Greg: He's Fine.

A READER'S GUIDE

by Beau Griffin

A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

Greg never figures himself out. That isn't a spoiler — it's the deal the book makes with you. He doesn't see what's happening to him, which means you have to. You, and everyone around him, are the only ones let in on it. So this guide won't ask you what Greg learned; he didn't learn anything, he was just there. It'll point you at a few moments where you saw something he couldn't, and then get out of the way. The best conversations in here won't be about Greg at all.

1. Early on, Greg gets bumped to business class by a gate agent's mistake and decides, somewhere over the Aleutians, that it wasn't a mistake — that he'd begun giving off a certain energy. You can see what's actually going on. He can't. Where in your own week have you decided something was *about you* that maybe wasn't — and would you want to know?

2. A stranger named Cheska laughs, kindly, at the smile Greg deploys at people, and he quietly retires it for the night without ever knowing he was given feedback. Who has corrected something you didn't know you were doing — and did you ever clock it?

3. A line of Diane's surfaces in his head unbidden — that he was about as open as a savings bond — and he stops chewing for exactly one second, then resumes. Whose line about you lives in your head like that? Did they have a point?

4. Greg goes on the "adventure" his son told him to have, and a village turns out to have been expecting him before he'd even bought the ticket. Who in your life has gone ahead and expected the better version of you before you agreed to be it?

5. A BREATHER

   Greg clips a pink memory-foam neck pillow to his suitcase with an aluminum carabiner rated for fifteen kilonewtons — wildly overbuilt, a fact he finds reassuring rather than absurd — because, as he sees it, if the pillow was going to be attached to the bag, he wanted the attachment to be unambiguous. No real question here. What's the most gloriously over-engineered fix you've ever brought to a problem that did not need it? Bring receipts.

6. Greg learns the name of a man he's seen two hundred times, and it costs him nothing. Whose name have you been not-quite-learning? What's the door across the street you keep walking past?

7. Greg never once sits Tyler down to fix things between them. He doesn't have a plan for Tyler; he wouldn't know he needed one. And yet across the book it's Tyler who thaws — who smiles more in one afternoon than he has in three years, who reaches, at the door, for a goodbye that isn't *drive safe* and can't find the word. The repair happens sideways, while Greg is busy with a sash and a rooster, and neither of them ever names it. Where with a parent or a child of your own has sitting them down *not* worked? What's the sideways thing — the thing you'd do *near* them rather than *at* them — that might?

8. When the book opens, Greg eats dinner standing alone at his counter, sleeps with his hands folded on his chest like a man in a coffin, and takes his sister's worried Sunday calls without quite knowing why she worries. He'd never call himself lonely — he wouldn't have a file for it. By the end the walls are down and he never noticed them go. What's a wall you'd swear you haven't built? And — if you wanted to, which you may not — what's one small thing that would leave a door open?

9. By the end, some things Greg used to manage carefully — a photograph, an empty bottle — he simply stops managing, without ceremony and without noticing. Is there something you're still actively managing that might just be fine where it is?

10. A neighbor tells Greg he looks different and neither of them can say how. By the last page, you can probably name the thing they can't. So turn it around: what's the one thing about you right now that everyone but you can see — and what's the small thing — a text, a lunch, a yes — you'd actually do this week?

11. One last one, and it isn't really about the book. Greg is the kind of man you could set down just about anywhere — a different country, a different disaster, the same nice shirt packed as a talisman — and the fun would be watching him not notice it. If there's more of him in your future (and there may be), where would you send him? And then the version that actually matters: the same question, turned on you — where have you been meaning to go, and what would it take? I'd love to hear either answer.

FOR BOOK CLUBS

The laugh is the way in. Let people talk about Greg before they talk about themselves — it's easier to point at a man who can't see himself than to start with the mirror. The fun of this book is that the whole room is in on something the main character isn't, so lean into that together before anyone turns a question around on their own life. And resist the urge to explain Greg to each other. He's fine. That's the whole joke.

TELL ME HOW IT WENT

If your club reads the book, I'd love to hear about it. Send a photo and one thing the book opened up for your group to goodgrieftravel@gmail.com. I read every one.

WANT ME TO JOIN?

If your club would like me to drop in for a few minutes by video to talk about the book, I'm glad to. Reach out at the same place — goodgrieftravel@gmail.com — and we'll find a time.