



And so I'm in India. Kolkata, to be exact, although many of you will know it better as *Calcutta*. It's in the North East of India. And I'm living it up like a millionaire. If a slightly reluctant, half embarrassed one, at that.

You see, I'm not used to *opulence*. God help me if I suddenly sell a multi-book or movie deal. Kolkata is very much split into the 'haves' and 'have-nots', with shanty towns next to glass and chrome buildings, with Internet whizz kids standing on buses next to people who don't even know what a PC is. India is undergoing rapid social and economic change. and it shows everywhere, like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon while the other cocoons around it are yet to open.

That said, I have *never* seen such a sense of community. Ever.

And because of this, I'm being put up at the ITC Sonar hotel, a five star millionaire's playground, where security stop all cars entering and check beneath the bonnet and hood for explosives, where you walk through a metal detector to enter the hotel itself and where security stands at every corner. I have never been so safe. But then, what else do you expect from the guy who wrote *Batman Returns*.

I know, I didn't - but at least one of the Kolkata papers seems to think that I did, and the talk I did last night started with '*You've read his books - you've seen his movies*', so I do wonder exactly how many of the audience last night actually knew me for who I was and how many hoped that Christian Bale would pop by.

Of course, he could have been there for all I knew, as Jetlag had really kicked in by that point - I arrived at Kolkata airport at 4pm, was whisked through security with celebrity writer chum [Jake Arnott](#)

(also doing talks here), picked up by a car and brought to the hotel by 5pm where the lovely Dr Debanjan Chakrabarti awaited. I had a quick twenty minutes to freshen up and then we were off to

Starmark

, a bookstore in South Kolkata, very much in the

Barnes & Noble

mode - where I had close to a hundred people waiting - most likely for 'that Batman guy'. There were more press cameras, TV crews and journalists here than I've pretty much had in total all my comics career, and everything I did turned into photo opportunities. I picked up a

Midnight Kiss

- click. I spoke about

Dracula

- click.

It was incredibly surreal, even more so considering the fact that I had pretty much flown from London straight here with about two hours sleep in thirty hours, but I think I weathered the storm, and I was told afterwards that because of my talk, today's lecture has almost doubled in figures. Which is wonderful. After that I met back with Jake at a swanky floating hotel called the 'Floatel' which apparently isn't really a floating hotel - no, I don't understand either - where a British Council reception was held for us, where we also met many of the other people we'll be seeing along the journey we're both taking over the next few days.

I had my first food in thirty hours, never being a fan of airline food, and of course it was incredibly hot curry...

I did get to see some of night time Kolkata though. I have no earthly idea, however how there isn't a car accident every ten minutes. These guys are *crazy*.

Right. Off to be a University lecturer. Do I need a tweed jacket for this, or what?