

PARANORMAL SINGAPORE
VOLUME 2

Welcome to my world, dear friends.

As I sit in the black corner of the *kopitiam*, looking out into your world, I hunger to invite you to join me.

Do you feel my eyes watching you from the deepest shadows of day, and from the hollow darkness of the ghostly night? Do you sense me sitting on that empty stool beside you, the one that draws your darting eye? And, yes, that flickering sliver of blackness that slides through the half-light among the tables and chairs and sends a shiver down your spine, it is I.

For those who dare, I invite you into my black world. Sit at my table and we'll share a *kopi* and a tale or two.

Then we'll play a little game.

But beware—if you lose, you will be doomed to stay with me in the shadows of the *kopitiam* forever.

Happy reading!

Andrew Lim

BOOKS IN THIS SERIES

Paranormal Singapore
Volume 1

Paranormal Singapore
Volume 2

**PARANORMAL
SINGAPORE**
TALES FROM THE KOPPTIAM

VOLUME 2

Andrew Lim



monsoonbooks

Published in 2008
by Monsoon Books Pte Ltd
52 Telok Blangah Road
#03-05 Telok Blangah House
Singapore 098829
www.monsoonbooks.com.sg

ISBN: 978-981-05-9687-3

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Printed in Singapore

12 11 10 09 08

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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Jasmine house

I was a teacher in one of Singapore's oldest girls-only boarding schools. I had been working there for only two months when this incident took place. Let me say right from the start that I am not a superstitious person. I was born in England and had a strict Church of England upbringing. The idea of ghosts was not entertained, not at my church or in my family.

I first came to Singapore in 1984. I had met my husband, George, two years earlier in the United Kingdom where I had been teaching. He was an officer in the Singapore Armed Forces and I moved to Singapore to be with him. After we were married I took a job at the school teaching geography and maths. I thoroughly enjoyed my students. They were, for the most part, bright, attentive and eager to learn. It was quite refreshing compared to my experience in England. The school itself was a large complex with many well-designed buildings. It was a pleasant place to work.

As was my way, I often stayed after class to prepare for the next day. Because George was frequently stationed elsewhere, I sometimes stayed at the school, working late so as to avoid going home to an empty apartment.

One evening I was working particularly late. It was just after 10 pm when I left my second-floor office and started towards the stairwell. I didn't see the girl until she was also near the stairwell. She gave me quite a shock as I wasn't expecting anyone else to still be there, except for the cleaning staff. I was so busy trying to juggle a stack of books that by the time I looked up, the girl was already walking ahead of me. She was heading towards the stairs and I could clearly see her under the ceiling lights.

Apart from the fact that she was there at that hour, what struck me as unusual was the uniform she was wearing. The colours were right but the style was all wrong. For a start, the skirt was too long, touching the floor as she walked. It certainly wasn't the shorter, more modern version that I was used to. Her blouse—even though I could only see the back—was also the wrong style and her hair was pinned up in an old-fashioned bun.

'Hello?' I called out. She stopped and turned. I continued walking towards her.

'Hello,' she replied. She was Chinese, quite pretty and I guessed about ten or eleven years old.

'Are you lost?' I asked, thinking perhaps that she was new and didn't know her way around. I wondered if her uniform had been handed down from her sister, or even her mother.

'I think so,' she said.

'What on earth are you doing here at this time of night? What house are you in?'

'Jasmine,' she replied. I stopped. The houses we had were not named after flowers.

'We don't have a house called Jasmine,' I replied.

'Oh,' the girl muttered, her face full of disappointment.

'Come downstairs with me and we'll sort this out.'

'I'm lost,' she said—and vanished right in front of me.

I was dumbfounded, fixed to the spot. Could this be a practical joke? Surely not. As I waited for the pranksters to show themselves, nothing happened. I was alone.

Suddenly I heard a noise on the stairs and two cleaners appeared. They were talking and laughing. I remember clearly that one carried a bucket and mop, the other a wide broom.

'Did you see a girl on the stairs?' I asked them.

'No,' one of the cleaners replied. 'No one. I think we are the only people in the building.'

I thanked them and promptly left, confused and a little fearful at what I had seen. On my drive home I went over and over it in mind. Had I really just seen a ghost? Or was I working too hard and needed a rest?

That night I found it difficult to sleep. I kept seeing the face of the girl and the terrible disappointment on her face.

The next day I decided not to mention my little interlude to the other staff members. Instead I went to the library during my lunch hour and pulled out the school yearbooks. I kept flicking through until I found pictures of students wearing uniforms that

matched the one I had seen the girl wearing. The books were dated from 1900 to 1922, and yes, the boarding houses back then all bore the names of flowers: Jasmine, Rose, Tulip and Orchid.

I finished my lessons for the day and returned to the library. I pulled out the relevant yearbooks and studied the students' photographs. Admittedly they were mainly group photographs, small and faded with time, but after a few hours I did manage to narrow my search down to two girls who looked similar to the girl I'd seen in the corridor: one from 1911 and the other from 1919.

The girls' names were Milly Yang and Jenny Tan. Then I went back through other class lists and found that Milly Yang had been sixteen and a prefect. A close up revealed she was not the girl I'd seen. That left Jenny Tan.

Despite searching extensively, I could only find Jenny Tan's name up until the age of ten. After that she no longer featured in the yearbooks, neither by name nor in any of the group photographs.

Suddenly realising that I'd been playing detective for quite a number of hours, I hurriedly went back to my classroom to collect my things to go home. The clock on the wall showed 10 pm. I wondered if I would see the girl again, but there was no one there except for the cleaners. I was a little disappointed. I really had wanted to meet the girl again and promised myself that this time I would ask her what her name was.

I vowed that the following day I would probe further to see whether Jenny Tan had moved away or something more sinister had happened to her in 1919.

Unfortunately, the next morning I awoke with a terrible migraine and it was several days before I could return to school. The absent days meant that I was behind with the curriculum and with exams looming, my time was taken up with teaching. The mystery of Jenny Tan had to be put on hold, and after a few weeks I forgot all about the ghost in the corridor.

It was about a month later when I met the girl again. As before, it was just after 10 pm when I closed the door to my office. I was heading down the corridor towards the stairs when she suddenly appeared about ten feet or so in front of me.

I froze, but after a few moments managed to summon enough courage to speak.

'Jenny?' I called. The figure stopped and turned, just as she had done the first time.

'Yes?' Her voice was weak and barely audible.

'You're lost, aren't you?'

'Yes.' She nodded. 'I am lost. Do you know where Jasmine House is?'

'It has a different name now,' I replied.

'Oh, I didn't know that.'

‘Would you like to go there?’ I asked, not having the faintest idea what I would do next. After all, I had to concede that I was talking to a ghost and there was no handbook on how it should be done.

‘One day,’ she uttered sadly. Then she was gone.

The next morning I arrived at school early and went straight to the library. There I went to the section where school records were kept and found the roll for 1919. After searching for a short while, I found it. There, in beautiful copperplate script, were the words: JENNY TAN, JASMINE HOUSE, DECEASED.

‘Poor Jenny,’ I whispered to myself. I wondered how she’d died and why she was still haunting the school, looking for her Jasmine House.

At mid-morning break in the staff room I told those who were there what had taken place. Several scoffed openly, but others just nodded. One teacher, Ming, had been at the school for almost twenty-five years.

‘I’ve seen her several times,’ she told me and, as soon as she’d said it, another teacher admitted and said she’d seen something too. It turned out that five teachers in all had seen Jenny Tan’s ghost. I was sure there were others who had chosen to remain silent.

‘Why has no one said it out loud?’ I wanted to know.

‘Because who’d believe us and besides, we all need our jobs,’

Ming replied. ‘Running around saying there’s a ghost on campus isn’t exactly conducive to winning a promotion.’

So there it was. I hadn’t been the only one to see the ghost of Jenny Tan. But despite so many sightings, no one knew how she’d died. There was no record in the school files, and either it hadn’t been noted or someone had removed the reference.

When my husband returned from his next overseas posting, I told him about my experience and he nodded, not the least bit surprised. He came from a very superstitious family. He contacted his friend who had access to police records, and a few days later I was able to tell my colleagues exactly what had happened to poor Jenny Tan.

One night in 1919 Jenny had returned to one of the second-floor classrooms to pick up an assignment book she’d left behind. It was a few minutes after 10 pm. An impoverished labourer had crept into the school grounds, desperate for something to steal. Instead, he’d bumped into Jenny in the second-floor corridor and, panicking, he’d killed the young girl and hidden her body in a cupboard in one of the classrooms. When she wasn’t at the roll call at bedtime, the police had been called. Her body had been found the next day.

The labourer had been seen leaving the building and the scratches on his face pointed to his guilt. He was tried and found guilty. The school, desperate to protect its reputation, denied that

any murder had ever taken place.

After much discussion we decided to write a letter to the principal asking that a ceremony be performed on the second-floor corridor to release Jenny's spirit. Everyone who'd seen the ghost signed his or her name. When presented with the letter, the principal also admitted she'd seen the ghost once.

In August this year the school chaplain performed the ceremony, which was attended by most of the staff of the school. Since then, despite working late on many nights, I have never seen Jenny Tan's ghost again. Hopefully the sad little soul has moved on to her very own Jasmine House.

Fangs

Baby Sara was born a normal baby to adoring parents Tay Ji Hong and his wife Chloe. The only indication that there was something a little different about her was that she was born with a full set of teeth, as her mother discovered the first time she tried to breast-feed. The episode had ended in tears for both mother and child and the situation never improved. When Mrs Tay went for checkups at the mother and baby clinic, doctors were horrified to find lacerations on her breasts as a result of the baby's abnormally sharp teeth.

A bottle-feeding regime was put in place for Baby Sara. Mrs Tay would express her breast milk, bottle it then feed her daughter. Despite the fact that it wasn't an ideal situation, it did provide relief for the mother and natural sustenance for the child.

In the first few months Baby Sara grew dramatically. The nurses at the mother and baby clinic were amazed by her progress and astounded to discover she had started eating solids when she was just six weeks old. At six months Baby Sara could sit upright unaided. Sitting in her high chair in the Tays' kitchen, she would watch her mother preparing food and doing the hundreds of little

chores that running a household, even a small household such as theirs, entailed.

Not one to cry, Baby Sara only made a fuss when she was hungry—which was often. Mrs Tay no longer expressed breast milk, and her child’s appetite meant that formula was needed and in large amounts. Baby Sara devoured carton after carton of tinned baby food as she continued to flourish. The doctors weren’t concerned that she was eating solids at such a young age.

‘Every child has his or her own timetable for every stage of development,’ Sara’s paediatrician explained. ‘Sara is very advanced, but there is no cause for alarm. Just let her grow at her own pace.’

So that is how Mr and Mrs Tay brought up their daughter. Sara would dictate her own regime, at least as far as her eating habits were involved.

When Sara was one year old she was very, very active. She had almost skipped the crawling stage completely and started walking, albeit a little unsteadily. Her proud parents were delighted. Their only concern now was the fact that their daughter’s teeth were still growing—and they didn’t look like baby teeth. They were sharp, almost pointed, and even when Sara closed her mouth, large canines stuck out between her lips.

The paediatric dentist X-rayed the little girl’s jaw and confirmed that they were Sara’s primary teeth. He was reluctant

to perform any corrective surgery until Sara was older.

‘The effects of a general anaesthetic alone could be quite severe, potentially fatal, on a child as young as this,’ he explained. ‘I think we will need to wait until Sara is perhaps five or six years old before we attempt to reshape her teeth.’

So, despite their concern at their daughter’s rather large and not particularly attractive teeth, Mr and Mrs Tay continued to spoil their daughter with love and attention.

When Sara was two she was full of energy and needed watching every second. She wasn’t particularly mischievous but she did have a habit of putting things in her mouth. Most children do, of course, but the problem was that because she had such sharp teeth and powerful jaws, she usually ended up breaking these objects. Sometimes she would snap a pen here, or the handle of a hairbrush there. Sometimes she would bite the heads off bugs or steal food from other people’s plates. Then there was the unfortunate incident involving a caged bird.

The Tays were visiting their good friends, the Long family, in Bedok North when the incident happened. While the adults chatted in the kitchen, Sara and Mrs Long’s daughter Melissa sat playing on the living room floor. A canary perched in a cage that was resting on a low side table near the toddlers.

Suddenly the adults heard a shrill squawking followed by Melissa crying. Alarmed, Mrs Long rushed into the living room.

The door to the birdcage was open and feathers were strewn everywhere. Sara was hiccupping uncontrollably and she had feathers stuck to her lips.

The Tays apologised and bought their friends a new canary. The whole incident was hurriedly forgotten.

When Sara was three her parents enrolled her in a local kindergarten. She enjoyed playing with children her own age, despite the fact that she was much more physically developed than her new friends. However, problems began to surface after only a few weeks. One incident in particular proved catastrophic. One afternoon she and another child were playing in a sand pit while the girls' mothers, who had arrived early to pick them up, chatted nearby. Without the parents realising, the girls began to quarrel over a toy. It was only when little Anna screamed that her mother knew that something was seriously wrong. Running across the playground, Mrs Tay close behind, they arrived at the sand pit before the teacher. Both froze in a state of shock. Baby Anna was sitting in the middle of the sand pit, her face as white as chalk, her mouth and eyes wide open. She was holding her left hand in front of her and her eyes were fixed on the place where her thumb used to be. Instead of healthy, plump thumb there was just a stump. A fountain of crimson blood was gushing from the wound, soaking the little girl's dress.

Mrs Tay looked at Sara, who was sitting next to her playmate.

She too was sprayed with blood from the severed thumb, but she seemed unconcerned as she sat chewing steadily on something in her mouth.

Sara was expelled from the kindergarten.

When Sara was four she was as large as a normal six-year-old girl. She was intelligent but still had abnormally large teeth, which even her parents had to admit were ugly. The incident in the sand pit had caused a considerable stir in the media. The authorities had been involved, of course, and it had been decided that Sara should have limited contact with other children and be supervised at all times. Doctors decided that they would correct her teeth on her fifth birthday.

The family shifted to another part of the island and Sara was home-schooled by her mother. She had little contact with other children. Most parents, who'd heard about the incident in the sand pit, didn't want their children around her. Sara's trademark teeth continued to grow. Now they protruded almost an inch below her upper lip.

Controlling her boisterous four-and-a-half-year-old in a small apartment was proving difficult for Mrs Tay. The stress and strain was starting to affect her marriage so the couple decided that what they really needed was time alone, away from their daughter. Mrs Tay's mother travelled down from Malaysia to take care of her granddaughter while Mr and Mrs Tay took a ten-day vacation in

Bintan. It was close enough for them to be on hand if anything went wrong, but far enough away for them to relax. That was what they hoped, anyway.

Grandma Tay was quite old and had to take a nap every afternoon. The problem was how to occupy Sara during that time. This she managed to solve almost by accident: Sara loved to play Sudoku, her grandmother's favourite game. So every afternoon when it was time for her nap, Grandma Tay bolted the doors to the apartment, locked the windows and retired to her bedroom, taking the keys with her and leaving Sara sitting happily on the couch with a thick book of Sudoku puzzles.

One afternoon Sara was sitting on the couch as usual while her grandmother slept. Her parents had been away about a week. This particular afternoon, however, Grandma Tay had forgotten to shut the front door. Whether the cat wandered inside of its own accord, or Sara went outside looking for it, no one will ever know. What is certain, however, is that when Grandma Tay awoke and went into the kitchen for a glass of water, she was greeted with a horrific sight.

Sara had somehow managed to get a knife from the kitchen cupboard. She had cut the cat's head off and crudely skinned it before sitting cross-legged on the kitchen floor, gnawing the flesh off the poor animal's bones. She was still picking at a leg when her grandmother found her, or so the authorities suspected.

'Ma hasn't called even once. I'm not sure if that is a good thing or not.'

'It's good,' Mr Tay soothed. 'She's raised a family of five boys and two girls. She knows how to manage children and Sara adores her.'

The pair were lying beside the pool, a position that they had occupied religiously every day for the past week. They slept late and relaxed all day before dining at the resort's restaurant and dancing the night away. For the first time in a long time they were happy.

'Just think, in just a few months this nightmare will be over,' Mrs Tay said, reaching out to stroke her husband's cheek. 'Sara will have teeth just like any other girl her age and we can start to live a normal life.'

'I can't wait,' Mr Tay replied, kissing his wife's hand gently.

Mr and Mrs Tay arrived back in Singapore on the ferry and took a taxi to their apartment. When they got out of the taxi they could see that the windows were closed and the curtains drawn, which seemed strange to Mrs Tay. She knew that her mother liked the sun to filter through during the day.

When they tried to unlock the door they couldn't. 'Ma must have slid the bolt across,' Mr Tay said. 'Ma, we're home, open the door.' But there was no immediate response so he began knocking loudly. Still no one answered. Panic rose in the parents and they

began to furiously bang on the door and shout their daughter's name. Suddenly they heard Sara's footsteps behind the door.

'Sara, open the door,' Mr Tay instructed. There was a delay of a minute or so, then the sound of a bolt being slid across. The door opened and there stood Sara, her teeth stained red with blood.

Mrs Tay was the first to enter the apartment and her scream was the loudest. Mr Tay, who was a step or two behind, also screamed. Sara stared at her parents and immediately began crying. She seemed totally bewildered.

There, lying on the floor of the living room, was the body of Grandma Tay—or what was left of it. The coroner later concluded that she had died of a heart attack and not at the hand of Sara. However, whether it had been hunger, being alone in the apartment for a number of days or some other appetite that had driven the youngster to do what she did, the result was the same. Grandma Tay's limbs had been gnawed to the bone. Pieces of skin and flesh surrounded the body. The torso was intact, as was the head.

Today, Sara is in care in Woodbridge Hospital. Her teeth have been fixed but not her mind. The staff at the institution have all been instructed to be careful of her bite, normal teeth or not. When she mingles with other young patients, she has to wear a mask to prevent her biting them.

Mr and Mrs Tay are no longer married. Mrs Tay is also institutionalised, having suffered an enormous mental breakdown. Mr Tay now lives and works in Hong Kong.

He is a devout vegetarian.