why did you decide to create Ernie? What do you want readers to understand about American values? Must you be an American citizen to have them?

I thought it would be interesting to follow the story of a man who knows from early childhood that he's undocumented. He was raised in Phoenix, went to college in Arizona, started a business, loves the United States — only to be falsely arrested and deported.

America is a land of opportunity – anyone can succeed if they apply themselves. It is also a place of immense kindness, a country that believes there is more than enough for everyone. And so we offer our hands out to others who are not as fortunate – helping them to be successful. These are our values – it's in the water and in the air. And if you're raised in America, these are your values too. We have approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Each day they make our world a better place, and we must recognize that they too are transformed in our presence. America offers the dream – we mustn't be stingy about sharing it.

Are any of the characters based on people you know or have met?

I've used bits and pieces of people from my own life to create the characters – and of course – my own sensibility to give them life. My grandmother provided the essence for Daisy. She too was orphaned at a young age and taken in by relatives. At that point, their stories diverge, but the sweet “goodness” of Daisy's character is very true to my grandmother.

Charlie and Dave's dynamic might initially appear to mirror my own relationship, but in reality, we're nothing like Charlie and Dave. Charlie is a “nester” while Dave transforms into a “libido” fiend as he struggles with issues of aging and discomfort about the loss of his career.

Henry was easier to write. Being a gay man, I certainly know the struggle of self-acceptance. There's a universal vulnerability and loneliness that LGBTQ youth face. And even today, the coming out process can be traumatic and very dependent on family reaction.

What is one lesson you'd like readers – and the characters – to take away from the book?

We're all in this thing called life together. We need to walk in each other's shoes to understand the challenges that the other faces. And you're never too old to change. Whatever is happening in your life that might need to be fixed—it can be done. There are always people nearby to help. I'm a true believer that it just requires that we be vulnerable. Good people rally.

What is your next project?

I started working on a novel tentatively titled “The Season of the Caterpillar.” It's the story of a teenage girl who discovers she's named after a deceased uncle who died of AIDS. She embarks on a journey to meet the Uncle's surviving partner. Along the way, she learns about herself and her family.

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Characters of **THE INTERSECT**

Charlie Huff and Dave Greenway

Charlie and Dave arrive in Phoenix in March 2010, after relocating from the Bay Area for Dave's new healthcare job. In a long-term relationship that has lasted twenty-years, the men discuss the challenge of moving to a new city. Both men are attractive, in their mid-fifties, and at a point in their respective careers when they've been successful. Yet this new chapter in their lives threatens to unseat their expectations of their life together. Charlie is a retail consultant, but with the economic downturn, retail has been in a slump. Charlie's eager for a new adventure and sees Phoenix as very much fulfilling that promise. He takes charge in handling all the details of the relocation, including house-hunting.

Dave is high-strung and concerned about whether accepting a new job and moving to Arizona was a prudent decision. Dave tends to rehash decisions over and over, and realizes early on that he's working for the wrong company as he clashes with company culture. Meanwhile Charlie discovers the home of his dreams in a community on the grounds of the Arizona Biltmore, an upscale neighborhood located in the heart of Phoenix. Charlie dismisses Dave's concerns and presses to buy the home, which precludes Dave's options of changing jobs.

Daisy Ellen Lee

Daisy is a spry, healthy, and independent senior, who lives alone in the Biltmore Greens, one of the many communities that make up the grounds of the Biltmore. Her key lifelines remain the surrounding neighborhood and the security guards who man the gates. When she breaks a hip in a minor auto accident, Daisy is whisked off to the hospital, suddenly keenly aware of her vulnerability. Transferred to rehabilitation at The Village, an infection sets in, which sends her back to the hospital, where she's admitted to intensive care. When she finally returns to rehabilitation, Daisy struggles with depression. Overwhelmed by her health issues, and afraid of becoming a long-term care resident, Daisy battles her demons, remembering her past as an orphaned girl, forced to sleep on a roll-away bed in the hallway of her older brother's crowded Bronx apartment. When she returns to her home at the Biltmore she finds it has been sold to Charlie and Dave.

Jack and Enid Lee

The Great Recession, repeated break-ins to their Indian Village home, and fear that Jack's teacher's pension might disappear, pressure retirement-age couple Jack and Enid to sell their home at the bottom of the real estate market, leave Detroit, Michigan, and move to Phoenix. This is a second marriage for Jack, who lost his beloved first wife to breast cancer. Jack and Enid are at odds with relocating to Arizona, until Jack discovers that his long lost aunt Daisy resides in the Biltmore. Enid, a trust-fund baby, is angered when she tours their new condo, believing the accommodations are beneath her standards. Jack explains that with the hit to her trust fund from the stock market, and his limited pension, they will have to adjust to a new lifestyle. Enid, annoyed about Daisy, and not wanting to take any responsibility for the older woman's circumstances, changes her tune when she realizes Jack is Daisy's only heir. She steps in, takes charges, and when Daisy is heavily medicated at the hospital, obtains Daisy's power of attorney.

Characters of **THE INTERSECT**

Bonnie Devlon

In her late thirties, Bonnie is the Director of Rehabilitation at The Village. Smart and beautiful, Bonnie has been through a series of relationships and one-night stands. She's come to think of herself as married to her career, which offers her a great deal of satisfaction. Recognizing that Daisy is failing to rehab, she intercedes, and assumes Daisy's direct care. She inspires the older woman to reach inside and garner her resources to get moving by introducing Lyle, an older gentleman, who is also in rehab. As she watches the couple bond, she longs for a sweet romance of her own.

Anna Garrett

A psychic who runs her business out of her house, Anna is a short, rotund, oddly-dressed woman who favors colorful turbans and channeling the dead, rather than dealing with the living. Anna has a thriving business, and has just installed a new neon sign on her front lawn. With the economic downturn, the neighborhood along 19th Avenue has begun to change. Concerned with her safety, Anna hires a handyman, Ernie, to install security lights. One night, a stranger presents himself with a knife. Even though she is in danger, Anna's intuitive powers immediately pick up that the young man holding her at knifepoint is a frightened teenager desperately trying to survive.

Ernie Gonzales

Raised in the United States, Ernie has known since early childhood that his mother brought him over the border illegally from Mexico. Uncomfortable with his illegal status, Ernie has done his best to adopt the appearance, values and education of an American, overcoming these challenges by starting a successful handyman business. Stopping by Anna's, he intercedes on the robbery. When the police arrive, amidst the confusion, the assailant escapes and Ernie is mistakenly arrested. A night in jail leads to deportation to Nogales, Mexico.

Henry

Tall, dark-haired, and well-built, with the sharp, angular features of only the best looking men, Henry presents himself as far more mature than his 15 years. Tossed out by his parents when he reveals he is gay, the well-developed teen struggles to survive on the streets of Phoenix. During a suicide attempt, Anna intercedes, insisting the teen move in with her and return to school. Even though Henry knows Anna is accepting of who he is, Henry compartmentalizes his life, shutting Anna out as he is befriended by Paul, a twenty-something adult who has other plans for Henry.

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