



JAMES

..... EPILOGUE

KING

SKYTUBE

ALFIE GOES TO THAILAND - BOOK 3

JAMES KING

Skytube

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First edition

*This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.
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This series is dedicated to the people in Thailand, who have given me their time, affection and company gratuitously, and made me feel welcome in their beautiful Country. Without them this book would not have been possible.

Special thanks to those who provided me with valuable information and gave me moral support, which helped me in the writing of this book.

And thanks to my Advanced Reader Team who make sure I don't make too many gaffs when I publish my books.

Most of all, thanks for reading.

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Author Notes

I strongly recommend that you read the Alfie Goes to Thailand series books in order, particularly the three novels.

The first novel - **Post-it Notes** reveals that Alfie's life was complicated, and by the time he flew to Thailand he was emotionally unstable. He had to reconcile the fallout from a bitter divorce, with the global financial crisis and a need to understand the culture of a country, which was often indifferent to reality.

When I looked at the story from an independent third-party viewpoint, it was hard to weld into a cohesive narrative. So, I think it is better if Alfie tells you in his own words, exactly what happened in **Post-it Notes**, the first novel of the trilogy, before I deal with the horrors of the second novel - **House of Vipers**.

Skytube is an Epilogue linking Post-it Notes and House of Vipers

A world in chaos. A fanciful dream. Split allegiance could lead to disaster.

Back in Cape Town, Alfie must save his business. But the call

of Thailand and the commitment he's made spell danger

When the World's banking system collapses, everyone is hurting. The headless chicken doesn't know which way to turn, while the wily fox sees the opportunity. Alfie's outrageous dream of a futuristic transportation system is the spark that ignites his fuse, and he acts. As he leads his team through desperate times, he streamlines the company by slashing overheads and retrenching staff. In three short months he turns it round.

But little does he know the challenge that faces him in Thailand is much greater. And he may not make it with his sanity intact.

If you think any incidents or scenes in the series are unrealistic, or farfetched, remember the story is based on true life events. And truth is often stranger than fiction.

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The Hundredth Day

It was the June of 2008, and Alfie's immediate future looked bleak.

He left the two sisters and grabbed a taxi to Phuket airport, bound for Bangkok and the bi-annual Jewellery Fair. Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy; the Federal Reserve bailed out AIG Insurance; money market funds lost one hundred and forty-four billion dollars in a day, and investors were running to gold. The price had doubled since Alfie bought the business in 2004, and now it looked set to double again. How soon was anyone's guess, and speculating on anything was a longer odds gamble than usual. He always enjoyed the four days with friends who flew into Bangkok from around the world, twice a year, for the Fair. But he worried about his business in South Africa and was glad he was returning to Cape Town.

June came and went so fast, Alfie hardly noticed. When July took over, Thailand had seduced him. He even called the Kata Bungalows Resort, home, without a moment's thought that his home was in Cape Town. Never one for convention, Alfie

was comfortable in the role of non-conformist. If he'd been a Frenchman in World War Two, he would have played a part in the resistance and thought the war was fun. Maybe as the owner of a Bistro in Paris. He would have entertained German officers, plying them with cognac and gourmet meals, while members of the resistance, dressed as onion sellers and peddlers, were plotting their demise in his cellar. When August kicked July out the door he owned the beach in the early morning, until lazy holidaymakers drifted down to fry themselves in Ambre Solaire as the day grew hotter. Alfie, the odd local and a stray dog or two, had Kata Beach to themselves. He tried not to think how fast the hundred-day holiday was winding down, or that by mid-September home would be Cape Town again.

It was hard to relax in the final days before leaving, and people must have noticed a tinge of sadness as he said his goodbyes. A special one for Pong, in the laundry room, when Nin was working her last day, gave him a guilt complex he couldn't hide. His obvious discomfort showed he wasn't a callous philanderer, which endeared him to Pong. Despite feeling uneasy, he was elated to have made a good friend of a special person. It had taken time, but he realised he meant more to her than he thought, and he told her she should make her feelings clearer in future.

"This is the way I am. And now you know me better. Who knows what the future holds?"

"Will you keep in touch?"

"If you want me to, I will. And remember what Ot said about Nin, back in July."

"I will."

She leaned across and kissed him softly, a silent tear rolling down her cheek. And when he held her, more tears flowed,

like a river to the sea. Pong's grip was so tight, he would have struggled to free himself. Not that he wanted to.

A man can easily miss things that are obvious to a woman.

Departure

Nin and Alfie took a taxi to Phuket airport. Her flight to Bangkok left three hours before his, to Cape Town via Kuala Lumpur. When they flagged that her flight was boarding, they hugged and said goodbye. If all went to plan, he would be back in a few months.

The hundred days were over. He achieved much of what he set out to do and had a list of new objectives. The world is not black and white, and neither was Alfie's adventure. It had been many colours. Colours that imbued him with new life, new experiences, some exciting, some revealing, some difficult to understand, and some funny. Above all, he learned, and the prospect of learning more on his return was motivation enough to get him back to Thailand as soon as he could. Business would determine how soon.

Some of the Bhudda way had rubbed off and his thinking had changed, as he hoped it would. Alfie knew what he wanted and was committed to a challenging project. Building a house and living in the poorest region of Thailand was unlikely to be a simple accomplishment or as idyllic as the dream.

For a hundred days he hadn't given a thought to the Post it Notes stuck on the fridge door or the empty wine bottles scattered around the kitchen. He should have binned the lot before he left. The last thing he wanted were reminders of an unsavoury period in his life, and they would go the moment he walked in the door. The memory of his ex-wife was filed in archives, and he was no longer miserable and disillusioned, as he had been when he started the hundred days in South-East Asia.

But Thailand had such an impact, and Alfie's world was turned on its head once more.

When it stopped spinning, would he know who he was?

The day before he left Phuket, the United States Congress rejected the Government's bank bail-out bill, Wall Street was in cardiac arrest, and financial markets across the globe were in meltdown. All hell erupted, queues formed outside banks like giant anacondas, and riots broke out in China and across Europe.

Time and Alfie's resolve would determine if he had taken on more than he could handle. But he was confident, a man of his word, and there was no going back. Did he have the strength it would take to tackle the repercussions from the bankers' greed, and the failure of government regulators to prevent it from happening?

Only time would tell.

Skytube

Alfie felt the tap on his shoulder, but it didn't register. "Excuse me, Sir. Excuse me, Sir," the air hostess said, louder. "We are preparing to land. Please put your seat in the upright position."

"Preparing to land? But this is Skytube."

"No, Sir. This is the Malaysia Airlines Airbus, you boarded twelve hours ago."

"Oh sorry - I."

"That's alright. Would you like some juice?"

"Thank you."

Alfie Mynn's sleep ended, but the dream didn't. For years, he envisioned a world where the major cities were linked by giant bridges. The bridges were tubes, sealed from the elements, which crossed oceans and land on stilts. And bullet trains travelled as fast as the fastest airliners, inside the tubes. Fueled by solar power, stored in the outer casing of Skytube, it was the cleanest, safest and most efficient form of long-distance travel. Alfie had no idea if it was possible, any more than any inventor had, until it happened. But he hated everything that

was possible to hate about air travel. So much so, that his dream became an obsession.

If ancient man could build the pyramids, Chichén Itza and Angkor, why couldn't modern man build Skytube? Think of the benefits. No more catastrophic air crashes, cleaner air, no noise, no need for air traffic control on the scale it was. Air terminals, spread over acres of costly land, would be replaced by sleek multi-level tube ports, using free air space. No more weather delays, planes stacking over airports, or re-directs. No more roads congested with fuel tankers on their way to airports. Passengers would have room to move around, and wouldn't be packed into Boeings and Airbuses, like sardines in a tin. There would be restaurants, bars, coffee shops, lounges and sleepers. You could even live on Skytube. You'd still have bureaucratic nonsense at each end; customs and immigration. But it would be a small price to pay for the comfort and convenience. No more DVT, stagnant air, and no more turbulence. How he hated the turbulence. Alfie revelled in his dream, but he had no idea if it was feasible.

He was wide awake when the Airbus wheels screamed as they hit the runway, back in today's world. Compared to building Skytube, re-engineering a small jewellery business would be a simple job. He couldn't allow the commitment he had made to Nin to split his loyalty to Bob. In one way it was a problem, but in another it was a force that would drive him on and ensure he let neither of them down. Challenges like this were what he had thrived on his whole life. Skytube motivated him, he was ready to tackle the financial meltdown and save his business from ruin.

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