



DECEMBER 01, 2012

# AMERICAN WAY

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(Pg. 12)



# I'm a Goonie

**RIGHT NOW**, at this very moment, I'm in seat 13D en route to Las Vegas for a travel-journalism conference. Our 757 is flying over central New Mexico, and the patchwork of red earth and shadows from the clouds below forms what is seemingly a whole other mountain range. It's pretty out here, and the DFW-LAS flights are always full of interesting people.

The lady next to me is super nice: an ICU nurse from Tampa, Fla., traveling to Vegas for her sister's wedding. But not before spending a few extra nights in Sin City to cut loose with her friends and family. They'll undoubtedly run into the guys from row 17, and their buddies in row 24, who keep buying drinks for each other, frat-guy style.

As for me, I'm going to be a part of an in-flight-magazine panel with the editors from several other carriers' magazines, foreign and domestic. These conferences are exciting. Some of the best parts of this job are traveling to lectures and workshops around the world to meet travel writers, photographers, illustrators and public-relations professionals, and then when all of us meet the staffs of all the hotels and restaurants. I've made several lifelong friends in the process.

This'll be my first time back in Las Vegas since 2010. I haven't returned since my failed attempt at co-writing a screenplay about the town with my friend, fellow movie buff Jeff Hoferer. While I know that plenty of failed dreams pay the electric bills for all that neon in the middle of the desert, I'm sure it's not too often that the ghosts of those dreams are of the literary kind. "If only we could get this to Spielberg," Jeff and I used to say, never knowing whether the script was good enough to make it past his secretary's manicurist's best friend's sister's boyfriend's dog walker.

My reticence to return to Vegas is compounded by the fact that our first literary agent, who loved the plot and swore that Ridley Scott was interested in buying it, not only left the industry but left town without telling us. Our second agent loved everything about the screenplay — except the beginning, the end, four of the five characters and the thesis. Oh, and the middle. All that research was for nothing. So I gave up the ambition of one day being a screenwriter and went back to watching movies on my nights and weekends instead of writing them. I suppose enough time has elapsed that I can talk about the project: If the screenplay

hasn't been picked up by now, it won't be. And because our agent hasn't called us since 2011, I'm guessing she isn't shopping it around anymore.

Our screenplay was about three fun-loving, 20-something Texas trust-funders who try to fix the World Series for their hometown baseball team, only to find out that the Chicago Mafia has already fixed it for its own hometown club. A dramatic comedy ensues about a fix against a fix.

As much fun as it was to research this project in Las Vegas, and even though it's tough flying back here now knowing that all that hard work will never pay off, the flight did indeed pay off when I read a draft 10 minutes ago of our cover story on Steven Spielberg (page 48), who, in my opinion, is the absolute best director of all time. What I realized is that screenwriting isn't for me. *The Funds*, as we called the script, wouldn't work even if we landed heartthrob Eddie Redmayne (page 18) as the lead because, well, we don't have an agent — I don't think. Nor do we have the faintest idea how to land one. And because we've given up on trying. So y'all are stuck with me for a little while longer. Still, I wouldn't mind having the number of that dog walker ...

ADAM PITLUK  
Editor

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