

JAMES KING

A person wearing a traditional conical hat is riding a bicycle away from the viewer on a dirt road. The background shows a hazy, rural landscape with rolling hills under a soft, warm light, possibly at dawn or dusk. The overall color palette is muted, with earthy tones and a gradient from light to dark.

A SHORT STORY

the **ONLY**
WITNESS

ALFIE GOES TO THAILAND - BOOK 1

JAMES KING

The Only Witness

Alfie Goes to Thailand - Book 1 - A Short Story

First published by Jamoroki Press 2019

Copyright © 2019 by James King

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

James King asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

James King has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

This book is a work of fiction except in the case of historical fact. Characters, businesses, organisations, places, locales, incidents and events portrayed herein are either imaginary or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental where that is concerned. Any opinions expressed herein are those of the characters and should not be misinterpreted as the author's.

*Learn more about the author and his books at
<https://www.jameskingbooks.com>*

First edition

*This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.
Find out more at reedsy.com*

This book is dedicated to all the people I have met in Thailand who have given me their time, affection and company gratuitously and made me feel welcome in their beautiful Country over many years. Without their help and sharing information about their lives and culture, writing the ALFIE GOES TO THAILAND series would not have been possible.

There are times when things stop making sense.

They are often the times when everything falls into place.

JAMES KING

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	ii
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	iii
A Peaceful Day	1
A Vicious Assault	4
The Only Witness	7
Grapevine	10
Dead Man Walking	13
Sleuth	15
Epilogue	18
Afterword	21
<i>About the Author</i>	22
<i>Also by James King</i>	24

Foreword

At the time I wrote *THE ONLY WITNESS*, I had no plans to write about Alfie and his adventures. The story became a part of the series and is based on a true-life incident.

I particularly like it because it is typical of many strange things that happen in Thailand and life generally. It also has a flavour of the series and will give you a taste for *ALFIE GOES TO THAILAND*, which, I hope, will make you want to read all the books.

Learn more about me and my books at <https://www.jameskingbooks.com>

Acknowledgement

If you would like to help others enjoy this book, you can leave a review.

Reviews are essential to attract new readers to a book. Honest reviews help bring books to the attention of other readers. If you enjoyed this book, I would appreciate it if you could help others by taking a few minutes of your time and leave a review.

Copy and paste this link in your browser:

<https://amzn.to/2K6yali>

Enter, then click on the book and scroll down to **'Review this product'**. Click **'Write a customer review'**

A Peaceful Day

Returning to the village on the way back from his regular morning cycle ride, Alfie Mynn had a strange feeling, as he turned off the canal road and pedalled leisurely through the village. When his stomach started churning for no apparent reason, it was usually a sign of something untoward brewing. Eight in the morning is not early, especially in the small farming communities of Thailand. Most folk were up by five-thirty, before the sun rose. But today was Sunday, and workers were not rushing to work in the nearby factories. Even so, the more than usual quiet was eerie.

It took an unusual occurrence to disrupt the tranquillity of the picturesque landscape and peaceful communities of North Thailand's villages. Alfie was past middle-age, but he was fit, because every day he walked across the farms and along the river bank, or he pedalled through the adjoining villages on his way to the golf club. On weekdays he waved to the school kids as they played around the shelter in the centre of the village. They waited there for the bus to pick them up and take them to a nearby village. The old school in the temple grounds, they used

to attend, was closed last month, so they had to go to the one across the main highway. It wasn't far, about four kilometres, and they had fun on the bus before the more serious matter of school began.

The two old ladies who waved and shouted to Alfie as he rode by earlier were still busy at the food stall in the adjoining village. Thais do that without subtlety or a hint of shyness. They begged him to stop and eat the food they cooked early and sold on the roadside. Trade was good, so it didn't bother them that he rode on, at the same time waving back at them. People didn't cook for themselves if they worked outside the village. They were up before sunrise, and it was easier to grab a takeaway *khanom jin* or *kapow moo sab* on their way to work. At twenty-five or thirty Baht, it was much cheaper too, and still the old ladies made good money from their efforts. Their husbands, who were working the family farm, never saw how busy the food stall was, and never saw the money their wives made. If they found out, sales of whiskey in the village would have gone through the roof.

Alfie pedalled up the incline out of the last village and onto the canal road, which took him to the Golf Club where he greeted the gateman in his usual cheery way.

"Sawasdee krupp."

"Sawasdee krupp. Sabaidee mai krupp?" the gateman called back.

"Sabaidee, khob khun krupp."

He parked his bike, stretched and breathed in the fresh morning air, before strolling along the path leading to the sixth tee. The morning sun broke through the trees which lined the fairway, and a foursome was just replacing the flag in the hole on the fifth green. Alfie stopped to greet them before turning his

attention to the pretty young lady who ran the little drinks café. One of the staff from the clubhouse drove her there in a golf buggy, at the same time every morning to open up. Alfie bought a coke, and sat with her on the wall chatting, as the foursome tee'd off. When they had gone Alfie paid for his drink, said goodbye and walked back to the gatehouse.

It wasn't far from home, about twelve kilometres round trip, but it was an invigorating ride with no hills and few inclines. Most days he did it in forty-five minutes. Occasionally he needed longer when his legs felt more like a creaky eighty-five-year old's or he didn't get such a good night's sleep.

A Vicious Assault

There wasn't a soul in the high street as he rode through the village. He saw no walkers, no cyclists, no motor-bikes, trucks or cars, no children, and no shops were open. It was like a ghost town in a Western movie, without the tumbleweed. Has a plague hit our little village in the night? I know it's Sunday, but this is very odd.

A hundred metres up ahead, a delivery truck was parked outside Joy's pub and general store. He couldn't see anyone, and all was quiet. He sensed a lull preceding imminent danger. A chilling scream broke the eerie silence, followed by a fearsome volley of abuse, as a man's body sailed out from behind the truck. He landed on his shoulder, and his head bounced on the concrete road. With a groan he rolled onto his back, taking the weight off his shoulder. But he could barely move, as blood gushed from the head wound caused by the impact and his nose being flattened against his face. He was badly hurt and not in a condition to render harm to anyone. Yet, in an instant, another man ran after the flying body, kicking it, shouting obscenities and gesticulating wildly. It happened in a split second, and

there had to be a build-up, which Alfie didn't see or hear, and no-one else did either. Where was Joy? Where was the delivery man?

One thing Alfie had learned during his time in Thailand, was – do not to get involved in other people's business – particularly when it involves a level of violence such as this. He was not cut out for this kind of stuff. As he rode past the truck, the assailant stared manically into his eyes, as though he was taking a mental snapshot of the intruder. Alfie was scared, and myriad thoughts raced through his mind, as he continued home on auto-pilot. He fell off his bike in the driveway and left it there, while he staggered up the steps. Then he collapsed into his bamboo hammock on the veranda, as Pong rushed out of the house when she heard the noise.

“What's wrong, what happened, tee-rag?”

He caught his breath and tried to explain what he had just witnessed.

“Never have I seen such anger and aggression as I saw in that man's wild staring eyes.”

“Do you know him?”

“No.”

“What did he look like?”

“I can't say, but if I see him again, or just his photograph, I will definitely recognise him. I could never forget those manic eyes and his wild bushy hair.”

The image of the man, who stood like a triumphant gladiator, over his defeated opponent was etched in Alfie's mind. He tried to imagine what evil thoughts and emotions could enter a person's head, that would induce them to inflict such injury on a fellow human, but he couldn't. It was no accident or spur of the moment flare-up. Of that Alfie was certain.

A malaise in modern society had made us almost immune to similar incidents in the world's inner cities, but when it surfaced in Alfie's peaceful farming village, it stunned everyone. If the victim was dead, or he died as a result of the assault, the first question would surely be, was it premeditated murder?

The whole village was in shock, but the bizarre events that followed shocked Alfie more.

The Only Witness

Alfie only saw the end the fight, when a body flew into the road. And he was the only person who could give eyewitness evidence except for the victim and the perpetrator. The former was barely conscious by the time Alfie rode past, and the perpetrator was hardly likely to talk, even if the police found him. I am the only witness so that won't happen unless I come forward, Alfie thought, shivering from fear not cold. It was 30°C. He assumed the attacker would disappear at once after he rode past the scene. And he prayed the victim would recover, once someone, braver than him, scraped him off the road and took him to hospital. Because if he didn't, there was only one person who could identify the assailant. Alfie was the only white person in the village, and the assailant had stared into his eyes as he rode past.

In a quandary he waited, biding his time. He kept his trap shut and listened to see what may happen. He threatened to sew Pong's lips together if she breathed a word to anyone. Her job was to play amateur sleuth, tap the village grapevine and bring the information back to Alfie for processing. What a nightmare;

one he could never have dreamt would happen, when he moved to the village.

Pong had no choice but to wait. As far as anyone was concerned, she didn't know anything, so she couldn't ask any questions, as it would raise suspicion. She got the first news at lunchtime, from her next-door neighbour who came to visit.

"Did you hear what happened outside Joy's?"

"No. What happened?"

It can take a long time in Thailand, but within ten minutes Pong got the first version of events and a promise to keep her posted on developments. As soon as Pum had gone, Pong went outside.

"Alfie, come here," she called to him in the garden. "They say Joy saw nothing because she was out the back of the shop, stacking beer crates. And the delivery man was with her shovelling ice into the freezer. When she heard the noise, she ran outside and found a man lying in the road behind the delivery truck. He was badly injured but still breathing."

"Did she call the police?"

"No. She thought they would take too long, so she called the emergency paramedics, and they arrived within ten minutes. She told them there had been an accident. He was alive, and they rushed him to hospital. That's all the news I have so far."

"What about the police?"

"I asked that too, but Joy didn't call the police."

"I know she didn't call the police first. Did she call them later? Did the paramedics call the police?"

"I don't know. I think the paramedics just took him away as fast as possible, to save his life."

"If they don't, the police will be over the village like a smallpox outbreak. Because the doctors at the hospital will know it

wasn't an accident and they must inform the police."

It was hot so they went into the house to cool off. Alfie opened a large bottle of Chang beer, something he never did until six o'clock. Pong was making Som tum with moo grob and sticky rice, which she served just as he was opening bottle number two. As the sun went down, they ate and drank together in the sala at the back of the house. The colourful sunset faded and the evening cooled off as Alfie's stock of beer disappeared and his depressed state worsened.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to shout at you. I suppose Joy must have been scared."

"I understand. I can see the whole thing has shocked you. You must stay here until it blows over."

Grapevine

Alfie became more nervous with each passing day, as he waited for Pong to bring news from the village grapevine. He wanted to tell the police or the village mayor he was there but knew enough about Thai culture to be wary. How could he explain, so they would understand, what he saw and why he didn't stop? He wasn't going to get involved in other people's business and expose himself, without making damn sure he was in no danger.

When Pong came back from shopping she turned her mobile off and said,

“Listen to this Alfie. The injured man is Bia. He has brain damage, is in a coma, and in intensive care on life support. He is brain dead, but they won't turn off the life support because there's another funeral in the village this week, so they have to wait.”

Funerals lasted from three to five days and cost up to one hundred thousand Baht. They burn the body on the last day, following several days of visitors coming to the house of the deceased where they meet, talk and eat. They were big events,

and in a village of seven hundred people, Alfie was amazed at how many funerals there were, yet so few births. Old people die and too many men between forty and sixty kill themselves with whiskey laos-khao, the local rice brew, which at ninety baht a bottle is too affordable, even to the poor.

When Alfie recovered from the shock and processed the startling news Pong had brought, he asked,

“Did I hear you right? They won’t let him die until they finish the other funeral. He has to wait his turn?”

“Yes. That’s right.”

“Is there more I should know?”

“They arrested the killer, but they let him go, because the two families got together, and Bia’s family agreed not to press charges as long as the man who killed him pays for the funeral.”

There were very few occasions in his life when Alfie wished he’d been a bus conductor, lived in the same house all his life, retired on a measly pension, and sat by the fire reading books about people who travelled and had amazing adventures in tropical countries. This was one of them. He never drank hard-stuff but he desperately needed a stiff one right then.

“You can’t be serious.”

“I can.”

“This is hard to believe. Nobody saw a thing except me, and nobody knows I was there. Bia is in a coma and can’t speak to anyone. Is that correct?”

“That’s right.”

“How did the police know who to arrest, then?”

“I don’t know.”

“Of course, you don’t, because what you heard is bullshit. Are you sure you haven’t missed something?”

“No, but I do know the killer. His name is Tum, and he is a

drug dealer.”

“I see. And I suppose Bia bought drugs from him and owes him money?”

“Something like that. Yes.”

“Do you know how much?”

“Five hundred Baht.”

It wasn't funny, but so ridiculous Alfie couldn't help himself. His laughter was infectious, and Pong laughed with him as the tragicomedy unfolded.

“Five hundred Baht! He killed a man over a case of beer?”

“Looks like it. I've never seen anything like it before.”

“I'm sure you haven't. I suppose Tum just gave himself up like a good citizen, and there was no need for the police to interview anyone?”

“I don't know about that, but I'm sure I'll find out more soon.”

“Well, I won't be saying or doing anything, that's for sure. When do you think they'll turn the life support off so we can enjoy another action-packed funeral party?”

“Wait and see.”

Dead Man Walking

Alfie didn't think too much about it after he questioned his own sanity and concluded he was the only one in the village who was normal. He kept out the way, staying at home pottering in the garden and writing. Five days later he walked up the lane to the village centre passing the scene of the crime at Joy's shop and bar on the way. The blood must have drained from his face, because he came over dizzy when he saw the killer sitting alone at the counter, drinking whiskey laos-khao, as brazen as you like. Bia's blood was still on the road, now dried and black. Alfie kept walking, wobbling from the dizziness, and took a left turn, a short-cut back home. When he reached the house, Pong asked him why his face was red and why he was back so soon?

"It's either anger or rising blood pressure. I'm not sure."

Alfie left it at that and sat alone under the shade of a lam-yai tree. Pong joined him after she thought he'd had enough time to himself. He told her what he'd seen.

"I don't understand everything about Thailand, and I probably never will. But this has stopped making sense to me."

“It doesn’t make sense to me either,” she said.

...

A week passed with no more news.

“When is the funeral?”

“I don’t know. The news has stopped.”

“Surely, they’ve turned the life support off by now,” Alfie said.

Nothing had happened. He didn’t ask Pong again because she would have told him if she had any news. Then another week passed and still nothing.

“I think you must ask some more questions, Pong. This is strange.”

Next evening Pong came home with news which floored Alfie but didn’t faze her in the least.

“Bia has come home from the hospital, but he won’t be back at work for another week.”

“The dead man is walking then?”

“I don’t know if he’s walking, but he’s home.”

“And Tum? I suppose he’s on a world cruise.”

“No. They have locked him up for drug dealing.”

“Drug dealing. Not murder? Sorry, I forgot, Bia’s not dead anymore. How about actual bodily harm or grievous bodily harm?”

“Just drug dealing. Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you.”

“Something important?”

“Yes. Tum’s family paid Bia’s family thirty thousand Baht for the funeral while Bia was on life support.”

“That was nice of them. Did they take him a bunch of bananas when they visited him in hospital?”

“They didn’t go to see him in hospital.”

“Really? That explains a lot.”

Sleuth

Alfie was sure he made the right decision to keep his mouth shut and withhold evidence. There were too many unanswered questions and the police didn't interview anyone in the village. As soon as he heard Joy didn't call the police, yet they made an arrest without eyewitness evidence, he knew something was not right.

Why didn't Joy call the police?

Was is it reasonable to assume that she was too scared? There was every chance of that and Alfie thought so. Tum wasn't delivering to the shop and she must have served him a drink, unless he helped himself. In which case she knew he was there. Neither Tum nor Bia was part of the truck delivery crew, so they must have been in the shop together, at the same time. It's difficult to imagine Joy was unaware of either of them even if she was working at the back of the shop. Did she think she had no responsibility to the police, and the paramedics would deal with the police from hospital?

Why didn't the police interview joy?

She must have been the first person on their list. He couldn't

work out why the police didn't interview her. Maybe they did or maybe they knew the history between the men, put two and two together and came up with four. Then realised it wasn't the right answer. Whatever, Joy was tight-lipped. Why?

Was Bia on life support?

Of course not. That wasn't difficult to work out. Assuming Tum's family never went to the hospital and didn't check, it would have been easy to hoodwink them into thinking he was brain dead. Thirty thousand baht to avoid a murder indictment was cheap. Bia's family must have known he owed Tum money, so they agreed to say nothing in exchange for thirty thousand baht, by tricking them into believing Bia was on life support.

What evidence did the police have to arrest Tum when there were no witnesses, or the only witness nobody knew existed?

Someone must have told them Tum was in the shop. Either Joy or the delivery man in the back, putting ice in the freezer. There was no one there when Alfie passed, except two men fighting. But the obvious person to have told them was Bia when he regained consciousness.

By thinking laterally, Alfie concluded that it worked out well for all concerned.

Bia took a nasty pasting just because he owed Tum five hundred baht for drugs. That wasn't good for the village. If everyone in the village was beaten half to death because of a five-hundred-baht debt, most of the community would have been in intensive care. With the other half in prison. But Bia could pay Tum back out of the thirty thousand baht his family got from Tum's family. Tum avoided a murder wrap, and the police, who had been trying to nail him for ages for drug offences, got their man. Everyone was happy.

Alfie had learned not to believe everything he was told –

especially the facts.

“Village life in Thailand is far too clever for a simple farang like me. Goodnight Pong.”

“Goodnight Alfie.”

Epilogue

I hope you enjoyed Alfie's little escapade. If you did you may like the first novel in the - Alfie Goes to Thailand - series.

POST-IT NOTES and Empty Wine Bottles.

Here's the first Chapter.

Cape Town to Kuala Lumpur.

'Good morning, I'm Bonzo Waddington, and this is The Voice of Reason, your morning chat show on channel sixty-nine. The channel that knocks your socks off and sends you into raptures of ecstasy.'

What an idiot. It had to be the biggest load of crap ever created by America, worse than Fox News and McDonald's. They broadcast it before anybody was up in the morning, and it still topped the ratings. Then they replayed it after work, so people could listen in their cars going home. I just didn't get it. Thank God I didn't have to listen to it for another four months. Come to think of it, why did I listen to it anyway? If that shit could top the ratings, Donald Trump could become America's

next president. Imagine that. What could be more odious than a narcissist consumed with hatred and envy?

It was getting dark. The intercom buzzer was louder than a machine gun, when I stood next to it. I keep threatening to move it, just haven't got round to it. Fuck, I shouted, spraying a mouthful of rooibos tea all over the kitchen, as my nerves took control of my hands.

"Yes?" I shouted again.

"Taxi," came the chirpy reply.

"You're early."

"Sorry, Sir. I'll wait in the car."

He was lucky he was ten minutes early, not ten minutes late. Then he would have got both barrels, the mood I was in. I wasn't good after dark since I'd been living alone, or when I had a plane to catch. He dumped my bags in the boot, and climbed in the back seat, slamming the door behind me.

"Bad day, Sir?"

"Not really."

"No problem, Sir. You can't be too careful round here, day or night."

"You can drop the Sir. I'm Alfie."

"Sorry. It's a habit."

"And the sorry?"

"Habit too."

"I see there was another Black taxi driver shot on Saturday at Bayside."

"It's getting bad. The private taxi okes like me are scared now."

"I've got good security, but I worry sometimes, now the Dunoon township is mushrooming."

"I understand, and you're leaving your house for a while?"

“I am, but Armed Response will take care, I hope.”

“They’re pretty good. I’ll do my best to get you to the airport safely.”

“Your best?”

“Relax.”

“I’ll try.”

I was not in the mood for small talk, or grovellers. But I did as he suggested, sat back in silence and breathed slowly, hoping it would help me relax. It seemed the yoga and meditation classes were effecting my bank balance more than my state of mind. We made our way through Milnerton and picked up the N2 at Mowbray. Heading across the Cape Flats we passed the ghettos of Langa and Bonteheuwel without alarm, but I didn’t relax until we swept past the roadside shacks, and turned off the highway, down the airport approach road. I don’t know what it was, but after years of driving through the Cape Flats, I felt less safe than I ever did. It was a sad feeling, and sad to think, if things went well in Thailand, I may leave Cape Town for good.

If you liked the first chapter you may like the book. Check out the release date and how to get your copy at:

<https://www.jameskingbooks.com>

Or: <https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B00EXAZIE6>

Afterword

Reviews are essential to attract new readers to a book. Honest reviews help bring books to the attention of other readers. If you enjoyed this book, I would appreciate it if you could help others by taking a few minutes of your time and leave a review.

Here's how:

Copy and paste this link in your browser:

<https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B00EXAZIE6>

Enter, then click on the book and scroll down to **'Review this product'**.

Click **'Write a customer review'**



About the Author

James King is a retired English businessman who lived in South Africa for eighteen years after apartheid was dismantled. In 2008 he moved to Thailand. His natural instinct is to delve into the culture and lives of the people, wherever he lives.

The Author has travelled to more than twenty countries, has mixed with politicians, sports stars, music impresarios, business tycoons, murderers, fraudsters, and even hired assassins. Each of them has provided rare material which he uses to add colour to his writing.

James' niche is in literary, thriller and romantic suspense drama. His writing is character driven and emphasises story with a literary bent.

His poetry drifts from the romantic to a fear for the survival of our world and the darkness of death. Inspired by music, film, and literature, Shakespeare, Dickens, Hesse, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan, amongst others, have all had a profound influence on his writing at some point.

Learn more about James and his work at <https://www.jameskingbooks.com>

You can connect with me on:

 <https://www.jameskingbooks.com>

 <https://twitter.com/jamoroki>

 <https://www.facebook.com/jamoroki>

 <https://amzn.to/2K6yali>

 <https://www.pinterest.com/jimking9406417>

Subscribe to my newsletter:

 <https://www.jamoroki.com>

Also by James King

The following books are scheduled to be published -2019 and 2020

ALFIE GOES TO THAILAND

The Only Witness

Post-it Notes

House of Vipers

Catcher of Dreams

THE KENRIGHT CHRONICLES

Picton Street

Enemies of Justice

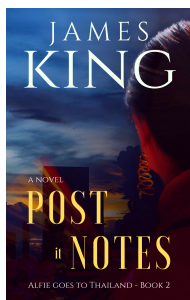
The Great Art Swindle

Red Roulette

The Wrong Verdict

The Secret of Preah Khan

To check on availability and titles awaiting publication, learn more about the author and get his books, Click or copy and paste the following link into your browser. <https://www.jameskingbooks.com>



POST-IT NOTES

A different attitude, a strange culture, and a new woman, bring hope and opportunity.

But they also bring danger, as Alfie jumps straight back into the fire.

Smarting from an acrimonious divorce, Alfie goes to a place where no one knows him, and attempts to rebuild his life.

The empty wine bottles and a few post-it notes stuck on the fridge door were constant reminders of a period Alfie wished he could forget. But he couldn't resist a challenge, even if it had the potential to destroy him.

Thailand wouldn't change the past or the global financial crisis that threatened his business back in Cape Town, but it did change his thinking, and he vowed to change the way he dealt with adversity in future.

It's amazing what you can cram into 100 days if you don't waste a minute of it. And Alfie didn't.

The first ALFIE GOES TO THAILAND novel – finds Alfie piecing his life together, working out why he is depressed, after being set free by his third wife. If you like thought-provoking drama, psychological romance, and complex characters, then you'll love the tropical sauna and wry humour of POST-IT NOTES.

