

The Fifth Flight

A First Novel

By Gavin Tracey

Prologue

What follows is a true account of one survivor of the fifth plane to be hijacked on September 11th 2001. She and other people came together to write this book. Her name was Bethany. And on that day, she lost her mother and her brother. They died with the 300 other people on flight 551.

The Fifth Flight

Laura Downing was a bargain hunter. She would buy anything that was in a sale even if she didn't need it. And when she saw a flight and accommodation for only €120 per person to New York, there was no way she was going to say no. Laura was in her mid forties, with shoulder length blonde hair and clear, crystal blue eyes. She was Irish, born in Dublin in 1964, and had already been to the states twice, once with her sister for a five day spa trip, and once with her two kids, Mark and Bethany, to

see the twin towers and the empire state building. Mark was 12 years old while Bethany was only seven. Both went to the same school, St. Patrick's and both were very nice people. Of course they had their fights like any other brother and sister, but they still loved each other, even if you did need a submarine and a high-powered searchlight to find it. Laura's husband, Darren Dowling, had divorced her a year ago, and had left to America with another woman. Laura and her children were a happy family, and lived in a

small suburb of Dublin called Sundrive Rd. The house was nice, with red brick for the first half of it, then biases stonework for the rest of it, until you hit the roof, which was beautifully tiled with light brown slates.

They set off for Dublin airport at 9:15. Their plane was due to take off at 1:15 and would fly overnight into the states. They arrived at the airport at 10:00, and even at this early time of morning, it was black with people. There were businessmen talking loudly into

their phones, bedraggled mothers with their screaming children and the constant drone of the announcements over the airport annoy. They checked in their luggage and passed passport control, and visa control. Finally, at 01:00 they walked through the long corridor and boarded a plane that said "Air America" in big blue letters, with an eagle resting in the triangle of the A of America. They had been seated in the middle row, and with Laura in the middle of the two children they were either side of her. She made

sure that Mark and Bethany were strapped in properly, and a stewardess made sure that the entire luggage was packed in properly in the overhead lockers. Laura felt her brain squish into the back of her skull as they took off.

It was 5:16 am, and the first light of an American sunrise made its way through the sides of the window shutters. Mark and Bethany had stayed up all night either playing their Game Boys, colouring or reading. Laura had fallen asleep at around ten past eleven. There

was a loud bang from the cockpit, followed by sounds of someone scrambling.

The noise had woken Laura, and she opened a gluey eye to see what was going on. She stood up, stretched and walked towards the captions cabin. Just as she was about to knock on the door, it burst open, and a dark skinned man, who was about 20 with long black hair and a big moustache, holding an AK-47 assault rifle step out.

“Nobody moves!” he shouted with a deep Iraqi accent.

“The drivers are dead, and if any of you want to stay alive, I suggest that you do as we say.”

The plane was mainly full of families and college students who went over because of the low prices. A man stood up from behind Laura. He was about forty, trailing with a wife and three kids.

“Is this some sort of joke?” He asked incredulously. The man looked like he was from the Middle East, with dark skin, and a rough black beard.

“If this is a hoax, I swear that I’ll rip your head . . .”

There was the deafening sound of a gun shot. A woman screamed. The man looked down, and saw a rapidly spreading stain of blood on his t-shirt. The first shot was followed by a second, then a third. The man was blown backwards, and was thrown down the aisle.

“Now, if anyone else wants to join him, be my guest!”

No one moved, so the man went back into the cabin, only to be replaced by a much older man, in his forties, with the arms of

someone who lifts weights. He to was Asian, but with a clean shaven face. They all felt the plane lurch to one side.

Chapter Two: Madmen

Laura looked out of her window. They were passing New York, and passing the world trade centres, or as she called them, the twin towers... It was quarter past eight in the morning, and even as she watched, Laura saw the plane. It was the same type of plane that they were on. The terrorists had control of the plane, and as she watched, they struck the north tower. Laura watched in shock. The plane had simply flown straight into the tower, almost

lazily. Without knowing it, she began to sob. There must have been at least 100 people on that plane, and now they were dead, just like that. Other people were crying too. There was a great fireball, and some people had fainted, others were just frozen in shock. A man went into the bathroom, and they all heard a banging noise. They were bewildered, but their questions were answered when they saw what he was holding. He came out a few seconds later with the metal handrail from the disabled toilets,

holding it in his hand like a baseball bat. He could hear the men in the cockpit laughing, and he marched in. They all heard the sickening sound of metal hitting bone, and a body slumping to the floor. The man was putting up a fight. There was another crunch, and he backed out, holding two of the men, one of them either knocked out or dead, with his head bleeding, and another one, who he was pulling by the hair, who had his leg bent in such a way, that they all knew that it was broken. He threw the unconscious man on

the ground, and struck a blow the other mans head. He screamed, and collapsed to the floor. He was angry now, and he lashed out. But the he just battered his hand away with the pole, and started raining blows to his body and face. He hadn't even been hitting him for a second, when there was a sound of a machine gun, and he was thrown backwards. There was another round, and he fell back, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. There were bullet holes all over his torso, his face and his head. The blood was seeping out of him, and

snaking onto the carpet, in the same way the smoke was coming in plumes out of the north tower. The blood of the man who had been shot before was meeting with the blood of the other mans, making a sick merge of the two. His wife ran over to his body, and knelt over him, weeping.

“Get back to your seat,” the man said calmly.

“Make me, you lousy scum!”

She screamed back at him. He moved towards her, very slowly, and stopped when his feet were directly under her head. He flipped

his boot up, hitting her in the face and flipping her backwards. She screamed, clutching her face and cursing the man.

“Get back to your seat,” he repeated his voice a touch icier now.

Whoever these men were, they had no mercy. Laura was now fully crying, and when she looked out the window, she saw a plume of smoke, curling into the sky, like a huge snake crawling up and up towards space.

Other people had seen this too, and were crying as well. A woman was writing into her diary, her tears blotching the page. Another was sobbing into her boyfriend's shoulder. A boy stood up, he was no older than her Mark.

“Where are you taking us?” He demanded.

His mother pulled back into his seat and told him to keep his mouth shut.

The man walked slowly down the aisle, in the same way he had walked towards the woman, just a

few minutes earlier. When he reached him, he crouched down, so he was eye level with the boy.

“Have you ever been to capital hill?” he asked the boy.

“No, I’ve only seen it on TV.” He replied.

“Well my boy, it looks like you first time there is going to be your last. We are going to crash this plane into Capital Hill, and show your country that we are not afraid.”

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World Trade Centre, north building, 8 10 am

John Gaynor, was late for his day at work, and his boss was not going to like it. He was a tall man, around 6, 8 and was dressed in an opened neck shirt, black pinstripe trousers and a black pinstripe jacket. He was carrying a large folder in his hand, and the remains of his breakfast on his closely shaven face. He glanced at his watch. It was almost 8 15. He stumbled into the conference room.

“I’m really sorry I’m late, I was caught in traffic and...”

That was as far as he got. He saw everyone looking out of the window. He placed his folder on the large oval table, and joined them at the window. What he saw made his knees wobble and his hands shake. There was a huge airliner, heading straight for them. It would take about ten seconds before it would hit them.

“Oh Go-”

That was as far as he got. The plane smashed into the building, with such force, that he felt the floor tilt, and was sliding towards the plane. He was crushed

instantly, turned into mincemeat.
Other people were sucked into the
turbines and vaporised.

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There was a stunned silence on the plane. They all knew that were going to die someday, just not like this. The woman who had been writing in her diary, pressed her head against the window, and began to cry. Laura saw people with rosary beads, praying to God to somehow end the schemes of these madmen. The old woman now looked angry.

Why! Why are you going to kill thousands of people for no reason?"

"Why? We are not doing this for fun you know, we need to punish your

government for what it has done and what it has failed to do.”

With that he turned away, back into the cockpit to be replaced by the first man. He had a large bruise over his right eye, where he had been hit with the pole. He was sitting slouched, with a gun cradled in his arms. He looked angry, and the passengers said nothing. It looked like he would shoot if anyone so much as coughed.

Chapter 3

The Words of a Damned Woman

What follows is the diary entry from Mai O'Connell who was onboard flight 775, which was destined to Capital Hill

9/11/2001

Whoever is reading this, my name is Mai O'Connell, and I am onboard a hijacked flight to New York. There are men in the cockpit, and they are planning things to horrible to even think about. We are going to die, and some of us already

have. I am writing to whoever finds this, to tell them about the horror we are going through. I am old and don't have many years left in my life, but I never knew it would end like this. If my family are reading this, I am truly sorry that I have to put you through this. These men are planning to fly this plane into Capital Hill, which we will reach in just over two hours.

To my family and friends, and to my only daughter, to Courtney and to Matt let me be your alter, and

remember I love you more than
anything in the world.

Love from your Gran.

Elizabeth O'Connell

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Chapter Four

My first time to New York

Eric Delaney was walking through the centre of New York city. He was craning his neck to fully look at both of the world trade centres. They were amazing, almost identical, except for one tower which was slightly higher than the other. He was taking pictures, to show his family back home in Ireland. He came from Kerry originally, but now lived in Dublin with his wife and four kids. It was fairly early in the morning, but

still, the streets were flooded with people. There were gypsies at stalls selling handmade bracelets and necklaces, and there were business people walking around in suits sweating already. A television show was being filmed, with a man and a woman talking into a camera. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw something fling very low in the sky. He looked up at it and saw that it was an aeroplane. He had never see one fling so low, missing the rooftops of some of the building by no more than ten or twenty metres. The plane had

caught the attention of a couple of other people as well. They were pointing and murmuring, and the television camera was focused on it as well. If it didn't stop it was going to hit the north tower. But Eric knew with a sinking feeling that the plane was not going to stop. He watched it as it flew straight into the building. He watched as a huge fireball erupted from the building, and as many people in the building jumped. His eyes followed a woman who jumped, and he winced when she hit the ground. There wasn't very much of her left. People were

screaming, and running around like lemmings. In the distance, he heard sirens of police and fire departments. Eric didn't know how to react, he just stood there, gazing up at what had once been the north tower of the world trade centres. He was still there sitting down on the pavement when the fire department arrived on the scene. There were television cameras everywhere. There were five fire engines on the scene with about 20 or more police cars. The windows of all the surrounding buildings had been shattered by

the force of the impact. His wife had known that Eric had been at the world trade centres at the time of the attack, and as soon as she had heard the news, she had rung him on his mobile. She was hysterical, and Eric had to hold the phone away from his ear, because she was screaming so loud. He was meant to be going back to Ireland the following day, but judging by what had just happened, he doubted that he was going to get home before the end of the week. Once again he looked up at what had once been the north tower. He

felt a tear rolling down his cheek, and brushed it away. And with that he departed for his hotel. After what had just taken place he knew that getting a taxi was going to be impossible. He smiled grimly to himself, thinking that he would be one of the first people ever to think that in New York. He walked off, beginning the 12 mile walk home.

Chapter Four

Low Pressure

Back on the plane, Mai stood up, with a piece of paper in her hand, and walked towards the man with the gun. He pointed the gun at her, a look of anger in his eyes.

“What you want?”

He shouted at her, making some of the people jump.

“I just need to go to the loo, keep your hair on man!”

He looked offended by the remark, but put the gun down to allow her pass.

She walked passed him, and then she collapsed. She would have fallen down if she had not grabbed on to the handle of the plane door. The men nearest to her leapt up to assist her.

“NO!”

She shouted very loud for a woman her age.

“Hold on!” she shouted.

“What you mean, hold on?” the man with the gun asked.

As if in response, Mai grabbed the handle of the door and turned with all her might. There was a click.

“Hey, you, man!” she shouted

“Come over here you piece of...”

No one heard anymore from Mai O’Connell. She tugged one last time, and the door opened. He was sucked out in less than a second. The passengers all had their seatbelts on, all except one. The man with the gun, who was sitting only a couple of metres away from the door, was sucked out too. There was a look of surprise on his face. Other loose bits were thrown off too, and Mark’s Gameboy flew out of his hand. The plane was dipping to one side, and the bags started falling out of the overhead

lockers. Two men got up and tried to close the door from behind. It was hard work, and another three men came up behind them to help. With huge effort they managed to close the door. The passengers looked on with shock. The people on the left hand side of the plane could see the two of them for about three seconds, until they disappeared from sight behind the plane. At least Mai disappeared; the man with the gun met a more gruesome fate. He was sucked into the left turbine, and was vaporised. There was a bang, as

someone came out of the cockpit, to see what had happened.

“Where is Muhammad?”

The man booming voice shook through the whole plane.

There was nothing but silence.

“I asked you, where is Muhammad! If I don’t get an answer...”

He searched round the plane, and grabbed a woman by the scruff of the neck and held her up, with his gun aimed at his head. It was a Browning 9 millimetre, which is an old weapon, but a very reliable one, a favourite of the SAS. If he fired it would kill her in less than a

second. The woman's husband, a small skinny man, stood up in rage. "The old woman, she opened the door and got sucked out, Muhammad or whatever went with her. I guess he should have put on his seatbelt."

"Very good, thank you."

And with that he shot the woman.

"You said . . . "

"I never said I would let her live."

He spoke so calmly and softly the man had to listen very hard to her. With that he turned around, dumped the body on the floor. The woman's husband ran toward the

body, sobbing. Laura looked down at Mark and Bethany. Both were white, and completely unmoving. Laura bent down and pulled both of them into a vice like embrace.

“It’s ok, were going to be just fine.

“Laura hated lying to her children, but she couldn’t think of anything else to say. She didn’t want to admit it, but she was scared. And in just a few hours time, they would reach Capital Hill, and then, it would all be over.

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New York City, approximately 10:30am.

George had been a fireman for about a month maybe two, and the worst thing he had had to deal with so far was a burning building, with over 20 people trapped inside. But now there was this. Spraying water in it would do no good, the building was already ruined. Many of the firemen had gone inside, trying to rescue at least some of the people. There were huge crowds, and the police were having to hold them back. There was so much noise that George could

barely her himself speak, never mind taking orders from the chief. Suddenly, there was a cold, deathly silence. Everybody was looking up at the sky. George looked up as well. What he saw there made him freeze on the spot. Up in the sky flying towards them, was a second plane. No one could believe it. And so, like the first plane, it crashed, almost lazily, into the second tower. There was a fireball, and then the noise started again. It was as if someone had muted the city, and then turned up

the volume again. There was panic in New York, and everyone knew it. As seen through the eyes of George Bush.

I was reading a book to a group of little children when I got the news. I was reading a book called The Gruffalo, and it was actually quite interesting.

“It’s a Gruffalo!”

I cried, reading from the book. It was then that one of my security guards came up to me and whispered in my ear about what had just happened. He told me that the minister for defence was on the

phone and wanted to speak to me A.S.A.P. I got up out of my chair and walked over to the teacher to explain what had just happened. I had to find her a seat after I had told her. After that, I told the children that I had to go on a really important business meeting. While I was escorted to my car, the thought that they actually had done what they had threatened to do. About a week ago, I had been contacted that Osama Bin Laden and the terrorist organisation he was running, al Quaida, were going to hijack planes, and until now I

didn't really believe that they were going to do it. That and that only was racing through my mind, from that school to The White House. The phone rang and I answered it. It was the minister for defence.

"What just happened?" I asked, almost shouting.

"We don't know all we know is that there has been fatal damage to the north tower, and a second plane has stuck the south tower. There are cops and firemen on the scene."

“It’s Al Queda, isn’t it? They contacted me last week to say that they would do something like this. I didn’t believe them, I was just being stupid. I didn’t know that they would actually do it!”

I was babbling now, and the minister had to raise his voice to calm me down.

“It’s ok. You don’t have to tell the press anything about it, if you’re the only person who they told that they would do it.”

“Ok Brian, just do me one thing, willya?” I asked him in my casual voice.

“Yes?” He asked

“Get the Bin Laden family out of the country, once the people find out it was him; they’ll be the first people the crowd will turn to.”

“Ok. Will do A.S.A.P.” replied the minister, and then hung up.

I sat back in my chair, and ran my hands through my hair. It was at that moment that the phone rang again.

“Hello?”

“Listen, we have information of another plane, heading for the Capital Hill!”

It was the minister again.

“It’s about a half hour from Capital Hill. What are we gonna do?”

I sat back in my chair and discussed the plans.

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Laura clutched her kids, knowing that it would be over pretty soon. She looked behind her and saw a door. It must be a utility closet or something. She clicked open the door, and found four parachutes, lying in there on the floor, were four parachutes. She beckoned to Mark and Bethany. Taking them in the narrow space between the seats, so that the men could not

see them, she strapped up her children, and then herself. She say back up, to find that everyone on the right side of the plane was looking out the window. What she saw out there stunned her. They were coming in lower now because they were only about a 10 miles from Capital Hill. There, in a field, were a troop of solders. There must have been at least 500 of them, with about 50 trucks, and about 20 tanks. They were flying the American flag. They saw a blast from one of the tanks, and suddenly the middle of the plane

seemed to rip itself apart. The inflatable slides came down, and Laura, Mark and Bethany ran for them. They jumped and slid, and then, they were in open sky. Other people were jumping too. Someone ran and jumped and grabbed onto Mark, and they fell like a stone. He couldn't open his parachute! They landed with a splat, and there was no need to ask if anyone was alive. Laura opened her parachute and it looked like she was fine. That was until she looked behind her, and saw a large chunk of twisted metal hurling towards her. It hit her, and

together and together they were sucked into the turbines. Laura disintegrated immediately, but the metal put up more of a fight. A few seconds later, there was a large explosion, and many people caught fire. They were sent to their doom, burning and screaming. Bethany pulled at the chord to her parachute. Her parachute opened, and blossomed like a giant flower behind her. There was a tug, and gently, Bethany floated to the ground. The soldiers ran over to her with a stretcher, but that's all

she remembered. She passed out,
and woke up in hospital.

Once she passed her psychological
exam, she was let out, and now
lives with her aunt and uncle in
Monaghan.

THE END