



Curtin Express

Mike Dixon

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He's in England but he's planning to return to Australia. He wants you to go back too. That's why he needs the suitcase. There are some papers in it. He has to have them if he's going to take you with him.

Doris Johnson gladly hands over the suitcase when David Paget tells her of his Uncle Charlie's request. Sue Lynne had instructed him to fly to Hong Kong, get the suitcase and take it to Australia. When he reaches his hotel, he opens the suitcase. Amidst the papers which he divides into several packages, David finds sexually explicit photographs and a white powder that triggers his allergies. He recognizes a younger Doris in some of the pictures.

The next thing he knows, he's home in Canberra, Australia, but can't remember where he mailed the suitcase's contents. Only one package arrived. Meanwhile, Humphrey Hansen, a professor turned Narcotics Bureau employee, is instructed to examine parcels that were intercepted by the bureau when they arrived in Sydney from Hong Kong.

David and Humphrey share a connection that goes back to their families. Humphrey's mother worked for David's grandfather as an intelligence agent. Humphrey is again brought into David's world when David asks him to translate some Chinese documents. He unexpectedly meets his fellow worker, undercover agent Janet Pulnitz, when he arrives to examine the papers.

After a disastrous meeting with his family, David and Tim, his business partner, skedaddle out of town to avoid the authorities.

Through this adventure tale, Mike Dixon offers the reader a taste of Australian history and geography, political intrigue, assassins, and blackmail. With non-stop action, he mixes historical fact with a fictional race to find gold hidden since WWII.

Dixon's carefully-crafted plot keeps the reader guessing until the final pages. Neither David, Humphrey, Janet, their cohorts, or the reader understands the depth of corruption and greed that overcomes family members, co-workers, or government agents. The author capably develops his characters and maintains both consistency and credibility.

For those fascinated by Australia's wilderness and geographical diversity, the story takes readers north to the Coral Sea and the Torres Strait. David finally gets to explore the Great Barrier Reef as they search for the buried treasure.

He [David] descended into a different world...On the terraces below, giant clams nestled between huge brain corals. David saw them close their shells as his shadow passed over the light-sensitive spots on their flesh...A patch of staghorn caught his eye...

Dixon allows the reader to enjoy the book on different levels; from simple adventure to factual accounts of history. The Curtin Express, authorized by WWII Prime Minister John Joseph Curtin, provided free train rides to girls, called Curtin Girls, who were willing to go north to visit war-weary Allied soldiers.

At any level, this is a book that entertains.

PAT MCGRATH AVERY (March 17, 2011)

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