



Kith & Kin: The boy with a penchant for sitting in corners.

Jack Currie

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A 'Coming of Age' novel about a 15 year old boy looking back on the last ten years of his life. He recounts his experiences, happy and unhappy, and attempts to analyse how his experiences have shaped the person he is now. From being an outsider, he learns to appreciate the value of family and kinship.

The story begins with a third-person narrative, in which we learn about Nik Baird's mixed-race family background. This narrative takes Nik to age 5, a time when he is bitterly unhappy. He considers himself a loner and maps the reasons why.

A first-person narrative begins at age 7 when he discovers his extended family and forges strong ties with Indian family members after spending a summer holiday with them in London. He recognises that Indian culture, with its focus on family values, has many attractions for him.

A major trauma enters Nik's life when his mother contracts cancer and nearly dies. This experience acts as a catalyst to bring the family closer together and all is well for a while. The bond between Nik and his mother is cemented by the holiday of a lifetime to Australia and India after which Nik settles into a happy family routine, though he remains an outsider at school.

At school, Nik establishes a relationship with a girl called Suzie who has similar problems and experiences to his own. However, Nik is disillusioned with his parents when they show disapproval of his relationship with Suzie and he faces troubled times again. Now about fifteen years old, he goes off the rails and is forced into a move to a new school as a corrective measure.

Trauma again when Nik's Mum's cancer recurs with devastating consequences. Mum refuses treatment, recognising that she is facing death and not wishing to endure the pain of chemotherapy. After a last family holiday together, she dies. The family, both immediate and extended, are now close in their shared grief. However, there is more trouble for Nik when he and his father drift apart due to his father's inability to cope with his loss. Dad turns to alcohol as a way of coping but it has unfortunate consequences for him, his business and his relationship with Nik. Nik becomes wayward at school experimenting with drugs. The future begins to look grim.

Nik and Suzie decide to run away together and escape their miserable lives. Their adventure on the run is the catalyst that eventually brings the families together again and everyone realises that a close family bond is all that really matters. The novel ends on a very positive note and Nik looks forward to a happy future

Themes addressed in novel:

Growing up. Parent/child relationships. Boy/Girl relationships. Unhappiness. Loneliness. Ethnicity. Race relations. Childhood. Adolescence. Rebellion. Alcohol/drug abuse. Illness, death and bereavement. Importance of the family.

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