

THE STRAITS TIMES

GUILTY

AS CHARGED

CRIMES

THAT HAVE SHAKEN
SINGAPORE SINCE 1965

CONTENTS



1965

THE SUNNY ANG TRIAL



1970

THE CASE OF MIMI WONG



1971

GOLD BAR
MURDERS



1972

THE CASE OF
LIM BAN LIM



1974

THE
TONTINE
KILLING



1975

SWIMMING
TRUNK GANG



1978

MOUNT VERNON
MURDERS



1981

RITUAL
MURDERS



1983

ANDREW
ROAD
MURDERS



1995

NICK LEESON,
ROGUE
TRADER



1996

TOURIST
FROM HELL



1998

ROLEX
MURDER



2001

THE CASE OF
ANTHONY LER



2002

ORCHARD
TOWERS
MURDERS



2004

HIGH-
ROLLING
HUSTLER



2004

HUANG NA'S
MURDER



2005

KALLANG
BODY-PARTS
MURDER



2005

BODY PARTS IN
ORCHAD ROAD



2006

THE ONE-EYED
DRAGON



2006

THE SUNSHINE
EMPIRE



2006

KILLING
OF NONOI



2008

YISHUN
TRIPLE
MURDER



2009

TAXI
MURDER



2015

YAP WENG WAH,
SEX PREDATOR

SINGAPORE has made remarkable progress over the last 50 years to become the city state that is famous for its economic prosperity, social harmony, as well as safety and security.

Our crime rate is one of the lowest in the world today. However, the streets of Singapore in the early years of independence were not quite like what they are today. We were besieged by secret society activities and syndicated crimes involving the rampant use of firearms which gripped the nation in fear.

The safe Singapore we all enjoy living in today is the fruits of our pioneers' labour. Not only did pioneer Singapore Police Force (SPF) officers rise to the occasion time and again to bring criminals to justice, they were also motivated by the collective will of fellow Singaporeans to build a safer Singapore.

This e-book records 25 of the more prominent cases since 1965 and bears testament to the dedication and commitment of SPF officers — past and present — to uphold justice.

As a police officer, I experienced first-hand the amount of hard work and long hours our officers put in to uphold the law and bring criminals to justice. Indeed, it is my privilege and pleasure to work with these elite men and women to keep Singaporeans safe and secure.

Our SPF officers will continue to remain resolute in our mission to make Singapore the safest place in the world.



FOREWORD

Hoong Wee Teck

Commissioner of Police





INTRODUCTION

Melvin Yong

Director,
Public Affairs Department
(Editor's note: Mr Yong is
now with NTUC and a
Tanjong Pagar GRC MP)



BESIDES serving as a veritable record of our success in crime solving, this collection of stories is a reflection of how far we have come to build a safe and secure Singapore as one people.

All the cases featured in this book made headlines and grabbed the attention of our people. Some of these cases also proved to be the catalysts for enhancements to our legislative framework.

The commitment and dedication of our officers to bring criminals to justice are the foundations on which the Singapore Police Force has built an enduring relationship of trust with our community. Many cases were solved with assistance from people from all walks of life. The strong community support is a key motivation and inspiration for our officers, especially when the going gets tough.

Through this book, we hope readers will remember the collective efforts of our pioneer generation to mould Singapore into the safe country we enjoy today. More importantly, it serves to remind us that while Singapore remains a safe city, we have to be vigilant always to prevent and deter crime.

WARNING

VIEWER DISCRETION
ADVISED

Some contents in this e-book may be
disturbing for some individuals

1965

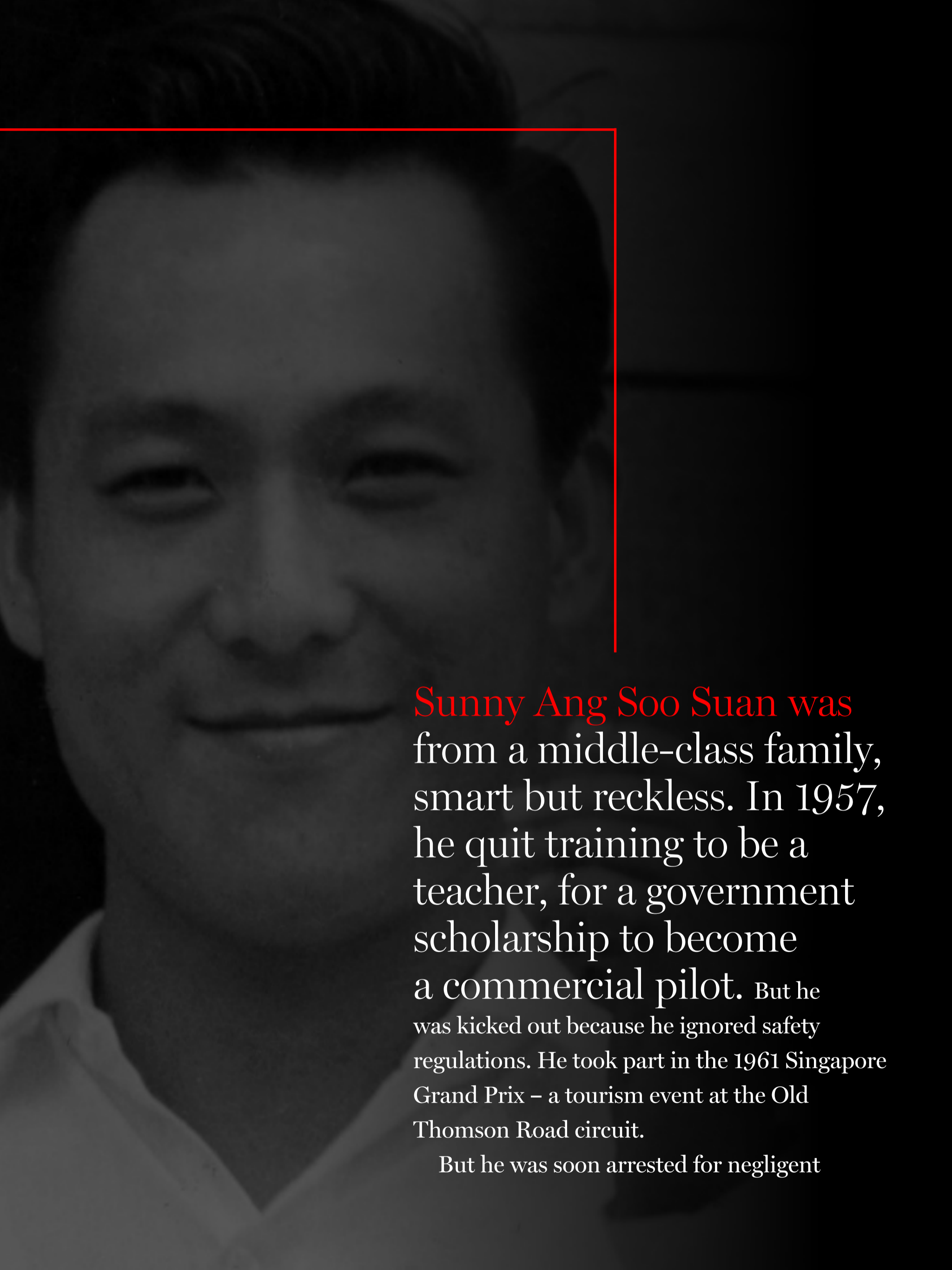
THE

SUNNY

ANG

TRIAL

He thought he had committed the perfect
murder when his girlfriend
disappeared at sea



Sunny Ang Soo Suan was from a middle-class family, smart but reckless. In 1957, he quit training to be a teacher, for a government scholarship to become a commercial pilot. But he was kicked out because he ignored safety regulations. He took part in the 1961 Singapore Grand Prix – a tourism event at the Old Thomson Road circuit.

But he was soon arrested for negligent

driving after killing a pedestrian. Then he was put on probation for trying to burgle in 1962. The same year, he started studying for a law degree, but was made a bankrupt.

Ms Jenny Cheok Cheng Kid was a waitress at Odeon Bar and Restaurant at North Bridge Road, having studied only until Primary 3. She was paid \$90 a month — her main source of income the \$10 she earned each day in tips from customers. She already had two children who lived with a husband whom she married according to Chinese rituals. They later separated.

She and Ang met in 1963, he was 24, she was 22. He was suave and educated, she was naive and simple, and flattered by the attention he gave her. She fell completely under his spell.

On Aug 27, 1963, just a few months after they met, she disappeared during a diving trip near the Sisters' Islands.

All that remained was a single flipper worn by her. It had been severed cleanly at the top and bottom, likely by a sharp instrument such as a knife or razor blade.

An expert witness would later tell the court during Ang's murder trial that the loss of a flipper would have resulted in a diver's loss of equilibrium and affected the person's mobility. Ms Cheok, an inexperienced diver, would have panicked and inevitably drowned in the strong currents swirling around the islands.

Suspicion was cast on Ang, a skilled diver,

KILLER



Sunny Ang Soo Suan killed his 22-year-old girlfriend after taking out a host of insurance policies on her life.
— ST FILE PHOTO

VICTIM



The body of bar waitress Jenny Cheok Cheng Kid was never found after she went missing during a sea dive. — ST FILE PHOTO

who conveniently stood to gain from the insurance policies he began buying for Ms Cheok shortly after they met.

In April 1965, one of Singapore's strangest and most sensational murder trial began — one in which the prosecution's case was based entirely on circumstantial evidence.

Prosecutor Francis T. Seow, in his opening statement, said: “This is an unusual case insofar as Singapore, or for that matter Malaysia, is concerned. This is the first case of its kind to be tried in our courts that there is no body.”

But he insisted that the notion a person could not be charged with murder when the victim's body had not or could not be found, was simply wrong — because that meant crafty killers would be able to get away scot-free by getting rid of the body. It only meant that the

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AS SINGAPORE, OR FOR THAT MATTER
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TRIED IN OUR COURTS THAT THERE IS
NO BODY.

Prosecutor Francis T. Seow

prosecution's burden of proof was higher.

A burden which was met. The jury was unanimous in its verdict: guilty.

THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

THE INSURANCE POLICIES

When Ms Cheok disappeared, her accident coverage amounted to \$400,000. The payouts were meant to go to either Ang's mother or Miss Cheok's estate. Three weeks before she disappeared, Ang took his girlfriend to make a will leaving her entire estate to his mother, whom she hardly knew.

A day before her disappearance, one of her policies expired. Three hours before the fateful diving trip which would cost her her life, Ang extended that policy for just five days.

The total payout would have amounted to around \$900,000 if several insurance companies had not become suspicious.

According to one witness from the Great Eastern Life Insurance company, Miss Cheok tried to apply for a \$40,000 "124" policy. The policy gave twice the sum if the insured died from natural causes but four times, or \$160,000, if death was a result of an accident. Before that, she wanted a policy which gave \$200,000 in accident benefits.

In other short-term policies Ang negotiated for Ms Cheok, he said she wanted to take up flying and was the heiress of a chicken farm.

“

WHY SHOULD
AN EX-
WAITRESS,
WITH LITTLE
OR NO MONEY
OF HER OWN,
BE INSURED
TO THE TUNE
OF \$400,000?

Prosecutor Seow

But these were lies. The truth was that Ms Cheok, who had quit her job a month before she disappeared, had little money to pay the premiums on her policies.

A PREVIOUS ATTEMPT ON HER LIFE?

Before the diving incident, Ang borrowed a friend's car and drove Ms Cheok to Kuala Lumpur for a holiday — but the trip was quickly cut short after a bout of stomach illness. Before the return trip, Ang took out accident policies — \$30,000 for himself and \$100,000 for her. Their car crashed on the way back. Ang, skilled enough to take part in a Grand Prix, said it was because he was trying to avoid a dog. The passenger side of the car suffered the worst damage but Ms Cheok escaped with bruises.

BOATMAN'S TESTIMONY

Boatman Yusuf Ahmad, the prosecution's key witness, made it clear that Ang behaved “normally” all through the diving trip, despite facing the loss of his lover.

At 2.30pm, Ang and Ms Cheok chartered his boat at Jardine Steps for three hours. The fare they negotiated was \$12.

After a 30-minute ride, Ang told him to drop anchor in the middle of the straits, then dropped in a guide rope.

Ang, who was in swimming trunks, had also brought along three air tanks, two pairs

of flippers, two knives, a small axe, aqualung equipment and a transistor radio.

Ms Cheok put on a dive belt to which the axe, a knife and metal weight were attached. Using the rope to guide her, she went into the water alone despite her lack of diving experience.

(Mr Yusuf also said that two months before, he had taken Ang and Ms Cheok to Pulau Tertukor. Only Ang went diving that day, while Ms Cheok swam. Mr Yusuf said she did not seem very skilful.)

Some 10 minutes later, she surfaced.

Ang changed her tank, and she went into the water again.

Still in his trunks, Ang started checking his own tank and found that it was leaking.

He said the problem was with the washer and the boatman helped him to improvise one, but it failed to work. Ms Cheok at that time was still underwater.

Ang then tugged at the guide rope three times and asked: "Where's the girl?"

Mr Yusuf said he did not know. Ang gave three more tugs. There was still no sign of his girlfriend.

Ang pulled the rope up and told Mr Yusuf to look for air bubbles in the water.

There were none.

"What are we going to do?" Ang asked.

Mr Yusuf suggested going to the nearby St John's Island to call the police. He hauled anchor, circled a few times to look for bubbles,



Mr Yusuf Ahmad, the boatman who took the couple out to sea. A key witness in Ang's trial, he said the accused acted "normal" even though he was faced with the prospect that his girlfriend may have died.

— ST FILE PHOTO

THE SEARCH FOR MS JENNY CHEOK

Royal Navy frogmen were sent
to look for her body in the
waters off the Sisters' Islands,
but she was never found.
— ST FILE PHOTO



and left for the island.

Asked by Justice Murray Buttrose if he or Ang went overboard to look for her, Mr Yusuf replied: “No.”

On the way to the island, Ang never asked him to speed up. He also did not rush onto the island when they arrived, as a desperate boyfriend would have. Ang returned with

SUNNY ANG'S TESTIMONY

During the trial, Sunny Ang was repeatedly asked why he did not go into the water to search for Ms Jenny Cheok.

Justice Buttrose: Did you realise that this girl, whom you love and whom you were going to marry, had gone down and disappeared, and you calmly turn round to the boatman and said, 'All right. Go to St John's'?

Ang: If she was anywhere around the boat we would have seen her air bubbles.

Justice Buttrose: It didn't occur to you to go down and search for her?

Ang: No.

Justice Buttrose: Why?

Ang: Because I thought there was obviously a leak and also if she was anywhere around the boat, we would have seen her air bubbles.

Mr Seow: You had skin-diving equipment with you in the boat?

Ang: Yes.

Mr Seow: The girl you were going to marry was obviously in difficulty, if not actually dead already. Why didn't you use your skin-diving equipment to go down?

Ang: I was not quite sure what sort of difficulties she was in. It occurred to me – it was a vague thought – that she might have been attacked by sharks. In fact, I remarked upon that to Yusuf. Not then, but long after the incident.

A day after Ms Cheok's disappearance, Ang (right) was already approaching insurance companies to tell them she had met with an accident and was presumed drowned or attacked by sharks.

— ST FILE PHOTO



Justice Buttrose: You could have gone down to find out?

Ang: She might have been attacked by sharks.

Mr Seow: When did you change back into your street clothes?

Ang: I think I remember I put them on, on my way to St John's Island.

Mr Seow: So that when the Malay divers were going in, you were then in your street clothes, and you saw no point in joining them?

Ang: I do not say I saw no point. I was in my street clothes and there were more experienced skin-divers, and there were five of them. Besides I knew the chances of finding her were very slim.

Justice Buttrose: You never got into the water at all that day? You never got your feet wet?

Ang: That is so.

Ang was also asked why Ms Cheok went into the water first. He said they had gone skin-diving a few days after they first met. He admitted that all she could do then was "float around". But she made "amazing progress". When asked by defence counsel on why she went in first the day she went missing, he replied that it was a matter of courtesy.

Justice Buttrose: That she should brave the perils of the deep before you?

Ang: Not exactly, my Lord, but always ladies first.

Buttrose: I see, even in deep waters?

a guard, who suggested picking up several fishermen from another nearby island on the way back to where Ms Cheok had gone missing.

They returned with five fishermen, all of whom dived into the water.

Ang stayed in the boat.

THE VERDICT

On May 18, 1965, the jury took just two hours to decide on a guilty verdict.

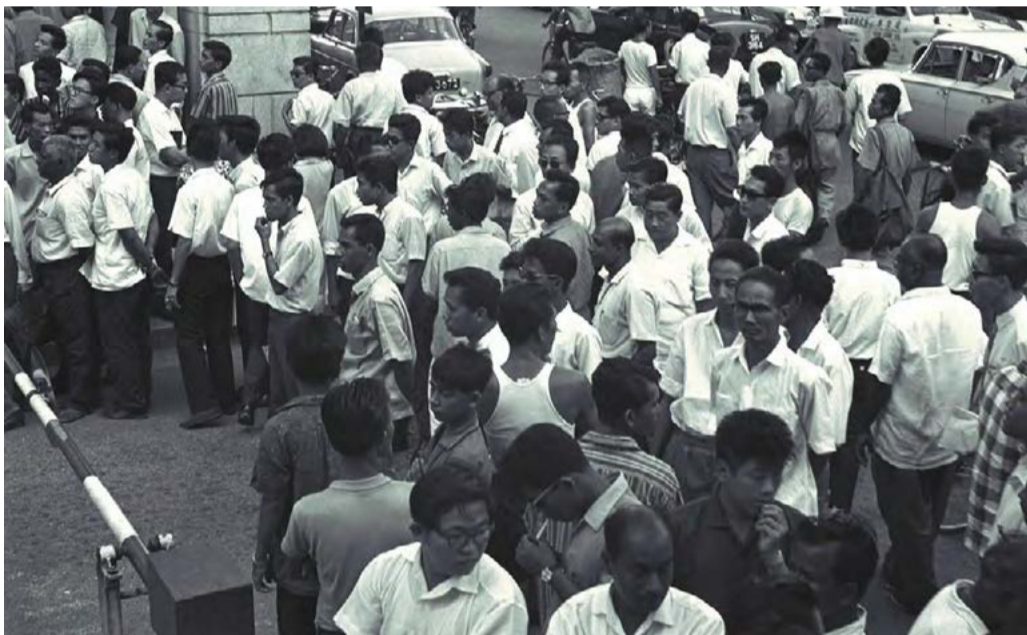
Justice Buttrose said: “You have killed this

young girl Jenny, whose only fault apparently was that she had the misfortune to fall in love with you, and to give you everything she possessed: her all.

“You killed her for personal gain. It is a crime cunningly contrived to give the appearance of an accident, and it was carried out with consummate

coolness and nerve. At long last, the time has come for you to pay the penalty for your dreadful deed.”

Outside the courtroom, Ang’s sister, Ms Juliet Ang, a law student, broke down. A big crowd watched Ang taken away in a green prison van. Ms Ang identified her brother’s body after he was hanged on Feb 6, 1967.



Crowds at the High Court for Ang's trial. — ST FILE PHOTOS



1970

THE

CASE OF

MIMI

WONG

**The dance hostess became the first woman
to get the death penalty in Singapore for
murdering her Japanese lover's wife**



It was the night of
Christmas 1969. Japanese
mechanical engineer
Hiroshi Watanabe decided
it was time for his wife
Ayako to meet Mimi
Wong Weng Siu, the dance
hostess who had been his
lover in Singapore for the
last three years. Mrs Watanabe,
33, had flown into Singapore with their three
young children only two days before, to live
with her husband here.

KILLERS



Sim Woh Kum pretended to be a workman when he and his wife went to the victim's home.
— ST FILE PHOTO



Mimi Wong Weng Siu claimed it was her husband who killed Mrs Watanabe.
— ST FILE PHOTO

That Christmas night, Mr Watanabe drove his family to Wong's house at Everitt Road.

It took some persuading from the Japanese to convince 31-year-old Wong to meet his wife. She was angry and abused him. But after he spoke to her alone for 30 minutes, she finally relented.

Along with Wong's servant and her daughter by a Hong Kong businessman, they all went out for dinner in his car. Wong also gave her lover's children sweets.

Six days later, on New Year's Eve, Wong even went to a party hosted by the Watanabes at their Jalan Seaview semi-detached house.

But behind the pretence, Wong was writhing in jealousy.

She was convinced that her affair with Mr Watanabe, who had been assigned to Singapore three years earlier to work on a reclamation project in the eastern part of the island, would fizzle out now that his wife was in town.

Her hatred was fuelled by Mrs Watanabe allegedly calling her a prostitute at the New Year's Eve party. On the evening of Jan 6, Wong returned to the Jalan Seaview home, with her estranged husband, 37-year-old Sim Woh Kum, a sweeper in financial difficulty. And they murdered Mrs Watanabe.

The killing was witnessed by her eldest daughter, nine-year-old schoolgirl Chieko.

She was the prosecution's star witness during the trial 10 months later.



Chieko Watanabe was nine when she saw her mother being murdered. — ST FILE PHOTO

'I SAW BLOOD ON MY MOTHER'S CHEST'

That night, Chieko said, her mother had tucked in the three siblings in a first-floor bedroom, which was joined to a large bathroom. Her father was working overtime at the reclamation site at the time.

As she lay awake on bed, Chieko heard voices, then footsteps on the ground floor.

Then she heard screams coming from the bathroom.

“They were screams of pain from my mother.”

She went to the bathroom and found her mother sitting on the floor.

“The man was pulling my mother’s left hand and Obasan was pulling her right hand.”

Obasan is Japanese for auntie — a name her father had suggested she call Wong.

“I saw blood on my mother’s chest. I cried and Obasan covered my mouth with her hand. I stopped crying and she released me.”

Her mother sustained two fatal stab wounds — one gashed the neck and the other penetrated her abdomen.

Chieko went back to the room to wake her six-year-old brother, but he continued to sleep.

Then she saw Wong and Sim run down the stairs.

“My mother stood in the bathroom. She staggered a few paces and fell. I thought she was dead.”

Her siblings were soon awake.

“All three of us stood outside the bathroom and cried. We were still crying there when Father got back.”

When Mr Watanabe returned to the house, he was greeted by the wails of his children. He ran up and saw them standing outside the bathroom. Inside, he saw his wife, who was wearing a red dress, lying in a pool of blood.

Mr Watanabe asked Chieko what happened.

“My father asked me who did it. I replied: ‘Obasan and a man whom I did not know.’”

Sim was a stranger to Chieko, but she later picked him out from an identification parade as the man she saw struggling with her mother.

SIM'S CONFESSION

Sim said that Wong first spoke to him about the plan to murder Mrs Watanabe on Jan 2, and offered him money.

On the night of Jan 6, they took a taxi to the victim's home. Wong had given Sim a tin half-

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MY MOTHER STOOD IN THE
BATHROOM. SHE STAGGERED A FEW
PACES AND FELL. I THOUGHT SHE
WAS DEAD.

WHO WAS MIMI WONG?

Police found that she was the daughter of her father's second wife. She was just 11 months old when he died.

At 14, she was already working as a packer.

She was 17 when she met Sim Woh Kum at a picnic. In 1958, when she was 19, they married.

A year later she gave birth to a son. In 1962, another son came.

Money was tight, and she had to do odd jobs in restaurants. Her husband lost his job after he was caught gambling.

She left him and became a dance hostess.

In 1966, she met Mr Hiroshi Watanabe.

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

filled with toilet-cleaning liquid. In her bag, she had a pair of gloves and a knife.

When Mrs Watanabe asked what she wanted, Wong told her that she had brought a workman to repair a broken toilet basin.

She let them in.

“I threw the liquid into the eyes of the woman,” said Sim. “Wong stabbed her with a knife. The victim shouted — probably in pain — and covered her face with both palms while on the ground.”

To keep Mrs Watanabe quiet, Sim covered her mouth but she bit his finger. That was also when Chieko saw him.

“After stabbing her (Mrs Watanabe) to death, Wong ran away. I chased her to the mouth of the road. We got a taxi...”

The next morning, Sim was arrested. Blood was found on a pair of trousers he had. It was found to be Type A, the same as that of the murdered woman.

During the trial, he also revealed his difficult relationship with Wong, with whom he had two sons. A year after their marriage, he said Wong assaulted his mother.

“This led my mother to dub her as ‘empress daughter-in-law,’” he said.

Sim never dared start a quarrel because “Wong would attempt to strike me”.

“When I saw her in an aggressive mood, taking up a knife or stick, I would run for safety.”

WHO WAS MIMI WONG?

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

She claimed she got pregnant and he refused to give her money for an abortion, saying he had none. After she went to Penang for an abortion, Mr Watanabe continued the relationship.

During their affair, she met a Hong Kong businessman and fell head over heels for him. He took her to Hong Kong.

Even so, she still continued to send Mr Watanabe love letters. When she got pregnant, her Hong Kong lover kicked her out.

She returned to Singapore and gave birth to a daughter. Mr Watanabe continued to visit her.

She worked as a social escort for a time to make ends meet.

In the middle of 1969, she became Mr Watanabe's mistress.

He gave her \$200 a month, and rented a room at Alexandra Road for her.

A few months later, they moved to Everitt Road. She even hired a servant.

The one occasion when he was hit with a breadknife left a scar.

Their youngest son was less than two years old when Wong left him in 1963, before becoming a bar waitress. He said she would strut with her boyfriends in front of him.

“I advised her to refrain from such an action. I was hoping she would return to me.”

'HE KILLED HER'

Wong put the blame for the death of Mrs Watanabe on her “greedy” husband.

After spending the morning and evening drinking, she said she went to the victim's home “just to slap her”. It was not only because of what Mrs Watanabe had said about her, but also to give the woman another reason to complain to her husband. Wong said she wanted Mr Watanabe to end the affair.

She brought Sim along as protection, even though she hated him, because Mr Watanabe had told her most Japanese knew judo. She was afraid that this was true of Mrs Watanabe.

At the doorway of the children's bedroom, she slapped Mrs Watanabe. They were fighting in the bathroom when she claimed Sim threw the liquid at them.

“I asked Sim to run away but he refused.”

She decided to leave and tripped down the stairs. It was only when she was outside that Sim joined her.

“If I had not been drinking that day, this

“

WHEN I SAW HER IN AN AGGRESSIVE MOOD, TAKING UP A KNIFE OR STICK, I WOULD RUN FOR SAFETY.

Sim Woh Kum on his relationship with Mimi Wong

incident would never have arisen,” she said, insisting there was no way she could have stabbed Mrs Watanabe.

“I am only a woman and have also not the strength to stab her especially when she was biting my left finger and grabbing and scratching my right hand.”

Wong also denied being a member of an all-woman secret society known as the Red Butterfly Gang — an accusation which had been made by Sim.

Testifying for the defence, psychiatrist Dr Wong Yip Chong said Wong had seemed prepared to be the “subordinate woman” in Mr Watanabe’s life.

He said she tried to be nice to Mrs Watanabe, even sending her presents through Mr Watanabe.

But the wife “was not only downright ungrateful, but also insulting and humiliating to Wong”, said the doctor.

This affected Wong, whom he said could have been suffering from a viral brain



Psychiatrist Dr Wong Yip Chong testified for the defence at the trial. — ST FILE PHOTO

infection. She could have caught the Japanese encephalitis virus from Mr Watanabe, he added.



Mr Watanabe was afraid of what his mistress would do if he ended the affair. — ST FILE PHOTO

WORRIED HUSBAND

In court, Mr Watanabe described his lover as a “lady with a forceful temperament” and a “strong drinker who could hold her drinks”.

While his wife disapproved of the affair, he said he could not end it suddenly.

“Wong had hinted to me on several occasions in angry tones that if I were to sever my ties with her, something drastic would befall me or any member of my family.”

He admitted he was thinking of leaving her, and that she suspected this.

On the day of the murder, Mr Watanabe had dinner with Wong at their Everitt Road place at 7.30pm. She asked him if he would be staying the night. He spurned her, saying he would be going home to his family.

He also said that after his wife’s death, Wong, who had a flair for hysterics, saw him at the Criminal Investigation Department.

She knelt on the floor.

“She told me in English: ‘I am sorry. Give me see your wife, can or not? That night I drunk. I love you true. You told me everything finished.’”

THE VERDICT

After a trial lasting 26 days, Wong and Sim

After a 26-day trial, Wong became the first woman to be sent to the gallows after Singapore's independence. She was hanged on the morning of July 27, 1973, along with her sweeper husband.
— ST FILE PHOTO

AVERAGE DAILY CERTIFIED SALE EXCEEDS 200,000

The Straits Times

RECEIVED
- 8 DEC 1970
12.00. London

The National Newspaper

ESTD. 1845 ★ TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1970. 15 CENTS K.D.N. 4517 : M.C. (P) No. 1597

Murder conviction for first couple in Singapore

Death for Mimi and husband

Mimi... showed no emotion

Sim... motivated by greed

Police face problem in finding 'invisible' tycoon

AN VEGAS, Man.—Police trying to locate "invisible" multi-millionaire casino Howard Hughes today found a keen problem — they don't know what he looks like. The last known photograph of Hughes was taken secretly 13 years ago after his wedding to actress Jean Peters. Police asked Hughes' Las Vegas apartment yesterday and reports of a

SWISS ENVOY KIDNAPPED IN BRAZIL

Big power cut-off in Britain

LONDON, Monday

ELECTRICAL workers switched off the power in cities and towns across Britain today, disrupting transport and plunging offices and homes into darkness.

The go-slow by 125,000 employers also hit the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) main daytime news programme, silencing the newscaster in mid-sentence as he reported the power cuts.

Workers in the nationalised power industry are demanding a pay rise of £5 a week, which would give them an average basic wage of £36. The Government has made a "final" offer of £3.

The work-to-rule and overtime ban started at midnight and by breakfast-time homes were cold and dark. Streetlights and rail lights went out, causing confusion and delay to travellers in the morning rush-hour.

Govt appeal

The Government appealed to all consumers — especially the big stores with Christmas noon displays — to conserve power, and as union and management negotiators planned another meeting, drivers stood by to deal with fires caused by candles burning in homes and offices.

An official of the Electricity Council said at lunch-time that things could be worse by tonight. "From the level of the cuts it appears that many electricity workers are going further than a simple work-to-rule," he said.

Among the victims of the go-slow were the embassies in the

Reports of whites fighting for Viets

SAIGON, Mon. — South Vietnamese national police are investigating two reports that groups of four to six whites, possibly Americans, have been sighted operating in combat with Vietcong troops.

The incidents occurred about a week apart, on Nov. 22 and again on Dec. 3, in villages of Binh Dinh province on South Vietnam's central coast, according to informants here.

Origin

The reports originated with Vietnamese villagers who reported seeing four or white men on the road

The star witness

See Page 17

Common

By T.F. HWANG: Singapore, Monday

DANCE hostess Mimi Wong Weng Siu, 31, and her estranged husband were sentenced to death today for the murder of her Japanese engineer lover's wife at Jalan Sea View 11 months ago.

The former cabaret queen and Sim Woh Kim, 38, a Housing Board sweeper and school canteen hawker, are the first couple in Singapore to be jointly tried and convicted of murder.

Mimi is also the first woman to be sentenced to death by a Singapore court.

Both Wong, who had collapsed three times on different days during the 26-day trial, and Sim showed no emotion when sentence was passed by Mr. Justice Tan Ah Tah, presiding, and Mr. Justice Choor Singh.

were convicted of murder and sentenced to death on Dec 7, 1970.

Wong became the first woman to receive the capital punishment from a Singapore court. Both showed no emotion.

After unsuccessful appeals — including one to President Benjamin Sheares — both went to the gallows at Changi Prison on Jul 27, 1973.

They were buried side by side



1971

GOLD

BAR

MURDERS

Brothers who killed for 120 gold bars end
up being hanged with five other youths



It was a sweet deal for Andrew Chou Hock Guan. As an air cargo supervisor with Air Vietnam, he could easily pass through the high levels of security at the airport. Naturally, he was asked by the aircrew to help smuggle gold bars onto flights. In early 1971, he began taking assignments

from three syndicates in Singapore. They would drop the gold bars at his home at Chepstow Close in Serangoon Garden Estate, and he would slip them past security.

In return, he would be paid “good money”. For each 1kg gold bar, he would receive a total of US\$15 from the aircrew and the local side.

For months, two to three times weekly, Andrew smuggled the bars and earned his commission.

Then things soured after money brought back to Singapore from Vietnam on a plane was stolen.

The commissions dried up. A plot was hatched to rob one of the syndicates still in business with Chou. Three people were killed.

And seven were hanged for the crime, including Andrew and his brother David, all on the same day at Changi Prison.

THE LOST MONEY

Relations with the syndicates went south in October 1971 when a bag containing about US\$235,000, that had arrived on an Air Vietnam flight, was lost at the airport. The money was meant for the three syndicates.

Andrew, whose job included collecting the money sent back, was relentlessly pressured by the syndicates to look for the missing cash. Threats were made against him. He did his own investigations, and managed to recover about US\$180,000 from airport staff.

MASTERMINDS BEHIND THE MURDER



Andrew Chou Hock
Guan, 31



David Chou Hock Heng,
34



Peter Lim Swee Guan,
24



Augustine Ang Cheng
Siong, 25

— POLICE FILE PHOTOS

But that still left him short.

Out of desperation, he even consulted bomohs (Malay shamans) at a cemetery at Jalan Kaki Bukit. But the rest of the money was never recovered, and he lost favour with the syndicates.

“Andrew became angry. His income from the gold trafficking was considerably reduced,” said Senior State Counsel S. Rajendran during the trial.

So Andrew plotted with his brother David Chou Hock Heng, 34, a university graduate who worked as an assistant manager at a pharmaceutical company, Peter Lim Swee Guan, a 24-year-old despatch clerk, and his good friend Augustine Ang Cheng Siong, 25. They came up with a plan to rob and murder import-export towkay Ngo Cheng Poh,

55, and his associates the next time he asked Andrew to deliver gold.

They recruited six others for the deed: Alex Yau Hean Thye; Ringo Lee Chiew Chwee; Richard James; Stephen Francis; Stephen Lee Hock Khoo and Nagalingam Konesekaram.

All were charged with murder.

But Andrew’s close friend Ang turned prosecution witness, was given a discharge

THE SIX ACCOMPLICES



Alex Yau
Hean Thye, 19



Ringo Lee
Chiew Chwee, 16



Richard
James, 18



Stephen Francis, 20



Stephen Lee Hock
Khoon, 16



Nagalingam
Konesekaram, 18

— POLICE FILE PHOTOS

not amounting to an acquittal on the murder charge, and detained without trial.

ANG'S TESTIMONY

Ang was close to the brothers and often visited them at their home. He said he, David and Peter even escorted Andrew during one of his gold runs after the incident in which money was stolen.

Ang said he was paid \$50.

He said he and Peter helped gather the recruits for the gold robbery — agreeing to pay

“

IT MUST BE
DONE CLEAN
AND QUIET AND
THE BODIES
MUST BE
BURIED.

David Chou to his gang of
would-be assailants

each of them \$20,000.

“It must be done clean and quiet and the bodies must be buried.”

According to Ang, that was what David said when they met in a Changi coffeeshop to discuss their plan. Ropes were to be used to strangle the victims.

If two men showed up, they would be brought into the house, and attacked as they left. If there were three men, one would be the driver who would stay outside. In this case, the driver had to be taken care of first. It was even suggested that the bodies be dumped in a well in Changi.

The boys were told to stand by every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday night – the days Air Vietnam flew into Singapore.

THE DEADLY DEED

On Dec 29, 1971, Andrew received a call from import-export trader Ngo, informing him that the next consignment of gold – 120 bars, worth over \$500,000 – was to be delivered to his house later at midnight.

Andrew rounded up all the recruits and had them gather at the backyard of his house at around 11.30pm. Pieces of cloth were hung up to prevent neighbours from looking in. Green nylon rope was hidden under a food cover.

Slightly before midnight, a Mercedes car stopped at the front gate. Mr Ngo, together with two of his employees, clerk Leong Chin

“

I SAW
ANDREW
STAMPING
THE MAN'S
BODY WITH
HIS FEET.
ANDREW
ALSO APPLIED
KARATE
CHOPS ON
HIS NECK
AND RIGHT
TEMPLE.

Prosecution witness
Augustine Ang Cheng
Siong, during his
testimony

Woo, 51, and office assistant Ang Boon Chai, 57, had arrived.

Andrew immediately signalled for the rest of the group to hide in the kitchen, while he and his brother went out to greet the trio.

Mr Ngo and Mr Leong brought the gold in. The other man stayed in the car. Andrew then called his friend Ang out to the yard to count the gold bars. “Before I could count the gold, I saw Andrew and David pounce on Ngo and Leong at the same time,” said Ang. “Andrew put both hands around Ngo’s neck and David did the same to Leong.”

Ang called out to the rest of the boys to come out. “I saw Andrew still with his hands on Ngo’s neck. Ngo was lying on the cement floor of the backyard.

“He was struggling and kicking his legs up and down. I quickly caught hold of both his legs and pressed them down.

“As I was pressing Ngo’s legs, I turned and saw David was pulling a rope that was around the neck of Leong, who was also lying on the floor.”

After a short while, David came over to Andrew and put his own hands around Ngo’s neck.

“I then walked out to the small path near the porch where I saw a man (the driver) lying down sideways. I saw Andrew stamping the man’s body with his feet. Andrew also applied karate chops on his neck and right temple,” said

Ang. “I took a rounded block of wood and hit the man’s face several times. I heard the man calling for help in Hokkien.

“He said: ‘Please! Please! Don’t hit me. Let me go!’”

Just after the killings, the couple living next-door returned from a movie. Cloth was quickly placed over the bodies, as David went to greet the couple and make sure they had not seen anything.

The three corpses were then bundled into the back seat of a Volkswagen. Andrew, David, and Ang remained in the house to wash off the blood from the backyard floor, while the rest of the boys went off to dispose the bodies.

But the boys panicked. Instead of disposing the bodies in a disused well as planned, they left them in thick bushes beside an old mining pond in Lembah Bedok.

Mr Ngo’s Mercedes was abandoned at Jalan Somapah Timor in Changi.

WIVES OF VICTIMS

When the clean-up was finished at around 2.30am, Andrew called Mr Ngo’s home and spoke to his wife Goh Cheng Hong. He pretended to ask why her husband never showed up.

“We have been waiting since he telephoned before midnight, but he and the two men have not showed up yet. Would you know what is the matter?” he asked Madam Goh, who grew

alarmed.

She knew her husband had a large quantity of gold with him.

At 5.30am, she could wait no longer. She left her East Coast bungalow and went to the Chou brothers' home. Stopping outside, she sounded the car horn.

Andrew came out dressed only in shorts, and put on another performance.

“Yes, Mrs Ngo? What happened to your husband? Why hasn't he come yet? We have been waiting and waiting!”

She noticed Andrew had a bandage on his left arm near the wrist. But she never thought that hours earlier her husband had been killed right where she was. She suspected secret societies had jumped him while he was transporting the gold.

She went home. At around 10am, she contacted the wife of Mr Ang Boon Chai, who was also growing anxious.

Half an hour later, they went to the Joo Chiat Police Station and made a report, telling the duty officer that they suspected “foul play”.

Two hours later, Mr Leong's body was found by a group of national servicemen who were training in the area of Jalan Lembah Bedok. His hands and legs were tied. Police were called. Soon, Mr Ngo's body was also found. Then the third body.

A few days after the murders, the police managed to retrieve all 120 gold bars, of which



Criminal Investigation Department officers inspecting the recovered gold bars.
— ST FILE PHOTO

115 were found neatly packed in small bundles of five in the home of Lim's aunt, Catherine Ang, who was supposed to help sell them.

The other five bars were found in David's office at Bayer Singapore.

'IT WAS ANG'S IDEA'

Andrew insisted that Ang was the mastermind behind the entire plot.

Ang was introduced to him by his brother David and they became “very close” friends.

Ang used to accompany him on his gold deliveries, and took a cut. After the incident involving the stolen money, Ang urged him to rob Mr Ngo.

“I was making good money from the gold transactions and there was no reason for me to want to rob him,” said Andrew.

“Ang was aware that I was contemplating leaving Air Vietnam. He told me not to be selfish but to think of him also. The discussion was basically on his anxiety to get rich.”

Ang first suggested that Andrew faked being robbed. Andrew replied that it was a crazy idea.

Then he suggested waylaying Mr Ngo on his way to deliver gold to Andrew’s home.

“I did not agree to this because it involved violence,” said Andrew.

After being pestered constantly, Andrew said he finally agreed to a plan in which Mr Ngo would be detained, the gold sold, and part of the proceeds given back to the businessman.

“Ang said he had the connections and asked me to leave everything to him and to trust him,” said Andrew.

GUILTY

Nine of those involved were convicted of

murder on Dec 29, 1972.

Ringo Lee and Stephen Lee, who were both under 18 at the time of the murders, escaped the hangman's noose and were detained at the President's pleasure.

The remaining seven men were sent to the gallows. When the sentence of death was read out, Ang was reported to be "visibly moved".

In the corridors outside the courtroom, female relatives of Richard James, Stephen Francis and Konesekaram, wept openly and had to be restrained and led out by police. One fainted.

In their appeal, it was argued that Ang's testimony could not be trusted. The appeal failed.

So did a petition to former President Benjamin Sheares for clemency.

All seven were hanged in Changi Prison at 6am on Feb 28, 1975.



1972

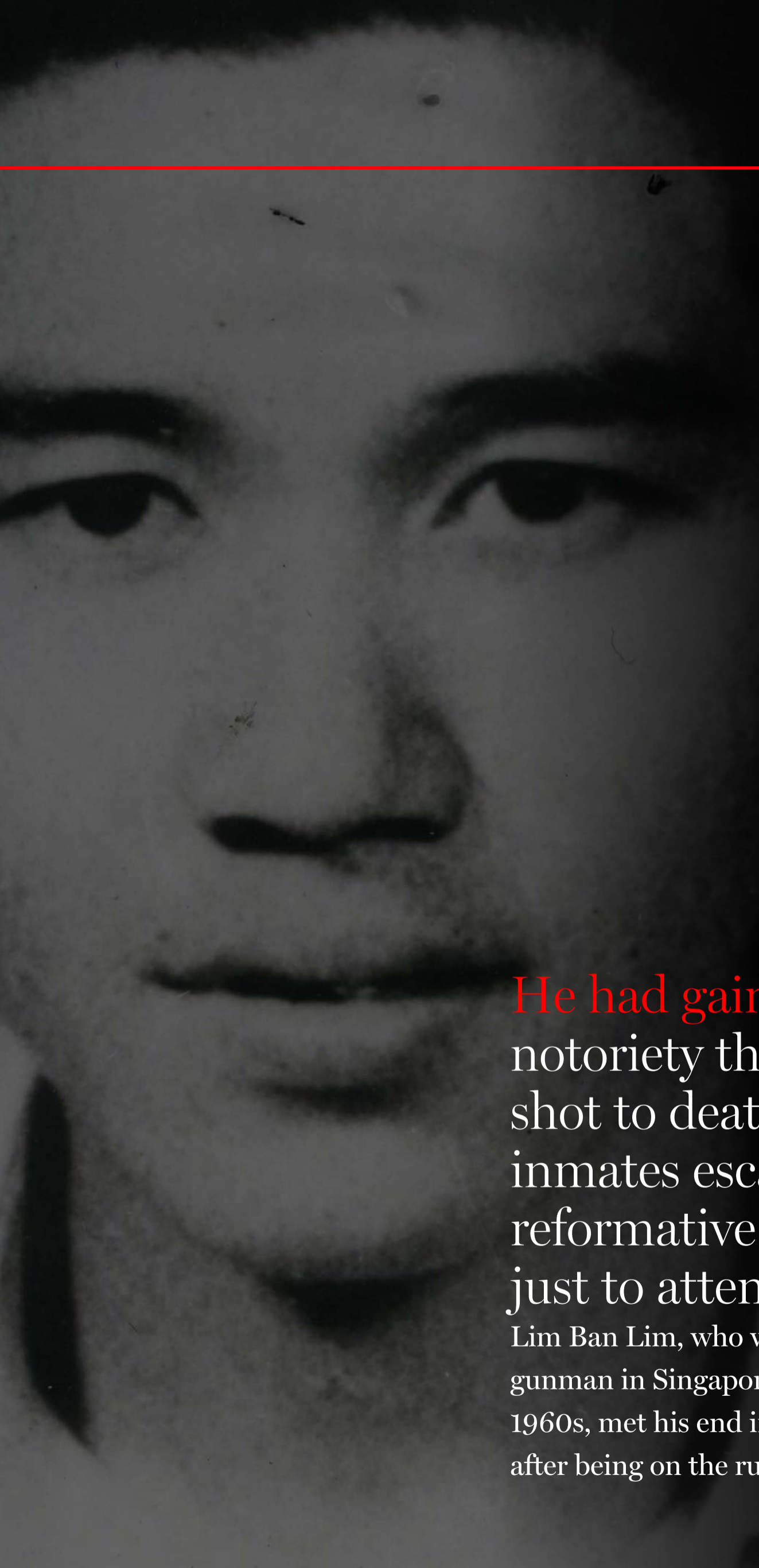
THE

CASE OF

LIM BAN

LIM

The notorious gunman who engaged in
Hollywood-style shootings with police met
his end in a showdown at Margaret Drive



He had gained so much notoriety that after he was shot to death by police, 33 inmates escaped from a reformatory training centre just to attend his funeral.

Lim Ban Lim, who was the most wanted gunman in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1960s, met his end in Queenstown in 1972, after being on the run for years.

He was 32 years old, and already responsible for the death of one policeman.

Lim, who had six aliases – Tau Hong Lim, Seow Lim, Ah Seow, Suay Kia, Oei Kia and Ah Oei, had been on the wanted list since 1965, after he shot and wounded a detective at Paya Lebar Road in May that year.

The shooting took place after Detective Peter Lim and another police officer arrested a thug who was with Lim and his companion.

Lim and the companion fled and Detective Lim went after them.

When he caught up with them in a lane off Macpherson Road, Lim snatched the officer's revolver, and opened fire at the detective, whose right finger and right leg were grazed by bullets.

Following the incident, the police looked for information on Lim, described to be Hokkien, about 1.65m and of medium build.

But he managed to remain at large.

A year later, in September 1966, Lim shot

“

YOU WILL NEVER CATCH ME.
WHEN YOU ARE ABOUT TO ARREST
ME, I WILL SURELY ENGAGE YOU IN A
GUNFIGHT.

Lim, over the phone to the head of the Criminal Investigation Department

WHO WAS LIM BAN LIM?

GUNMAN



Lim Ban Lim, once Singapore's most wanted gunman. The gangster got away with at least \$2.5 million in his nine-year criminal career on both sides of the Causeway.

He launched his criminal career with a hold-up in 1958, when he robbed several thousand dollars worth of cigarettes. But it was in 1963 when the Gi Ho secret society member went from small-time crook to big-time robber.

With three accomplices, and all armed with revolvers, he targeted The Straits Times' printing department at Anson Road. Shots were fired and he got away with \$30,000 in payroll money.

His biggest haul in Singapore was probably the \$156,000 he robbed from the First National City Bank in Collyer Quay in 1966. Two years later, he and five other gunmen stormed the Treasury in Johor and grabbed \$450,000. A police constable was shot dead.

He threw police off by parking a stolen taxi near a landing point from where smugglers were known to take a speedboat to Singapore. It was only later police discovered that he and his gang did not use that route.

In his nine-year crime spree in Singapore and Malaysia, he got away with at least \$2.5 million. He eluded police for years because after each major crime, he would slip out of Singapore to take refuge in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, or Macau using forged travel documents.

He was also described as a master of disguise. Not only did he undergo plastic surgery, he also dressed as a woman at times to avoid suspicion.

He could shoot with either hand and was well respected in the underworld, but those who knew him told police he never trusted anyone, except for Chua Ah Kow.

Lim once told the head of the Criminal Investigation Department over the phone: "You will never catch me. When you are about to arrest me, I will surely engage you in a gunfight. I will use the last bullet to end my life, so you can only collect my body."

It was reported that Lim, who married his childhood sweetheart at the age of 16, left three daughters and two sons.

another officer, Detective Allan Lee, who had arrested his friend in the lobby of the Odeon Cinema at North Bridge Road. Detective Lee was wounded in the leg.

On June 23, 1968, Lim killed officer Koh Chong Thye, a 27-year-old corporal. It was believed that he had spotted Lim walking out of a shophouse in Rangoon Road at 1.20pm that day. He and two other officers trailed Lim to a vacant plot of land in Owen Road.

There, Lim suddenly confronted them with a Browning automatic pistol and demanded that the corporal hand over his revolver.

Corporal Koh refused, and there was a struggle. The officer broke away and ran behind a parked car. But it was then when he got shot in the chest.

Despite being wounded, he drew his revolver and fired back at Lim, but missed. Lim fired a second shot — this time at point-blank range and aimed at the forehead, killing Corporal Koh.

This was not the end of the drama.

Constable Cheong Yan Soon of the police's Guard and Escort Unit, which deployed armed guards to banks for instance, picked up the dead officer's revolver and began a running gun duel with Lim.

He chased Lim through a maze of backlanes, parked cars, and stalls around Owen Road.

At Serangoon Road, Lim fired at the constable before dashing into Kitchener Road.

VICTIM



Corporal Koh Chong Thye, who was killed by Lim, left a wife and two young children.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

VIDEO

Retired police superintendent Lee Swee Thin describes how the Criminal Investigation Department dealt with secret societies in the 1970s. Tap to watch the video.



At this point, another detective turned up and also began firing at Lim, who ran into Verdun Road and then into the adjacent Sam Leong Road.

Lim was able to jump into a taxi and force the driver to take him to Lavender Street, where he disappeared.

Police conducted a massive manhunt for Lim after the incident, and his picture was shown on TV. Doctors and Chinese sinsehs were urged to inform authorities if a wounded man was seeking medical attention.

During the inquiry into Corporal Koh's death in March 1970, State Coroner Liew Ngik Kee, who returned with a verdict of murder, described the case as a typical "Hollywood-style shooting".

Assistant pathologist Chao Tzee Cheng said



Lim's body was covered by a tarpaulin after police were finally able to bring him down.
— WANBAO FILE PHOTO



One shot grazed Detective Tan Lee Keng's chest in the final shootout with Lim. When Lim tried to fire at the detective again, his gun jammed.
— ST FILE PHOTO

that the deceased had three bullet wounds. One struck him in the chest and went through his heart, lungs and stomach. Another hit him in the forehead and brain, and the third, his face.

Soon after the incident, police offered a \$5,000 reward for the arrest of Lim. The Criminal Investigation Department also carried out raids to track him down.

Less than a year later, in March 1969, police doubled the reward to \$10,000.

On November 24, 1972, police engaged him in a final gunbattle at a pasar malam at Margaret Drive.

Officers from the Rural West Division had a tip off that Lim, who had returned to Singapore after spending some months in Taiwan and Macau, and his “trusted armed double”, Chua Ah Kow, would be visiting the night market.

By then, there was a price of \$17,000 on Lim's head. He and Chua were wanted by both sides of the Causeway in connection with a series of armed robberies and murders.

At 7.30pm, six police officers laid an ambush and took up positions in the vicinity of Block 6, near Golden City Theatre.

After 45 minutes, they saw Lim and Chua walk to a row of shops across the road. The duo came out of a shop 10 minutes later.

Suddenly, they fled in opposite directions, firing at the police.

Officers returned fire, but had to be extra careful as the road was crowded. Two shots



(From left) Asst Supt Gian Singh, Detective William Chua, Insp Ronnie Ng, Deputy Supt Henry Edwards and Asst Supt A.R. Roman standing in front of Lim's body. Dept Supt Edwards, the officer in charge of Bukit Panjang Police Station, is holding Lim's revolver. — ST FILE PHOTO

grazed the chest of Detective Tan Lee Keng during the battle.

Eventually, officers shot Lim three times in his body. He staggered for about 10m, collapsed and died, still clutching the revolver in his left hand. Police later found 13 bullets in his pocket, and \$1.40 in change.

Chua fired two more shots at police before managing to escape. During a gunbattle at Tank Road three weeks later, he shot himself dead to avoid being arrested.



GUN LAWS IN SINGAPORE

A string of shooting incidents in the early 1970s played a key role in the introduction of Singapore's strict gun laws.

There was the ruthless Johor-born gunman Tan Chian Lai, who shot himself in the head during a police raid on his Toa Payoh flat in 1970.

In December 1972, the Hassan brothers — Abdul Wahab, 24, and Mustapha, 21 — killed themselves after a shootout with police at a Muslim cemetery in Victoria Street. The brothers had been running a gun-smuggling syndicate, and after Wahab escaped from Changi prison, were behind a string of armed robberies in a 1.5-month reign of terror.

In April 1973, Detective Ng Poh Hock, 27, was shot and killed by gunman Ng Ah Bai in Geylang. Later that month, the 30-year-old gangster was shot dead by police.

In July that year, there was an even more dramatic shootout.

Police had been on the hunt for 21-year-old Hoo How Seng, who had shot dead Detective Ong Poh Heng in Katong on July 12.

The officer had been trying to settle an argument between a busman and a car driver, when the latter pulled out a gun and fired at point-blank range.

Police later found out that the car driver was Hoo — a henchman of a notorious underworld leader who had been caught, and a member of a gang of armed robbers.

Hoo escaped to Malaysia.

But later that month, six detectives found out that he had returned, and was staying with his girlfriend in a Cavenagh Road flat. They knew he would be armed and had to draw him out of the flat and disarm him.

One of the officers phoned the flat and warned Hoo to get out as police were on their way. Hoo rushed out, but the detectives, dressed as noodle sellers and petrol station attendants, were waiting.

One officer grabbed Hoo from behind. When Hoo pulled out a revolver, the officer put his finger against the trigger to prevent it from being fired. Hoo pressed the trigger, breaking the officer's finger, and got loose. He fired three shots, but all missed. The six detectives closed in and shot him dead.

In November 1973, the Arms Offences Act was passed. Using a gun, or even trying to use one to commit an offence, was made punishable by death.

The first to be caught under the new gun laws was Sha Bakar Dawood.

He was sentenced to death in 1975 for shooting and wounding three people at a brothel and then opening fire at police at Thiam Siew Avenue.

1974

THE

TONTINE

KILLING

Sim Joo Keow fought with her sister-in-law over money, strangled her and hid the body in different places



On May 9, 1974, Sim Joo Keow first strangled her sister-in-law, dismembered her body and kept her torso in two earthen jars in her home. The 44-year-old killed Madam Quek Lee Eng after a fight over money — money that Sim owed Madam Quek, but that she did not have.



The Straits Times on Jan 28, 1975. According to the report, Sim was afraid of getting her husband and six children involved after killing her sister-in-law in a fight.
— ST FILE PHOTOS

Sim was sentenced to 10 years in jail in January 1975, after being convicted of manslaughter and hiding evidence.

On the day of her death, 53-year-old Madam Quek, the wife of a wealthy local textile merchant and the head of a tontine group, went to Sim's Upper Perak Road home to collect the \$2,000 that Sim owed her.

It was then that things soured. Sim claimed that Madam Quek threw a punch at her eye, leaving it blue-black. Sim retaliated in anger.

Before, Sim and Madam Quek shared a good relationship. Sim had a share in Madam Quek's tontine group, an informal micro-financing scheme in which members make regular contributions to a common pool.

Madam Quek had left her home at about 8.30am, telling her sons that she was going to visit her brother's wife.

When she did not return to her Pheng Geck home in Sennett Estate by nightfall that day, and her family could not find her, they got worried and lodged a report at Paya Lebar Police Station. Madam Quek was classified as a missing person.



THE VICTIM



Police officers (top) removing an earthenware jar containing a woman's torso. It belonged to Madam Quek Lay Eng (above). Her legs were found in a toilet, and her head and arms were dumped in Kallang.

— ST FILE PHOTOS

Two days later came the shocking discovery of dismembered legs, hacked from the knees, in a toilet near a mosque in Aljunied. The police received an anonymous call informing them of the gruesome find.

Pathologist Chao Tzee Cheng, who was summoned to the scene, confirmed that the pair of legs belonged to a female person, and that they had been cut off less than 24 hours before.

Sim had used a meat chopper and hammered it down with a block of wood after strangling Madam Quek, in a desperate attempt to get rid of the body. She apparently got the idea from seeing fish being chopped up

TONTINE SCHEME: HOW IT WORKS

Its roots go back to the 17th century and is a mix of group annuity and lottery. Each subscriber pays a sum into an investment pool, and then receives annual dividends. As subscribers die, their shares go to the other members of the scheme — increasing the yearly payout. The scheme comes to an end when every member is dead. In some cases, the entire fund goes to the final survivor, which explains the comparison to a lottery.

in the market.

The legs were quickly linked to the missing woman. When police arrived at Sim's rented two-storey colonial home, the heavy stench almost drove them back.

They found Madam Quek's upper torso, wrapped in plastic bags from then-popular department store Yaohan in the most unlikely of places: a huge earthen jar located on the ground floor.

They also found another jar on the top floor, near the kitchen. In it was a similar bag containing the lower half of the torso.

The police then painstakingly searched for the remaining parts of Madam Quek's body.

Just before the search was almost called off for the day, they detected a stench near the Kallang River bank, where a parcel was found.

It contained Madam Quek's head and arms.

The day the legs were discovered, Sim called her husband Quek Huang Phoew, and he went home immediately. In his statement, he said that he saw blood trickling out of one of the earthen jars, that there were flies hovering around, and there was a "strong smell".

When police went to her home the next day on May 12, Sim told Inspector Daniel Tan from the Special Investigations Section that she wanted to tell him "everything". After she was arrested on the spot, she proceeded to show police where she had hidden Madam Quek's clothes and handbag.



Sim being led out of court.
— ST FILE PHOTO

Then, she led them to to the kitchen, and showed Inspector Tan a chopper that she used. She brought him to the bathroom where she said she cut up the body, but no blood stains were found there.

She also brought them to Kallang Bridge, where she said she had dumped Madam Quek's head and arms.

It was later revealed in court that on the day of the murder, Sim told two different versions of events to her daughter Quek Pek Hiah.

First, she said that Madam Quek had arranged to meet her at a bus stop, where the two of them would meet another person to

HOW IT ALL UNFOLDED

○ **May 9, 1974**

Sim Joo Keow strangles and dismembers her sister-in-law, Madam Quek Lee Eng. She throws her head and hands, wrapped in plastic, into the Kallang River, leaves her legs at a site on Aljunied Road, and keeps her torso in earthen jars at home.

She tells her daughter two versions of what happened.

She is called in for a police interview in the capacity of a potential witness.

○ **May 11, 1974**

Police get a call reporting on a pair of legs found in a toilet on Aljunied Road.

Sim calls her husband on the phone to go home, and he sees blood trickling from an earthen jar.

Police arrive at Sim's home, and are almost driven back by a heavy stench.

Sim is arrested on the spot, and confesses everything. She shows police where the different body parts are.

○ **May 13, 1974**

Sim is charged in court. About 500 people turn up to catch a glimpse of her.

○ **May 20, 1974**

Second mention of her case, and she is remanded for psychiatric evaluation at Woodbridge Hospital.

○ **July 30, 1974**

Two-day preliminary inquiry held. She commits to stand trial at the end of it.

○ **Jan 27, 1975**

Sim is convicted of manslaughter and hiding evidence, and is jailed.



The house where the murder happened in 1974 — ST FILE PHOTO

settle some money matter. However, a car with a man and a woman pulled up. Madam Quek asked Sim to follow her into the car, but Sim refused.

Later, she said that Madam Quek had gone to her house with a couple. There, the couple and Madam Quek quarrelled over a money matter.

She claimed that the man then slashed Madam Quek with a knife, and punched Sim in the eye when she tried to help. She ran out of her house, and when she came back, there was no one there.

That very day, May 9, Sim was called in for a witness interview with Inspector Tan when it became apparent that Madam Quek's last destination was Sim's home.

While she was being interviewed, her daughter, who was seated outside the interview office, heard Sim giving the police another version of events.

She interrupted her mother and told her to tell the truth.

Inspector Tan then followed Sim to the home, but did not detect any stench or find any clues at that point.

When interviewed several years later, in 2005, Madam Quek's son, a lawyer said: "During my mother's death anniversary, we'll talk about what happened and we'll cry. But it's something that happened 30 years back, and I don't want to bring this up again for fear of hurting my father".



1975

SWIMMING

TRUNK

GANG

Greed proved the downfall of these serial robbers who struck in nothing more than underwear



Their modus operandi was unique, to say the least. They would first meet up dressed normally, take a taxi to their destination, and proceed to strip, leaving nothing but swimming trunks on. Then they would strike, breaking into homes and robbing families at knifepoint. With the loot, they would return to where they had placed their clothes, flag a taxi and flee.

For 30 months in the early 1970s, the gang of four robbers terrorised residents, inflicting injuries in four of their hold-ups.

They were so successful in eluding the police that they were believed to have been responsible for some 500 offences including housebreakings, thefts and armed robberies.

Their total haul, by the time they were arrested, amounted to nearly \$500,000.

The figures were reported to have been an all-time record in local criminal history then.

The sentence the four men later received was also believed to have been the highest meted out by a district court at the time.

Appropriately, they were dubbed the “swimming trunk gang”. The reason for wearing just trunks was to allow them to move easily, and to prevent their victims from catching hold of them. Sometimes, they wore masks.

The gang comprised of Suhaymi Harith, 40, Khalil Mohammed Dol, 39, Wassan Sakeebun, 45, and Wagiman Abdullah, 47. Those were their ages when they were finally arrested in 1975.

Unemployed Wagiman was Suhaymi’s uncle and a former secret society fighter. Khalil was a labourer with an engineering firm in Bedok. Wassan, a father of four, was the brains behind the operation. He was a chauffer for a medical professor and claimed to have spiritual powers which could protect the gang from the police.

ROBBERS



The swimming trunk gang arriving for court before being sentenced to 64 years in jail and 144 strokes of the cane in total. TOP: Khalil (left) and Suhaymi. ABOVE: Wassan (left) and Wagiman.
— ST FILE PHOTOS

The men started striking homes across Singapore in January 1973. They would usually commit their crimes between 2am and 4.30am. Their favourite entry point was the window.

In one attack on Dec 21, 1974, the men broke into the house of an Indonesian businessman in Tai Keng Avenue at 3am and woke the family members at knifepoint.

In another robbery on May 16, 1975, the gang broke into a house in Jalan Angklong, off

The Straits Times on July 6, 1975. In the story on the gang's arrest, a police spokesman described the robbers as "very elusive".

Upper Thomson Road, at about 4am.

Mr Lu Pao Kung, 65, who lived in the house, was then sleeping with his family of five when he was woken by men in swimming trunks beside his bed.

The intruders pointed their knives at family members' necks and reportedly said: "Do not move. This is a robbery."

They left after half an hour, making off with \$17,280 in valuables.

On June 10, 1975, the barely-clad men struck again at a teacher's home at Jalan Girang, off Upper Serangoon Road.

They woke Madam Low Ee Lee, 52, and her family at about 3am. The men fled after 30 minutes with \$1,920 in cash and valuables.

Their luck almost ran out after breaking into the house of a businessman in Jalan Penchalak, off Bartley Road, at around 4am on June 13, 1975.

They were splitting the \$9,370 worth of loot near the Bidadari cemetery, about 1km away from the home, when police detectives on patrol along Upper Aljunied Road spotted them at about 5am and gave chase.

But the men slipped away.

The greed of one of the gang members would prove their downfall.

Suhaymi believed Wassan was not giving out the proceeds fairly. So he took some of the loot to sell on his own.

On July 3rd, 1975, police got a call that a

man was selling watches, radios and pens to his colleagues.

They raided the office at River Valley Road, and hauled in Suhaymi, who worked as a driver.

A wristwatch, a gold ring and a ballpoint pen were found on him.

After being grilled for 24 hours, he spilled the beans on his accomplices.

One of the gang's victims also identified Suhaymi in a line-up.

The police caught up with the rest in pre-dawn raids.

Of the total money and valuables stolen, only \$13,000 was recovered.

All four pleaded guilty to 228 charges of housebreaking, robbery and theft committed between Jan 5, 1973, and June 13, 1975.

District Judge E.C. Foenander, who heard the gang's trial, sentenced the four men to a total of 64 years in jail plus 144 strokes of the cane in late July 1975.

In their mitigation, all four men blamed the high cost of living as their reason for committing the crimes. 81

1978

MOUNT

VERNON

MURDERS

Three friends who wanted to become
robbers decided they needed a gun, and
killed to get one



The killers of 18-year-old police national serviceman Lee Kim Lai and 60-year-old taxi driver Chew Peng Hin were caught in a remarkably fast time — thanks partly to the alertness of Detective Siew Mun Seng. He was driving home from the Beach Road Police Station to his flat in Geylang Bahru at 3am on April 25, 1978, when he saw two young men behaving suspiciously near some bushes.

PRIMARY SCHOOL FRIENDS WHO BECAME KILLERS



Yeo Ching Boon, 21.



Ong Hwee Kuan, 21.



Ong Chin Hock, 21.

— ST FILE PHOTOS

They were carrying a parcel, and at that time gangsters used to carry weapons in such bags.

The detective was off duty at the time, but his police instincts kicked in. He decided to approach the pair.

The two men were Yeo Ching Boon, who was unemployed, and labourer Ong Hwee Kuan.

What Detective Siew did not know at the time was that Hwee Kuan had just removed his bloody clothes for fresh ones while in the bushes.

When they saw the plainclothes police officer, they bolted.

But Detective Siew managed to catch Hwee Kuan. Yeo was soon arrested in his house in Kallang Bahru. A third man, labourer Ong Chin Hock turned himself in later that night.

And so unravelled a dastardly plot that began with a plan to steal a revolver to rob with, and ended with the murder of two innocent men.

The three culprits, all aged 21 and who had been friends since primary school, had decided to become robbers to solve their money problems.

But first they needed a gun.

Yeo believed he knew where to get one. Having served at a police reserve unit in Mount Vernon during his national service, he suggested stealing a gun from the sentry there.

Their plan was to abduct the sentry in a taxi. They decided to commit the deed at night —

believing that the sentry will be less alert, and that there will be fewer observers around.

In the early hours of that Tuesday, they hailed a taxi driven by the unsuspecting Mr Chew at Kallang Bahru, and directed him to a deserted stretch of road at Mount Vernon, somewhere behind the police unit.

When the cab stopped, they tied up Mr Chew, stabbing him in the stomach when he resisted.

Yeo and Hwee Kuan pulled him to a drain and threw him inside. Twice the cabby tried to climb out. Each time, he was stabbed.

Mr Chew eventually died.

The trio then drove to the gate of the police reserve unit, where the unfortunate Lee was on sentry duty.

Yeo alighted from the taxi, and flashed his national service card at the sentry.

He then asked Mr Lee to help him carry Hwee Kuan, who was pretending to be heavily intoxicated in the back seat of the cab, into the camp.

When Mr Lee came close, Hwee Kuan surprised him and pulled him inside the taxi.

Thinking that his assailants were robbers, the young sentry offered them the \$2 he had on him.

The kidnappers stopped the cab in Kallang Bahru, where they stabbed Mr Lee 15 times, including two fatal strikes to the neck.

They took his revolver and 10 rounds of

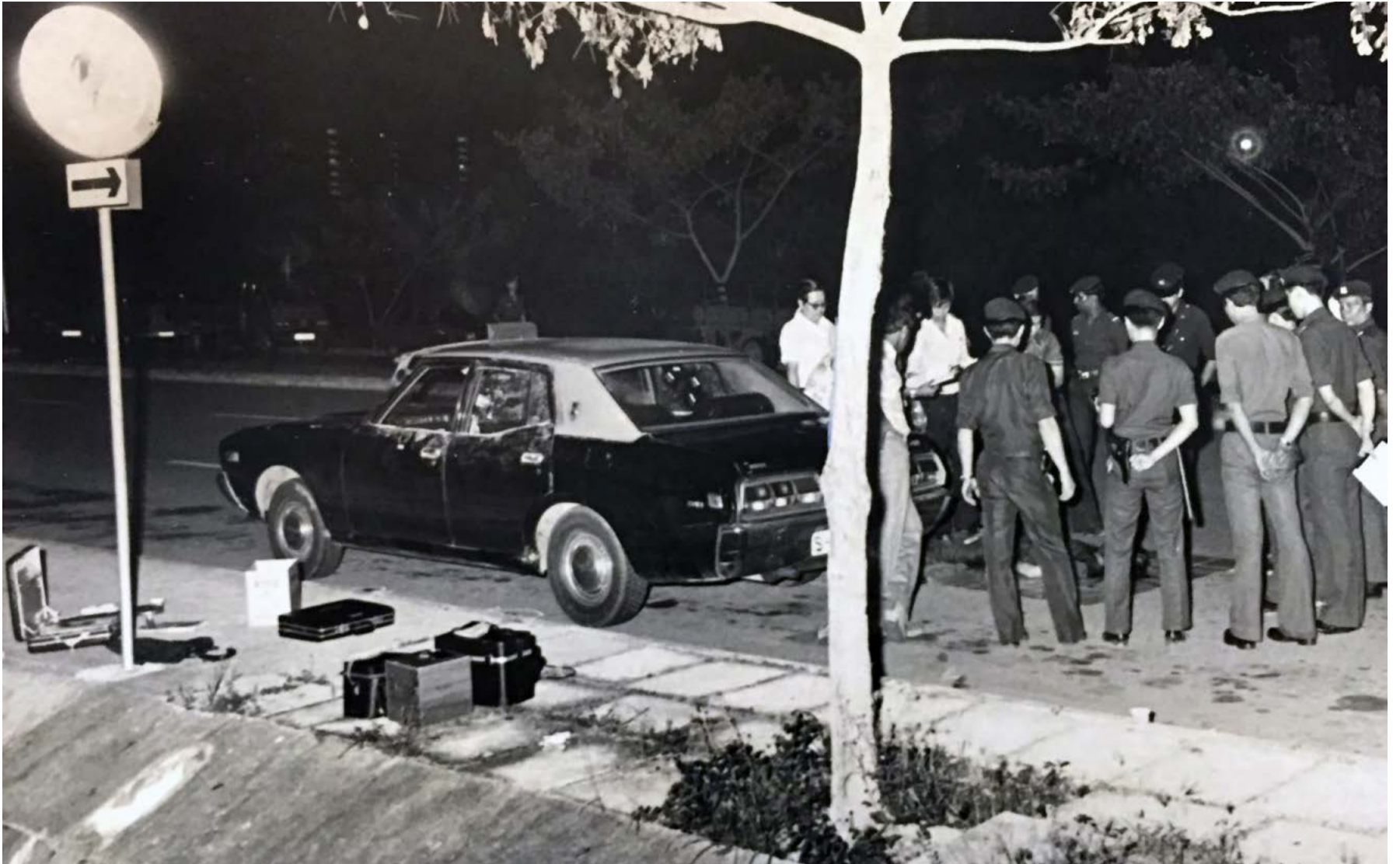
VICTIMS



Taxi driver Chew Peng Hin was left in a drain to die.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO



Police national serviceman Lee Kim Lai was stabbed 15 times.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO



Pathologist Dr Chao Tzee Cheng (left, wearing glasses) and police officers looking at Mr Lee's body beside the taxi.

— ST FILE PHOTO

ammunition, and abandoned the taxi at Geylang Bahru, leaving Mr Lee in the back seat.

What the trio did not realise at the time was that their actions did not go unobserved.

Former national sprinter Heather Marican's husband Osman was a senior policeman and the couple lived in the camp's residential quarters. Their home faced the guard house.

While looking out for her husband who had told her he was coming home late, she saw Mr Lee being bundled into the taxi. She told her husband when he returned soon after.

The police were alerted.

By then, Yeo and Chin Hock had gone to the former's house nearby to get fresh clothing for

Hwee Kuan, who was covered in blood.

Chin Hock later decided to go home.

Yeo, who left the gun they had stolen in a drawer, went to deliver the clothes to Hwee Kuan.

That was when Detective Siew discovered them.

Yeo told police they killed the two men because they had struggled.

Hwee Kuan insisted he tried to stop Yeo from stabbing Mr Lee, but his finger was cut in the process.

Chin Hock also denied taking part in the stabbings, claiming he was only the driver. When he surrendered, he thought he would be charged only with robbery, not realising that the two victims had died.

It was later revealed that Chin Hock had pawned his watch to buy the two knives used in the killings.

The three were sentenced to death on May 23, 1979



1981

RITUAL MURDERS

Adrian Lim, a charlatan medium seen by many as the very embodiment of evil, and his two “holy” wives, kidnapped, tortured and killed a pair of children



The first victim was little
Agnes Ng — curled up in
the fetal position inside
a travel bag by the lift
landing. She was discovered by a 25-year-
old carpenter at the ground floor of Block 11, Toa
Payoh Lorong 7, as he headed back home after a
night out at the movies on Jan 25, 1981.

“They found the bag, opened the zipper and
out popped her head,” said retired police officer
S.K. Menon, who was then the officer-in-charge
of the CID’s Special Investigation Section.



The bag in which Agnes' body was found. After the discovery, police appealed to shopkeepers who recently sold a brown PVC travel bag to contact them.

— POLICE FILE PHOTO

He did not know it then, but the nine-year-old girl was the first of the two ritual murder victims of Adrian Lim, an unemployed 39-year-old who claimed to be a medium, his wife Catherine Tan Mui Choo and his mistress Hoe Kah Hong.

Agnes was abducted by Hoe at the Church of the Risen Christ in Toa Payoh and taken to Lim's flat. She was injected with a sedative and then suffocated. She was also sexually assaulted by Lim.

A week after her death, either Tan or Hoe, called Agnes' mother threatening to "chop" Agnes' sister up.

But with few clues at the scene where the body was found, cracking the case was difficult, said Mr Menon. The pressure was truly on when the trio's second victim, Ghazali Marzuki, 10, was found almost two weeks after Agnes.

"He was just lying there on the grass patch," said Mr Menon, 78, when asked how the body was found, just metres from Lim's block.

Ghazali had been playing with his cousins in a playground in Clementi the day before when they were approached by Hoe asking for help.

Ghazali was taken to Lim's flat, where he was drugged, choked then drowned. There were also three burn marks on his back and a puncture on his arm.

This time, there was a trail of blood leading from Ghazali's body all the way to Lim's residence at Block 12.

THE VICTIMS

AGNES NG



Agnes Ng Siew Hock was a nine-year-old who went to the Holy Innocent's Chinese Girl School. She was the youngest of nine siblings. She was last seen alive by her sister Pauline and a friend at the Church of Risen Christ in Toa Payoh at about 4pm, on Jan 24, 1981. She was there waiting for her sister to finish classes before returning home together. Her body was found in a brown vinyl bag on Jan 25, at about 2.20am near a staircase at Block 11 Toa Payoh by a man returning from a midnight show. Adrian Lim's flat was at Block 12. Her home at Block 233 was not far away from where she was found. She had been sexually assaulted and suffocated — it seems by a hand covering her nose and mouth. According to a forensic expert during the trial, it would have taken her 10 minutes to die.

GHAZALI MARZUKI



Ghazali Marzuki, who studied in Henry Park Primary School, was 10. He was staying with his grandmother at Block 344, Clementi Avenue 5, on Feb 6 for the Chinese New Year holidays. While at a playground with two cousins, a woman approached them. She asked for help to collect some things from a friend's house. Ghazali agreed to help, and followed her into a taxi. That was the last time he was seen alive. In the early hours of Feb 7, Mr Fung Joon Yong, who lived at Block 12 in Toa Payoh, saw Catherine Tan stepping out of a lift, carrying a child over her shoulder. Adrian Lim was with her. They went in the direction of Blocks 10 and 11. Later that morning, Ghazali's body was found near a hedge just in front of Block 10. The boy had been drugged with a sedative and drowned — his head pushed into a tub of water. Burn marks were also found, but these were believed to have been caused by electrocution after he died.

THE MASTERMIND: **ADRIAN LIM**



He was born on Jan 6, 1942 and was the eldest of three children. He dropped out of Anglo-Chinese School after Secondary One, and was involved in a myriad of jobs — from an informer for the Internal Security Department to a bill collector. He spent 14 years with broadcasting company Rediffusion, but had always been obsessed with the supernatural. After learning Malay and Thai spells from a bomoh named Uncle Willie, he quit to become a self-proclaimed medium — claiming to have powers to heal. He would speak in different languages when in a trance, and persuaded women to sleep with him in order to cleanse the “evil” in them. According to his doctor, Lim went to his clinic at least 40 times for hormone injections to increase his sexual potency. Lim told the police that most of his “abilities” such as fortune reading were mere tricks to get young women to sleep with him because he believed it would prolong his life. He had two children with his first wife.

HIS “HOLY” WIFE 1: **CATHERINE TAN**



Neglected by her parents for her brothers, Tan grew up longing for attention. At 17, she left home after the death of her grandmother, with whom she shared a close relationship, and became a bar girl. She was just 20 when she went to see Lim in 1974 for treatment on the advice of her nightclub friends. And fell under his influence. She moved into his flat - a situation that Lim’s legal wife could not accept. Within days, she took their kids and moved out. In front of an altar of Chinese and Indian deities, Tan was made his “holy wife”. They married officially in 1977, after Lim’s divorce. He beat her up and convinced her into prostitution and to work as a striptease performer. He also got her to convince other women to sleep with him as part of their “treatment”, and to prostitute themselves as well.

HIS "HOLY" WIFE 2: HOE KAH HONG



Her own mother took her to see Lim. The factory worker became a true believer in Lim's powers, despite being subjected to electric shocks. He convinced her that she was an illegitimate child, and that her problems were caused by her husband Benson Loh Ngak Hua, a welder. During a "treatment" session on Jan 7, 1980, Mr Loh died of electrocution at the hands of Lim. Hoe told police he died while switching on a faulty fan.

THE TRAIL OF BLOOD

In a search of the area where Ghazali was found, police were led to the lift at Blk 12 where a resident had seen Catherine Tan with the boy.

A bloodstain was found in the vicinity.

Police decided to search the higher floors. More blood stains were found between the fifth and sixth storey staircase and the staircase leading to the seventh storey.

They decided to check the units on the seventh storey, the first of which was Adrian Lim's. He was in the corridor. They spoke and Lim agreed to a search of his home. It was very messy inside. In the kitchen, police found what seemed to be a bloodstain on the floor.

More police were called in to conduct a thorough search.

Tan and Hoe Kah Hong had returned by this time.

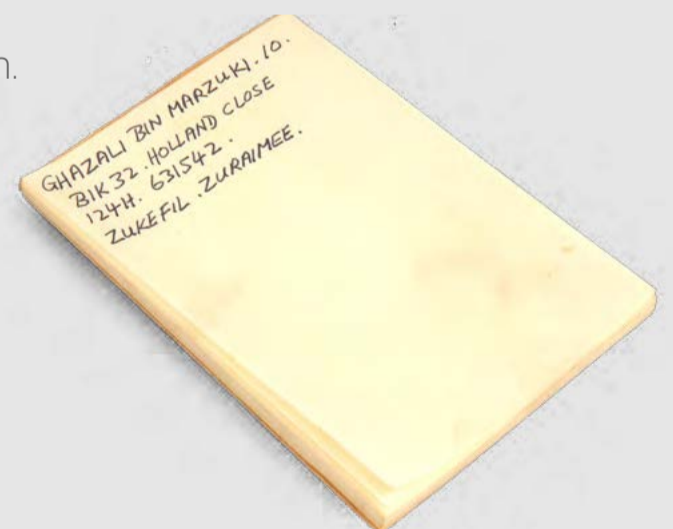
Lim called them his wife and girlfriend, and told police they lived together. A pair of slippers, shorts and a handkerchief — all stained with blood — were discovered. They belonged to Lim.

A bloodstained blouse belonging to Hoe was found in a pail.

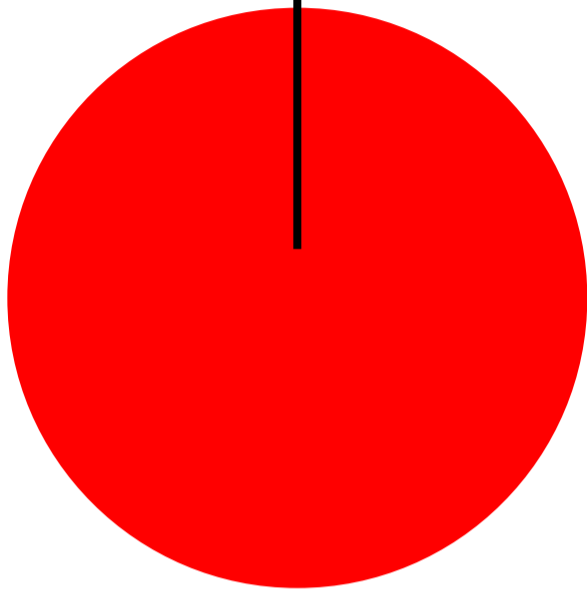
Pills containing the drug found in Ghazali were seized, along with a syringe believed to contain his blood.

Strands of hair that seemed like Ghazali's were found under a carpet and under a sofa.

Lim, Tan and Hoe were arrested and the next day, charged with murder.



THE NEEDLE- IN-EGG TRICK



Adrian Lim used the trick to convince people of his abilities. He admitted in court that it was nothing but a scam. He first heated a needle, turning it black. When the needle was hot, it would easily penetrate an egg as the heat softened the shell. Powder will then be used to cover the hole where the needle went in.

“He did not realise the body was dripping blood from the nose,” said Mr Menon. “The blood, that was his undoing.”

Officers cordoned off the area and searched the block house-to-house. When they got to the seventh floor, they found Lim, dressed in a shirt and pants, seemingly about to make a run for it, said Mr Menon.

“(The house) was very eerie, it was lit with amber light, and right in front when you go in is the altar.”

Officers found various religious items in the flat, and on the altar Mr Menon mentioned, there were crucifixes and Hindu and Chinese idols, some of which were smeared with blood.

Suspicious were aroused further when a drop of blood was spotted on the kitchen floor.

“I asked him about it and he said Chinese New Year was just over and he had been killing chickens in the kitchen,” said Mr Menon, adding that tests later revealed it to be human blood. “He was a class-one con man.”

Officers searched the house thoroughly, and also found vials of blood in the fridge, but the most damning evidence was a single piece of paper.

“We found a slip of paper inside (a telephone book) with both their names, Agnes and Ghazali’s, we knew then that was the man,” said Mr Menon, noting that while the girl’s name had been included in media reports, Ghazali’s body had been found only that morning.



VIDEO

Retired police officer S.K. Menon, who was then the officer-in-charge of the CID's Special Investigation Section.

Lim and the two women were arrested and taken into custody. They later confessed that the murders were a malicious act of revenge.

At that point in time, the police were investigating a rape charge against Lim. He was annoyed and angry with the constant questioning and claimed that he was framed. He decided to exact revenge on the police by murdering children, sending Tan and Hoe to hunt for victims.

The court heard details about the depraved

'WE DECIDED
TO KILL SMALL
CHILDREN TO
GET EVEN WITH
THE WHOLE
WORLD'

During the trial, it was revealed that Adrian Lim killed the two children as revenge after being allegedly framed for rape by cosmetics seller Lucy Lau Kok Huang — another whom Lim claimed as a "holy wife".

On Nov 7, 1980, Ms Lau went to police to report that Lim had raped her. He was charged and had to report to police each time he extended his bail. He described this as an inconvenience to him and his holy wives. He later told the court that he could not accept that as a "ladies man" whom women fell for, he had been accused of rape. He claimed Ms Lau was jealous of his other "holy wives" and tried to get revenge after he refused to get rid of them.

"I felt that I had been framed and that the police had been blind. We (with Tan and Hoe) wanted revenge and had a meeting. At the meeting, we decided to kill small children," Lim said.

On the stand, he later testified that his main reason for killing the children was to offer them as sacrifice to the deity Kali, who would help him escape the rape charge and solve other problems.

ADRIAN LIM'S HOUSE OF HORROR

Two children were killed here, a seventh-story flat in Block 12, Toa Payoh Lorong 7. The unit was vacant for five years after the murders until a Catholic family moved in.



“

PEOPLE WERE SO SCARED THAT SOME OF THEM DID NOT WANT TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.

Retired police officer S.K. Menon

lifestyles of Hoe, Tan and Lim, his work as a medium and how he subjected his victims to electroshock therapy. Hoe's husband Benson Loh was subjected to the torture some years earlier and died. At the time, Hoe told investigators that he had been electrocuted while trying to switch on a broken fan.

The case had so shocked and horrified Singapore that crowds gathered outside the courts to catch a glimpse of the trio and get a first-hand experience of the trial.

On May 23, 1983, all three were sentenced to death. Lim accepted the verdict but Tan and Hoe appealed, claiming mental illness. Both appeals were dismissed.

The trio were hanged on Nov 25, 1988, at Changi Prison and cremated at Mount Vernon Crematorium.

“In all my years as a police officer, I never came across anything else like this,” said Mr Menon. “People were so scared that some of them did not want to send their children to school”.



Police officers standing outside the flat where Lim and his “holy” wives tortured and murdered two children. — ST FILE PHOTO

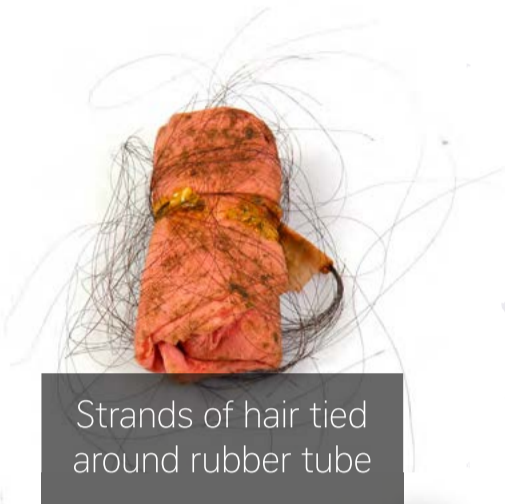


LIM'S "HOLY" RITES

Some of the 250 items, many of religious nature, that were collected by the police from Lim's house. Tap on each for a description.



Bundle of charms



Strands of hair tied around rubber tube



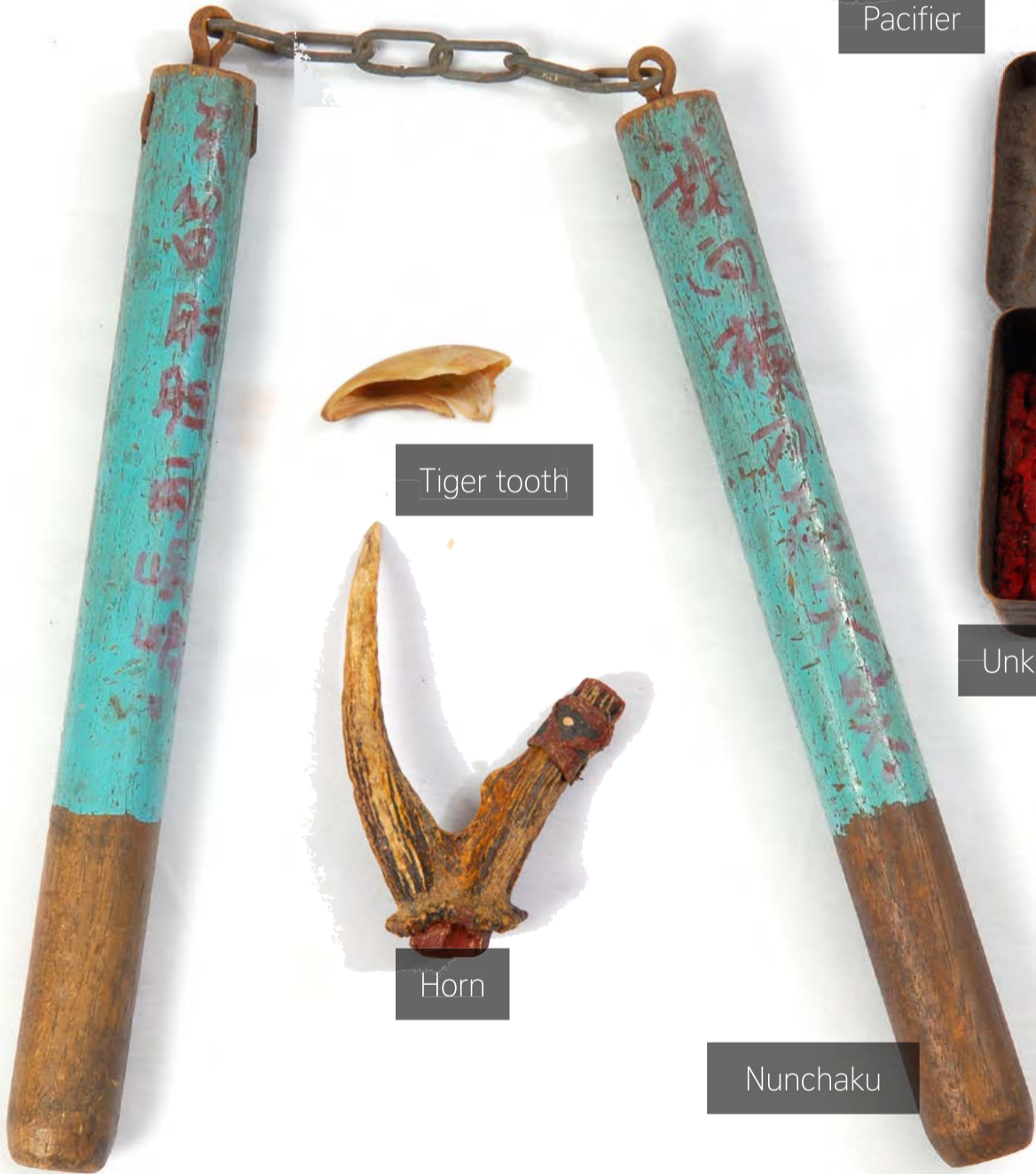
Red flag



Pacifier



Chanting instrument with red string



Tiger tooth



Unknown item

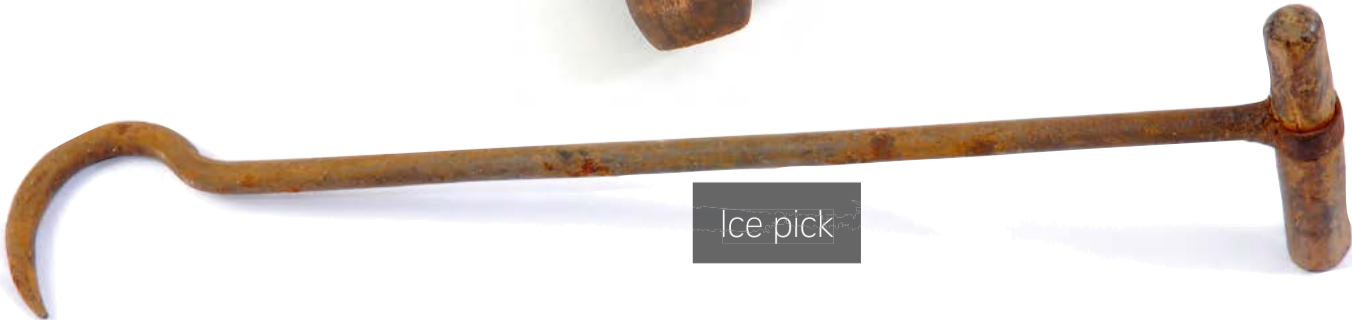


Horn



Plastic snake bangle

Nunchaku



Ice pick

*Item are not to scale

HOE'S SHOCKING TESTIMONY

She told police how she first met Adrian Lim. Her mother took her and her sisters to him for help. One of her sisters, she said, had become unstable after being jilted.

She was amazed when Lim rubbed eggs on her sister and broke them to reveal black needles.

On another visit, she said Lim had pointed a snake at her and her sister, making them vomit. He then covered their faces with black cloth and immersed their legs in a tub of water for electricshock treatment. "Suddenly I trembled all over and saw light everywhere although my face was covered by black cloth. After the treatment, he said I was prettier than before."

She went to stay with Lim a few days later. She said she was made to drink their urine to ward off evil spirits. She said in the days that followed she was brainwashed into believing that her parents had cast evil spirits into her. A mock wedding was held for her and Lim in front of an altar. He told her to collect her things from her home and move in with him. When she returned with her mother, Lim made her beat her mother with a broom.

"Whenever Lim wanted me to do something, he would say that the old master had entered him and had instructed that he pass the message to me. I would then do his bidding."

Hoe said her husband Benson Loh went on to spend the weekends in Lim's flat, at Lim's behest.

On the day of his death, Loh and Hoe were tied together for electricshock therapy.

All of a sudden she lost consciousness, she said. When she came to, she saw Lim and Tan trying

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

HOE'S SHOCKING TESTIMONY

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

to revive her husband. She was convinced by Lim to tell police that her husband was accidentally electrocuted.

When Lim took the stand, he admitted to murdering Loh. He said Loh's presence stopped him from having sex with Hoe.

After Lim's arrest for rape, he spoke of his plan to kill children.

In Dec 1980, he told Hoe to get the "fish" — the code for children.

She got a girl aged 10 to follow her from Toa Payoh Central. But Lim rejected the girl because she was Indian and the deity he worshipped, called Kalamamm, was Hindu.

Hoe picked up another girl from Clementi. She was Chinese. But Lim said she was too skinny.

The third girl she brought back made Lim panic when she called her friend on the phone, and told Lim that the friend had seen her being led away by a woman.

Agnes Ng was the fourth girl. Hoe said they pricked her finger and each of them took a sip. When Agnes went to the toilet, they killed her there. "I immersed her head in the tub of water. Lim stepped on Agnes' body while Catherine held her legs," said Hoe.

Lim then told her that he wanted a boy next, and to find someone with money so he could collect ransom before the murder.

Hoe said she chose Ghazali Marzuki because he looked like her dead husband. They consumed his blood too, before drowning him, she said.

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

HOE'S SHOCKING TESTIMONY

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

After a 41-day trial, Lim, Tan and Hoe were all sentenced to hang. Arguments that the trio were suffering from mental illness were rejected.

Justice T.S. Sinnathuray said Lim was "purposeful in his pursuits, patient in his planning and persuasive in his performance for personal power and pleasure".

"We are revulsed by his abominable and depraved conduct."

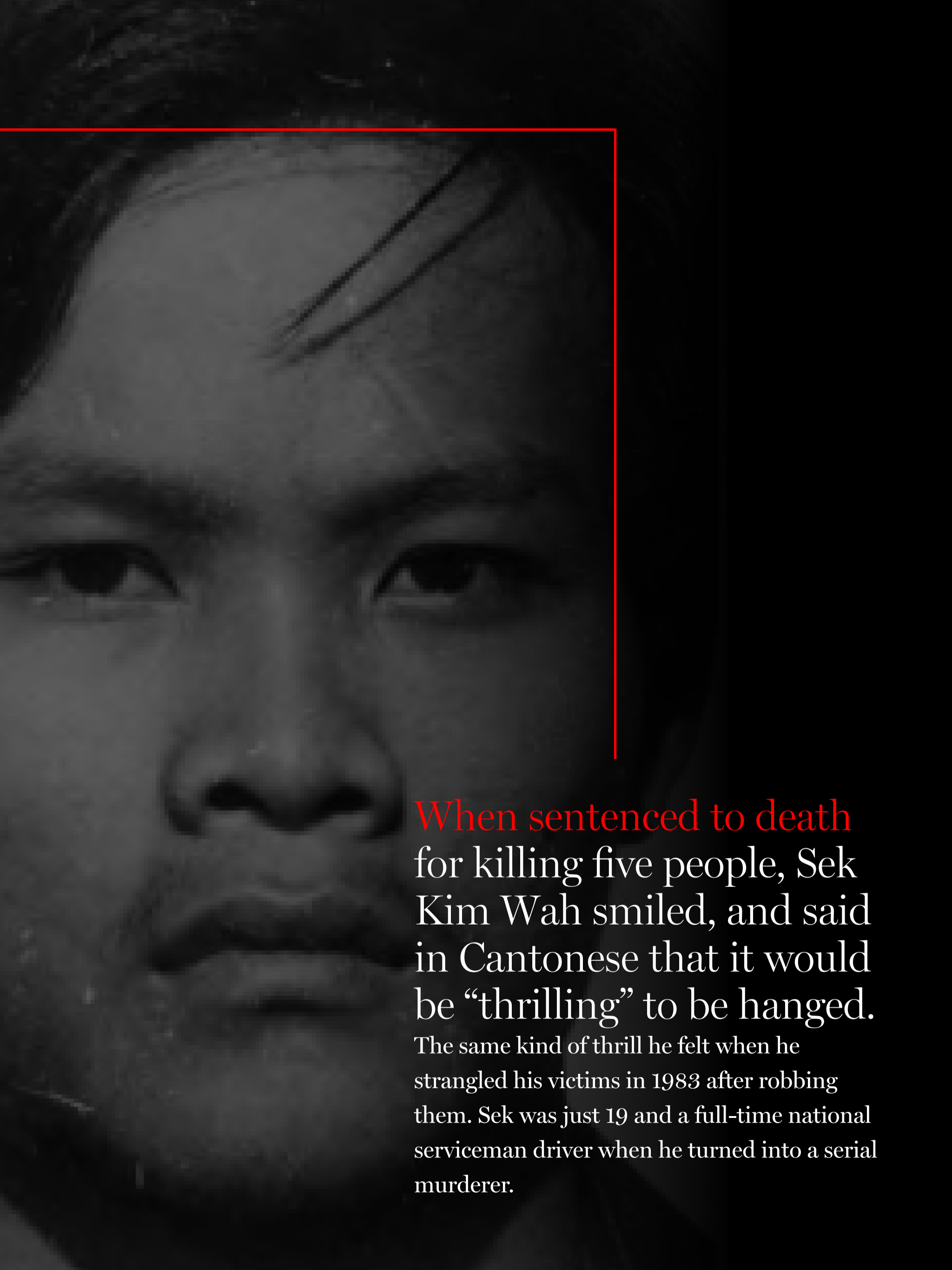
The judge called Tan an "artful and wicked person" who was always a "willing party to Lim's loathsome and nefarious acts".

In contrast, Hoe was a "simple person who can be easily influenced". When three police vans took the three back to jail, some in the crowd gathered in the streets booed.

1983

ANDREW ROAD MURDERS

**Sek Kim Wah killed a retired businessman,
his wife and their maid during a robbery,
and would have killed two more if not for his
reluctant accomplice**



When sentenced to death for killing five people, Sek Kim Wah smiled, and said in Cantonese that it would be “thrilling” to be hanged. The same kind of thrill he felt when he strangled his victims in 1983 after robbing them. Sek was just 19 and a full-time national serviceman driver when he turned into a serial murderer.

KILLER



Sek Kim Wah was found guilty of killing retired businessman Robert Tay, 61, his wife Annie, 45, and their Filipina maid Jovita, 27.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

VICTIM



Mrs Annie Tay was forced into telling Sek where she kept her jewellery before she was murdered.
— ST FILE PHOTO

He first took the lives of Mr Lim Khee Sin, 42, an illegal bookmaker, and 32-year-old bar hostess Ong Ah Hong in June 1983, in Marine Parade.

Their bodies were discovered at a Seletar Reservoir dirt track.

It was after he killed three more people a month later, in what is known as the “Andrew Road murders”, that he was caught in a massive police swoop on July 29, 1983.

He was arrested at his sister’s home in Alexandra Road.

The horrifying details of how he went about killing 61-year-old Robert Tay Bak Hong, a retired businessman, his wife Annie Tay, 45, and their Filipina maid Jovita S. Virador, 27, were revealed in his 1985 trial.

THE TRIPLE MURDER

He committed the triple killing in a split-level bungalow on Andrew Road.

One of the first witnesses to take the stand was Mr Tay’s 12-year-old daughter Dawn. She was 10 the day she was orphaned.

She had been roller-skating outside her home in the morning, waiting for her tutor, when she noticed two young men — one of whom was Malaysian Nyu Kok Meng — next to a motorcycle two houses away. She thought they were repairing the vehicle.

After her Mandarin tutor, Madam Tang So Ha, arrived in a car, Dawn practised her



Sek showed no remorse and was often photographed grinning.

— ST FILE PHOTO

spelling and dictation until she needed to go to the toilet.

That was when she saw the men — one with a long gun and the other armed with a knife — accosting the maid who had been sweeping the bungalow's front porch. They pushed her through the front door.

One of them asked: "Where is Robert?"

They tied up the hands of all those present.

Mrs Tay was forced into telling Sek where she kept her jewellery. One of the men also got her to sign a cheque for \$5,000, which Sek immediately left to cash.

Nyu, who was also 19, guarded the rest of them with a rifle which Sek had stolen from an armoury at Nee Soon Camp in 1982.

When Sek returned, he was far from satisfied with the loot. He made Mr Tay follow him to an OCBC and a POSB branch to withdraw \$7,000 in total.

While Sek was out with Mr Tay, Nyu told Mrs Tay that it was his first robbery and he never intended to harm them. Mrs Tay made him shake hands with Dawn. "Probably to seal the promise that I would not harm them," he said in court.

When Sek and Mr Tay returned to the bungalow, the pair of robbers gagged their victims and continued ransacking the home.

Then Sek led Mr Tay into a room where he tried to strangle him with raffia string. When he failed, he used a heavy wooden stool to



Malaysian Nyu Kok Meng decided to help Dawn and her tutor after he realised Sek was going to kill them too.
— ST FILE PHOTO

repeatedly strike Mr Tay, fracturing his skull.

He then led Mrs Tay and Ms Virador into the master bedroom. He struck Mrs Tay several times with a wooden stool. Both women were also strangled with a lot of force.

Nyu went to investigate the thumping he heard. When he realised that Sek was determined to eliminate all witnesses, he decided to save those he could.

“Suddenly, the male Chinese who was holding the long gun rushed into our room and locked the door behind him,” said Dawn.

Nyu refused to let Sek into the room. Sek then decided to leave the house in Mr Tay’s Mercedes car.

Nyu handed over his identity card to Madam Tang, and asked her to convey a message to his parents to buy a coffin for him, as he planned to commit suicide after releasing her and Dawn.

He unlocked the door and told them to make a run for it.

As Dawn left with her tutor, she saw her father’s body in one room and that of her mother and maid in another. The bodies had shorts placed on their heads.

“My tuition teacher pulled me away and screamed,” said Dawn.

They ran to the neighbour’s house for help.

Nyu failed to kill himself as he did not know how to operate the rifle. “I pressed the trigger but nothing happened...” he testified.



Members of the Police Tactical Team outside retired businessman Robert Tay's bungalow at Andrew Road on July 23, 1983. Mr Tay, his wife and their Filipino maid were found murdered. — ST FILE PHOTO

“Frustrated, I put the rifle down.”

He left on Sek's motorcycle.

They met that afternoon to split the loot and went shopping at Shaw Towers with lounge hostess Lily Tay, who had met Sek earlier that month.

Sek asked Nyu why he left the rifle behind. He replied that he was worried more people would be killed.

Sek called Nyu “stupid” for letting the girl and tutor go free.

Sek also told him that had he opened the bedroom door, he would have killed all of them,

including Nyu.

That night Nyu fled to Malaysia using his friend's passport.

Nyu eventually surrendered, and was brought to Singapore. He was acquitted of the murder charges against him, but was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to life imprisonment and six strokes of the cane.

EARLIER KILLINGS

About a month before the triple murder, Sek strangled two people to death sometime between 11.10pm on June 29 and 1.30pm on June 30.

Mr Lim and Ms Ong, his victims, happened



ST FILE PHOTO

THE STOLEN RIFLE

In November 1982, while at the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute in Jurong for a live-firing exercise, Sek Kim Wah stole 17 live bullets by hiding them in his boots. When he returned to Nee Soon Camp, where he was serving his Basic Military Training, he transferred them into a torchlight.

The next month, he stole a rifle from the armoury. He brought it to the barracks, where he dismantled it into four parts, wrapped them in newspaper and put them in a plastic bag which he locked in a cupboard. Later that night, he hid the dismantled parts under a tree.

A few days later, he sneaked into the camp, and took the rifle parts.

When asked during the trial why he did not use the rifle on his victims, he said he was saving the bullets for a confrontation against people who had guns. "I won't waste the bullets so easily."

to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

That day, after aborting an attempt to rob a petrol kiosk and its owner, he took a taxi to a hawker centre in Marine Parade and waited for victims. He saw a couple in a Honda Accord but the vehicle left before he could rob them.

He was about to leave when a red Mitsubishi Lancer arrived.

Sek sneaked into the car, threatened Mr Lim with the rifle he had stolen, robbed them, and eventually strangled his victims with raffia string.

He told the court that he killed them because he did not want to be identified. Another thing on his mind was how serious an offence it was for him to have the AR-15 assault rifle in his possession.

“I gave it plenty of thought and finally decided to kill them so that they would not be able to make a report against me and then identify me.”

After he killed the couple, he loaded their bodies into the Lancer’s boot, returned to his rental flat at Jalan Geok Siang Nng, off Upper Bukit Timah Road, took a nap, then dumped the bodies at Seletar Reservoir.

‘THRILLING’

When asked how he felt when strangling Mrs Tay, Sek brought up an incident when he was

“

I WANTED TO TRY
EVERYTHING. THE MORE
I TRIED EVERYTHING,
THE MORE THRILLING.

Sek, on why he tried to electrocute one of his victims

nearly strangled by someone at the Singapore Boys' Home until he blacked out.

Sek said: "At first I felt discomfort. Then it was very thrilling... as if the lights were being switched on and off."

His life of crime started early.

Coming from a broken family, he dropped out of school when he was in Primary 4, then joined a secret society when he was about 13. Claiming that it was his father who taught him to steal, he was arrested for theft and sent to the Home in 1980, when he was 16.

When Sek was on a day-release scheme, he worked part-time as a gardener for Mr Tay.

As he and the businessman were driving to the banks in the Mercedes during the robbery, the older man said he recognised Sek's voice and name.

That was the moment Sek realised he needed to eliminate every witness. He was also reminded of his previous killings and the thrill he had felt. Asked by the judge if he enjoyed strangling others, Sek replied: "Yes."

But first he tried to electrocute Mrs Tay by placing two live wires on her tongue. He laughed in court as he remembered how he forgot to turn the power on. He then put the wires on the sole of her feet. Nothing happened so he found the family's pet goldfish and poured them into a tub. He placed the live wires inside, and killed the fish.

Asked why he experimented with



ST FILE PHOTO

THE 'GIRLFRIEND'

Lounge hostess Lily Tan first met Sek Kim Wah, known to her as Allan, less than two weeks before the triple murder.

But not long after, he was confessing to her about the Seletar and Andrew Road murders. He also vowed to kill 20 more people – 15 of them police, because he hated them.

“By that time, the value of his life would be \$100,000. He said that at present his life was valued at about \$30,000. I understood that to mean that the police would offer this amount of money to arrest him,” she said.

She added that Sek boasted that he was better than notorious gangster Lim Ban Lim, who was gunned down by police in 1972.

Miss Tay told the court she never led Sek on, and treated him as a customer.

On July 27, Ms Tan was told by a friend that Sek was angry after he found out that she had a boyfriend. Sek went to the lounge in Golden Sultan where she worked and confronted her. He had a knife in the bag he brought.

He threatened to kill himself in front of her if she did not tell him the truth. Two days later, Sek was arrested.

electrocution, Sek said: “I wanted to try everything. The more I tried everything, the more thrilling.”

SPURNED

The defence, which tried to paint Sek as a psychotic, brought up a one-sided love affair which supposedly pushed him over the edge.

Sek said he was in love with a coffeeshop owner's daughter. Even though she saw him only as a friend, she would scold him when he did something wrong. Around three days before his first killings, she sent him a letter which led him to believe she had rejected

his love.

“After receiving the letter I had the impression that there was no one to supervise me and I could do whatever I liked.

“I was frustrated. I like someone to exercise control over me, to care and look after me.

“But all they are interested in is money. Since everybody is busy about money, I would get it by hook or by crook and the more the merrier.”

GUILTY

After a 17-day trial, Justice Lai Kew Chai and Justice Wahab Ghows found that Sek was not suffering from a mental abnormality.

Instead, he was labelled a cruel and cold-blooded killer.

When told he would hang, Sek thanked the court for the sentence, saying that he had always wanted to die on the gallows, which he did on Dec 9, 1988.



1995

NICK LEESON, ROGUE TRADER

**While based in Singapore, he brought
down Britain's oldest bank and created a
worldwide financial scandal**



At the age of 28, Nick
Leeson brought down
233-year-old Barings —
Britain's oldest merchant
bank. It was where Queen Elizabeth did
her banking, and had funded such milestones
in history as the Napoleonic wars — but even
that was not enough to save it from the \$2.2
billion in losses racked up by the rogue trader.

In 1995, it was revealed that Barings' Singapore-based trader Leeson falsified accounts and trading records, and brought the bank to its demise – catching market watchers and his colleagues by surprise.

Leeson joined Barings Bank in London in 1989 as a 22-year-old, and a year later was sent to Jakarta to sort through £100 million of back contracts which were in a complete mess. He did the job, and his reputation increased. It was in Jakarta where he met colleague Lisa Sims, whom he married in 1992.

That same year in March, he was posted to Singapore where he earned the label of being a “whiz-kid” trader, even if he did fail his A-level maths.

According to The Business Times (BT), within a year of his arrival, after-tax profits at Baring Futures (Singapore) jumped from \$2.7 million in 1992, when he was rewarded with a £150,000 bonus on top of his £50,000 salary, to over \$20.3 million in 1993.

By early that year, he was allowed to do proprietary trading for the entire Barings group.

Leeson started dealing in Japanese government bonds, then dabbling in Nikkei 225 futures and options. And he was supposedly making the firm millions, accounting for a large chunk of its profits.

One auditors' report urged that he be “retained as long as possible”.

FORGER



Nick Leeson, the rogue trader whose financial risk-taking brought down England's oldest bank Barings.

— ST FILE PHOTO

“He was like a God and everyone was in awe of him. You felt that he could make or break the market,” a trader told BT.

But Leeson held both the positions of chief trader and head of settlements, which meant that he pretty much had free reign. And he used this to his advantage, concealing losses and unauthorised trades in a secret account called “error account 88888”.

This account, which was meant to track bona fide trading mistakes and minor accounting discrepancies, was found to have been used since 1992 to hide Leeson’s losses and show artificial profits in other Barings trading accounts.

While Leeson looked to his peers to be a high-flying daredevil trader, nothing was further from the truth.

By December 1994 and unknown to his bosses, he had racked up losses amounting to \$373.9 million. On the official books, he was making handsome profits.

In an attempt to claw back some money, Leeson bet heavily against the Nikkei index falling below the 19,000 mark.

He believed that share prices, which plunged after the Great Hanshin Earthquake hit the city of Kobe on Jan 17, 1995, would rise.

But prices kept falling, and Leeson, whose gamble costs Barings \$932 million, found himself in a deep hole of his own making.

That same month, alarm bells started

ringing after auditors found a £50 million discrepancy.

Barings investigated, but by the time the deficit was discovered in mid-February 1995, the losses had increased to \$2.2 billion, twice-



Leeson being escorted by officers from the Commercial Affairs Department as he clears immigration at Changi Airport after being extradited from Frankfurt.
— ST FILE PHOTO

exceeding the bank's capital and reserves.

As the worst was about to hit the bank, he and his wife left their \$5,000-a-month rented condominium in Anguilla View off Orchard Road on Feb 23.



Leeson seen smiling as he leaves court in a police van after being sentenced to 6½ years in prison.
— ST FILE PHOTO

In a rental white Mercedes, he drove across the Causeway and checked into the Regent Hotel in Kuala Lumpur alone, picking a \$296-a-night deluxe room.

A few days later, he was in Sabah, where he stayed in the Shangri-la Tanjung Aru Beach Resort with his wife. They stayed in Room 428, which was registered under his wife's name.

On March 1, the couple boarded a Royal Brunei flight to Frankfurt. When they arrived the next day, German police, tipped off that Leeson was on the flight, boarded the plane. They carried photos of the Leesons and spotted the couple.



Leeson being escorted by police at Changi Airport after his release from prison in July 1999.
— ST FILE PHOTO

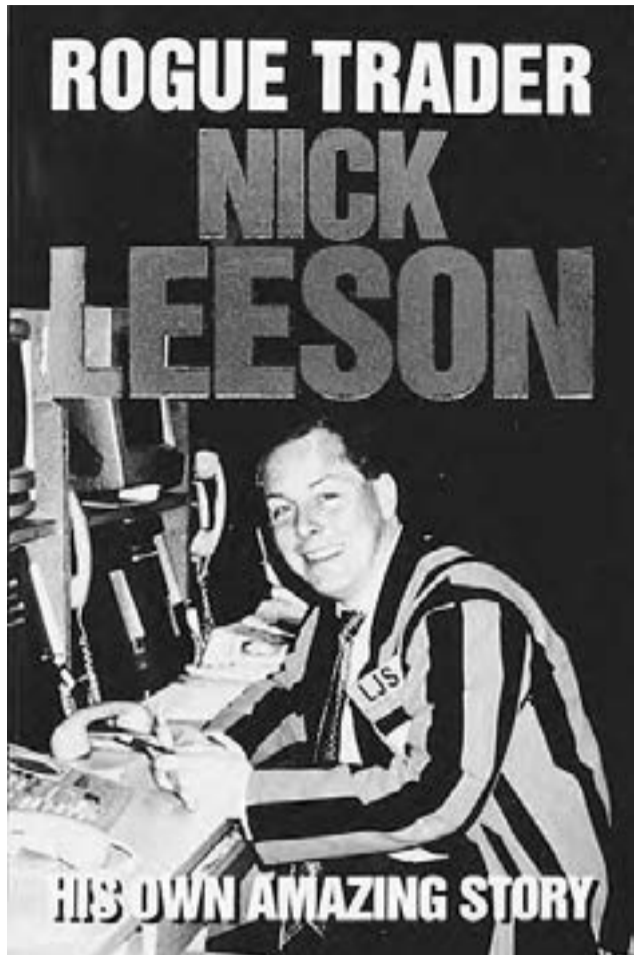
Leeson fought extradition, and while in jail in Germany, was allowed to be interviewed by noted BBC journalist David Frost, who also bought the movie rights to his story.

But he was back on Singapore's shores on Nov 23, 1995 – 272 days after he fled. The trial saw the world's media trying to catch every glimpse of Leeson.

The trial lasted just three days, even if it took more than an hour for the three charges of forgery and eight charges of cheating to be read out to Leeson.

He pleaded guilty to two charges and was sentenced to 6½ years in prison. He was released in July 1999 for good behaviour.

While in prison, Leeson wrote his book *Rogue Trader* detailing his time as a broker in



Scottish actor Ewan McGregor (right) starred as Leeson in the 1999 biopic *Rogue Trader*, which was based on Leeson's 1996 book (above). — HANDOUT FILE PHOTOS



Singapore and how he racked up those fantastic losses.

The film, based on the book and starring Ewan McGregor as Leeson, was released in 1999.

His wife Lisa divorced him while he was still in prison. In 1995, Barings was sold for a single pound to Dutch bank ING. ⁵¹


1996

TOURIST

FROM

HELL

**John Martin Scripps befriended
unknowing tourists, then butchered them
and drained their bank accounts**



He was the “tourist from hell”, and in his bag he carried knives, and one each of a hammer, can of mace and electric stun gun – tools he used to butcher his victims. In 1996, Briton John Martin Scripps, 36, was the first Westerner to be hanged for murder in Singapore. A year earlier, Scripps had killed and dismembered South African tourist Gerard George Lowe in the River View Hotel.

He put the parts into black plastic bags — three of which were later fished out of the waters around Clifford Pier. Mr Lowe's head and arms were never found.

Mr Lowe, a brewery engineer, had arrived at Changi Airport on the morning of March 8 to buy cheap electronics.

But while he was at the airport, he was approached by a smiling and charming Scripps, who asked if he was willing to share a room. Mr Lowe agreed. The duo checked into Room 1511 in the River View Hotel that same day.

Scripps, who admitted to killing the 32-year-old, had told police he was awakened by a half-naked Lowe that night in the hotel room. Mr Lowe, he claimed, was smiling and touching his buttocks.

Scripps said he was not a homosexual and Mr Lowe's actions frightened him. He used his 1.5kg camping hammer "to hit Lowe several times on the head until he collapsed onto the carpeted floor".

The next morning, Scripps asked a hotel receptionist to delete Mr Lowe's name from the room registration system, saying that he had kicked him out the previous night.

Records showed that Scripps then went on a shopping spree. He used Mr Lowe's credit cards to withdraw \$8,775 in cash and buy a \$499 videocassette recorder.

He also attended a Singapore Symphony Orchestra performance on March 10. On

MURDERER



John Martin Scripps learnt butchery skills during one of his stints in prison.

VICTIM



Mr Gerard George Lowe had come to Singapore to buy electronic goods.



The 1.5kg hammer which Scripps said he used to hit South African tourist Lowe. — POLICE FILE PHOTO

March 11, he checked-out and flew to Bangkok.

Days later, the first bag containing Mr Lowe's grisly remains were found in the Singapore River.

On a flight to Phuket on March 15, Scripps befriended his next two victims, Canadian mother-and-son Sheila and Darin Damudes.

They checked into adjacent rooms at a hotel facing the popular tourist-haunt Patong Beach. The Damudes were not seen again after they ate breakfast the next morning.

Scripps later told the receptionist that the Damudes had left and that he would pay their bill.

On March 19, Scripps returned to Singapore

and was arrested at the airport. He was found with his tools of death — the stun gun was used to incapacitate his victims first, as well as US\$40,000 in cash and traveller's cheques, and the passports, credit cards and belongings of Mr Lowe and the Damudes.

On that same day, the skulls of the Damudes were found in a disused tin mine in Phuket's Kathu district. A torso and a pair of arms and legs were also found along a road five days later.

Scripps, who was born in Hertfordshire, had learnt his butchery skills while in prison in Britain.

Since the age of 15, the teenage delinquent, who as a 10-year-old discovered his lorry driver father's body after he had committed suicide, had been shuttling in and out of prison for offences ranging from drug trafficking to assault.

But his skills with a knife, he learnt in 1993 while in the Albany Prison on the Isle of Wight for trafficking heroin. A prison officer who prepared him for a career as a butcher during the six-week course would later recall how Scripps was a natural at dismembering and deboning animals.

He also had a penchant of absconding from British prisons after being granted home leave. This happened in 1982, 1990, and also 1994, when he was serving two six-year sentences for heroin trafficking and was allowed to visit his mother and sister. This was despite his mother

MOTHER-AND-SON VICTIMS



Canadian Darin Damudes (left), a student, and his mother Sheila Damudes, a school administrator. Their bodies were found sliced into pieces.
— HANDOUT FILE PHOTO



The prison van carrying Scripps leaving the High Court after the trial.
— ST FILE PHOTO

begging authorities to not release him, warning that he would again run away.

While in custody in Singapore, Scripps was linked to several disappearances, included that of two British men. One went missing in Belize in 1995. His body was later found cut into pieces and thrown into a crocodile-infested river. The other disappeared a year before in Cancun, Mexico. Money from their accounts were traced to Scripps.

He was also wanted by American authorities for the murder of a homosexual prostitute in 1994. The body was found in a dumpster, chopped into pieces.

During his trial, Scripps claimed that while he had killed Mr Lowe, a “British friend” had disposed of his body. He insisted he could not reveal this man’s identity or his family would be

harmed back in Britain.

But judge T.S. Sinnathuray rubbished this.

“I’m satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that Martin had intentionally killed Lowe. After that, he disarticulated Lowe’s body into separate parts, and it was he who subsequently disposed of the body parts by throwing them into the river behind the hotel,” said the judge.

He also added that the manner of “the disarticulation of the body parts of Lowe, Sheila and Darin have the hallmark signs of having been done by the same person”.

While awaiting sentencing, Scripps had famously said: “Karma is karma. It’s in God’s hands now.”

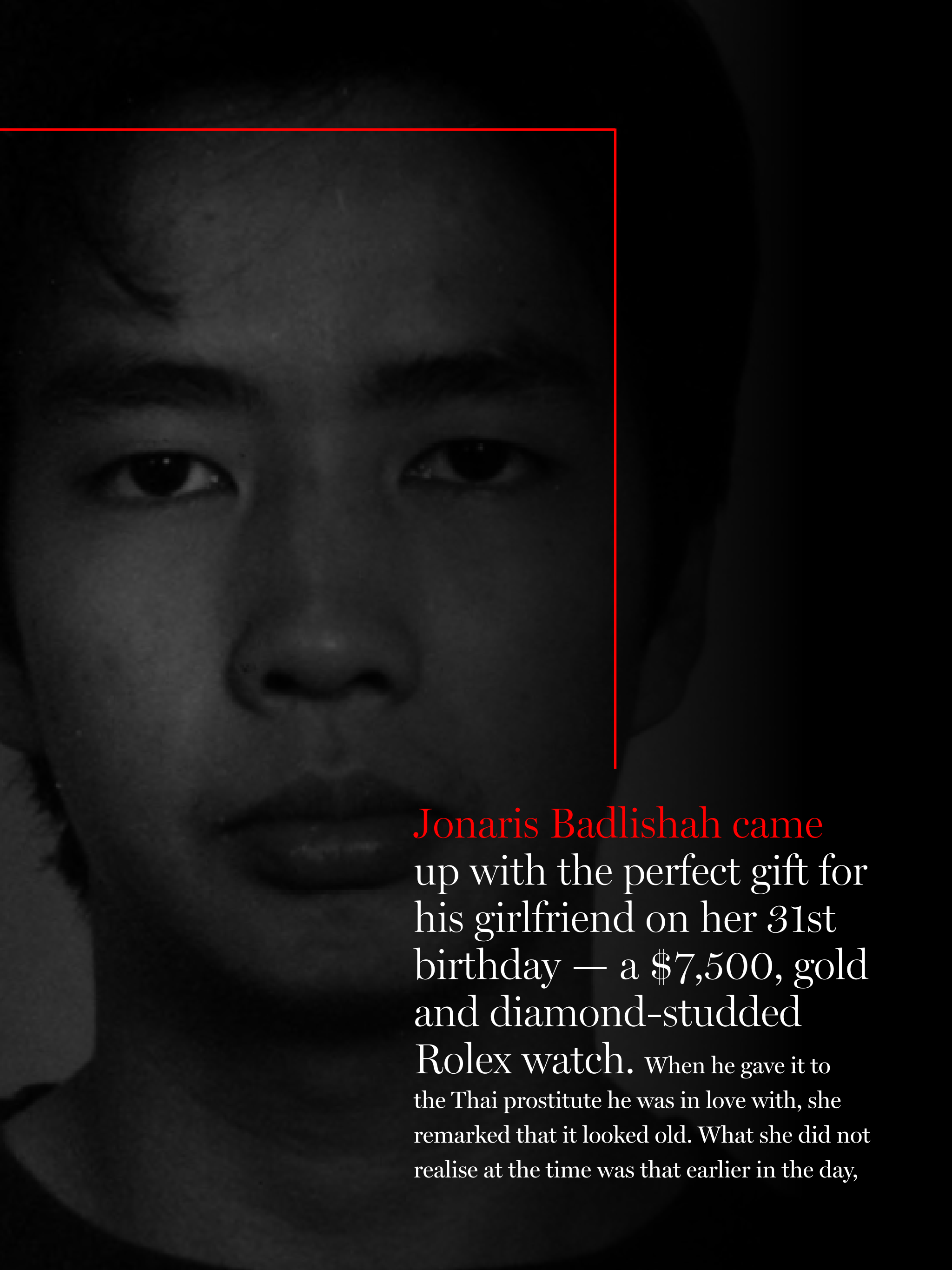
After a last meal of pizza and hot chocolate, he was hanged on April 19, 1996. And with his death, Canadian and Thai police closed the file on the deaths of the Damudes.



1998

ROLEX MURDER

Jonaris Badlishah wanted to give his girlfriend a Rolex. He did not have the money, so he killed to get the watch



Jonaris Badlishah came up with the perfect gift for his girlfriend on her 31st birthday — a \$7,500, gold and diamond-studded Rolex watch. When he gave it to the Thai prostitute he was in love with, she remarked that it looked old. What she did not realise at the time was that earlier in the day,

the watch had been on the wrist of 42-year-old make-up artist Sally Poh Bee Eng, a mother of two grown-up children.

In the early hours of April 20, 1998, Jonaris had repeatedly bashed her head with a hammer for the sole purpose of taking the watch.

OFTEN IN DEBT

Known as Joe to his colleagues, 23-year-old Jonaris was a freelance assistant cameraman and prop assistant.

Jonaris' Singaporean mother Elizabeth Seet divorced his Malaysian father when he was still young. She returned to Singapore when Jonaris was about two years old, and later remarried. The family lived in a Begonia Drive semi-detached house in the expensive Seletar Hills estate. But even then, Jonaris was often in debt and needed to borrow money.

He met Madam Poh during a filming project about two days before the killing, and noticed her wearing a Rolex watch. "It caught my attention," he said. He thought that it would make "a wonderful present" for his girlfriend Saifon Ngammoo. "I knew that I could not afford to buy such an expensive watch for her. The next thing that came to my mind was to rob Sally Poh of her watch."

THE KILLING

On April 19, he called her, identified himself as "Nigel" — a name that would later haunt

MURDERER



Malaysian Jonaris Badlishah said he was obsessed with getting his girlfriend a Rolex watch.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

VICTIM



Make-up artist Sally Poh Bee Eng, a mother of two.

him, and told her that her services were needed for a photo-shoot.

He promised her \$1,000, more than double her usual fee.

He asked her to be at the Marina South bus stop, opposite the Superbowl Golf and Country Club, at about 6.30am.

She drove her car there the next morning and waited near the bus stop as asked. Jonaris approached her and told her that “Nigel” and

the rest of the crew would be arriving shortly.

Madam Poh parked her car and waited at the bus stop with him.

Jonaris took out a hammer, struck the woman on the head and dragged her to the bushes behind the bus stop, more than 10m away.

Madam Poh regained

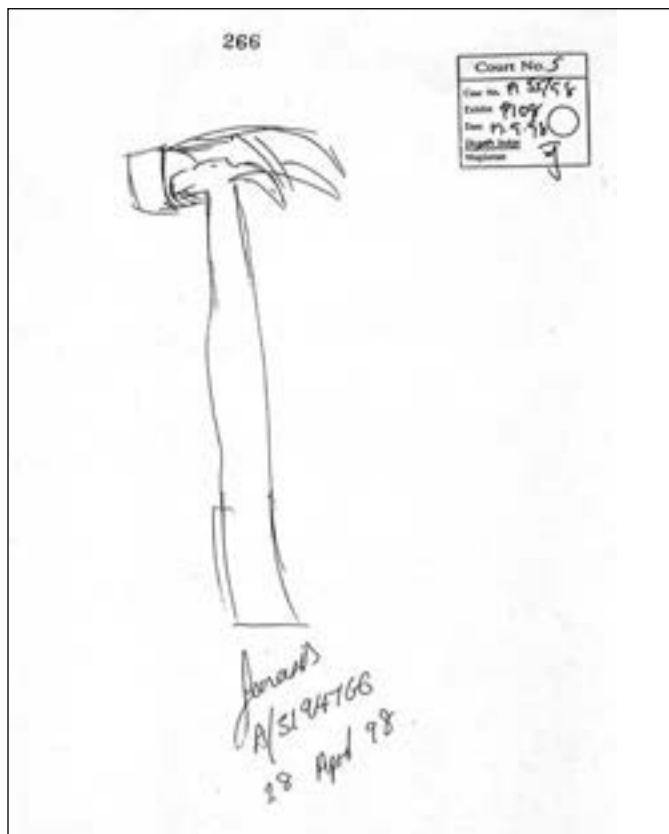
consciousness and tried to stand up.

Jonaris then used the hammer to hit her more than 10 times on the back of her head until she blacked out again.

He cut the victim’s wrists before leaving with



The Marina South bus stop where Jonaris hit Madam Poh with a hammer.
— SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO



Jonaris' sketch of the hammer he used to bash Madam Poh's skull. — HANDOUT FILE PHOTO

her watch.

According to forensic expert Professor Chao Tzee Cheng, the left side of her skull had extensive fractures. The longest crack on her head measured about 13cm long. Even if she had received medical help at the scene, doctors would not have been able to revive her, he said.

Later that day, Jonaris bought a bouquet of red roses, a cake and a bottle of whiskey and brought them to a brothel at Lorong 18 in Geylang. He and his girlfriend celebrated her birthday with a few other girls there.

He gave Miss Ngammoo the watch. She noticed that it was not new. "I asked him about it but he became angry," she testified during the trial. "I said I was only joking with him and I thanked him."

TWIST OF FATE

It did not take long for police to find a suspect.

Madam Poh's husband, Mr Lee Boon Siang, a 47-year-old teacher, had overheard his wife speaking on the telephone the day before the murder. He told police he heard her use a name which sounded like "Lai Joe" – when it should have been Nigel.

In a strange twist of fate, Jonaris had earned himself the nickname of "Liar Joe" among his friends because of his boastful nature. He would tell them he was dating an airlines executive who earned \$10,000 a month and



Ms Saifon Ngammoo, the prostitute who had carried on a relationship with Jonaris for about seven months before he was arrested. — ST FILE PHOTO



Ms Ngammoo, as sketched by The New Paper artist Kelvin Chan.

lived in a condo, when the truth was that his girlfriend earned her keep by having sex with as many as 20 men a day.

He would claim that a used silver Dupont lighter she gave him cost \$2,000, when it was less than \$700. He also borrowed money and never

returned it when he promised he would.

Even during his trial, Jonaris kept up appearances, wearing a black tailored jacket, gold cufflinks and shiny black shoes.

On April 23rd, police arrested “Liar Joe” at his home.

MENTAL DISORDER

His defence was that he was mentally ill at the time he killed Madam Poh. He claimed



Madam Elizabeth Seet admitted to beating Jonaris when he was a child. — ST FILE PHOTO

he was high on cannabis, suffering from depression and obsessed with the Rolex watch.

He also claimed that he was abused as a child by his mother and step-father and that growing up was “a living hell”.

Jonaris told the court the couple used to force him to kneel for hours and clipped clothes pegs on his ears, fingers, lip and tongue. He would be made to chew raw chilli and stand in front of a mirror for hours. He got so used to being caned that “my mother switched to using a belt”.

Madam Seet had two boys with her ex-husband and two children with Mr Robert Seah.

Jonaris said the couple treated their own children well, but that he and his younger brother were “like outsiders”. He also claimed that his mother told him to say he was her nephew and not her son in public.

Madam Seet admitted on the stand that she used to punish her son severely from when he was about three years old until he was 14 or 15.

She claimed the mother of her second husband did not like her sons from her previous marriage, and “brainwashed” him into telling others that Jonaris and his brother were only Madam Seet’s nephews.

She also claimed that Jonaris had bouts of headaches after he fell into a drain when he was about eight years of age.

Judicial Commissioner Amarjeet Singh

asked her: “You consider him fit enough to be punished?”

She replied: “Yes, your honour.”

Jonaris also claimed that around the time of the killing, his mother was constantly pestering him to return the \$2,000 he had borrowed. That made him even more depressed.

Ms Ngammoo, whom he first met in October 1997 when paying for her services, was different.

He fell in love with her because she “understood” him. He said “Ling”, his pet name for her, and him both shared a troubled past.

The divorcee, who had a three-year-old child in Thailand, had told him about her hard life back home and how she had to resort to prostitution.

Even when she loaned him \$7,000 to solve his money problems, she did not pressure him into returning it. She even gave him money to pay her pimp so he could be with her.

Jonaris claimed he wanted to earn more money so that he could take care of them.

THE WATCH

He said Ms Ngammoo told him about a Rolex watch which was given to her by her ex-husband, and which she had to pawn in 1995 to help a friend. “She missed her watch as it meant a lot to her.”

Since then, Jonaris said, thoughts and images of a Rolex watch kept appearing to

him. That “stupid” watch even appeared in his dream.

He revealed that a few weeks before the killing, he had trailed another woman, intending to take her Rolex. But he did not go through with it as he did not have the courage, he said.

When he saw Madam Poh’s watch, he felt that he had to have it. “Even if she had a five-carat diamond ring on her finger or \$10,000 in her wallet, I would not touch them. I don’t understand why.”

He said he was confused and could not decide whether to rob Madam Poh that day. “I heard a voice telling me that if I did not do it, I would face the same problem the next day.”

It was then that he took out his hammer and swung it at her head. He could not control himself, he said. It was “like watching a movie with ear plugs on” – he could see her mouth moving, as if she were talking, but he heard nothing.

As he walked away from the scene after taking her watch, he said he felt a kind of “happiness and relief” that he had never experienced.

“The colour of the water, the sky, the bird, was so new. I felt so free, like a renaissance, like a new beginning. Everything seemed so clean. It looked like a beautiful day.”

He went home to sleep. When he woke up later that day, he thought he had had a



The watch which cost Madam Poh her life.
— ST FILE PHOTO

nightmare, he said. “But when I saw the watch in my drawer, I knew that it was not a dream and that it really happened.”

HE WAS NORMAL

The prosecution called Dr Chan Khim Yew, a psychiatrist, to rebut Jonaris’ claim that he heard voices and hallucinated during the killing.

Dr Chan said Jonaris was able to describe how he had hit the woman on the head with a hammer several times before he dragged her to a spot hidden by bushes.

When asked how he had felt before the attack, Jonaris replied: “I feel afraid. What if she drives straight to the police station after I rob her. But I have already come so far.”

While he said his mother punished him

“

THE COLOUR OF THE WATER, THE SKY, THE BIRD, WAS SO NEW. I FELT SO FREE, LIKE A RENAISSANCE, LIKE A NEW BEGINNING. EVERYTHING SEEMED SO CLEAN. IT LOOKED LIKE A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

Jonaris, on how he felt after he got his hands on Madam Poh’s watch

severely as a child, Dr Chan said this would not automatically lead to any mental disorder.

Dr Chan said that six months before the killing, Jonaris visited his girlfriend regularly.

“He brought packet food for dinner and enjoyed her company. He spent the night in her room and had intercourse once or twice a week.”

Jonaris, a prop assistant, also told Dr Chan that he had “worked like a dog” in his last filming project.

Dr Chan noted that if someone was suffering from a depressive illness, he would not be able to work, enjoy sex and the company of others.

He also said that although Jonaris was always thinking about a Rolex watch, he was not suffering from any mental disorder. He said that a person who had an obsessive disorder would not think about wanting to own something but would instead harbour “horrific and senseless thoughts”.

Judicial Commissioner Singh then asked him: “If a person who has a compulsion to buy a Rolex watch and is preoccupied with it came to see you, would you consider him to be crazy?”

Dr Chan said “no”.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Jasbendar Kaur told the High Court that the accused had planned the crime carefully and even gave himself a fake name when he called the victim.

In her cross-examination of him, she had

suggested that he had intended to kill Madam Poh after robbing her because he did not want the victim, who knew him, to go to the police.

This was why Jonaris had also slashed the woman's wrists with a paper cutter – so that she would bleed to death.

It was also pointed out after the killing, Jonaris turned up at his workplace at 2.30pm.

Calmly, Jonaris filled up a cash claim form and took his \$600 pay.

The staff thought he had acted “his usual self”.

DEATH SENTENCE

On Dec 8, 1998, after a 19-day trial, the judge found Jonaris guilty and sentenced him to hang.

He said: “In my opinion, like Hamlet, the accused was not ‘mad’ but had a ‘method in his madness’ which showed that the killing of the deceased was pre-meditated and his ‘madness’ counterfeit.”

Delivering his 90-minute judgment to a packed courtroom, he said that Jonaris was normal. He was able to work hard, mingle with friends and fall in love with Miss Ngammoo.

“This was not a symptom at all of a depressed man close to the day or on the day of the offence,” he said.

He noted that Jonaris' financial problems began soon after he met the prostitute in a Geylang brothel late last year.

“

THIS WAS
NOT A
SYMPTOM
AT ALL OF A
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TO THE DAY
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DAY OF THE
OFFENCE

As a prop assistant, he sometimes earned about \$2,000 in a month but he would spend \$4,000 a month when he visited his girlfriend four times a week.

While he lived in the house of his mother and step-father, he had boasted that he was rich and lived in a bungalow with a swimming pool. To keep up appearances, Jonaris was desperate for money and this drove him to commit the robbery, said the judge.

He added that when Madam Poh regained consciousness and tried to crawl away, he hit her till part of her skull broke into pieces. To ensure that she would not live to report him to the police, he slashed her wrists with a paper cutter so that she would also bleed to death.

Such “quick action and thinking process”, the judge said, showed that Jonaris was in control of himself at the time.

As he was led out of the courtroom, Madam Poh’s husband shouted: “You deserve it!”



2001

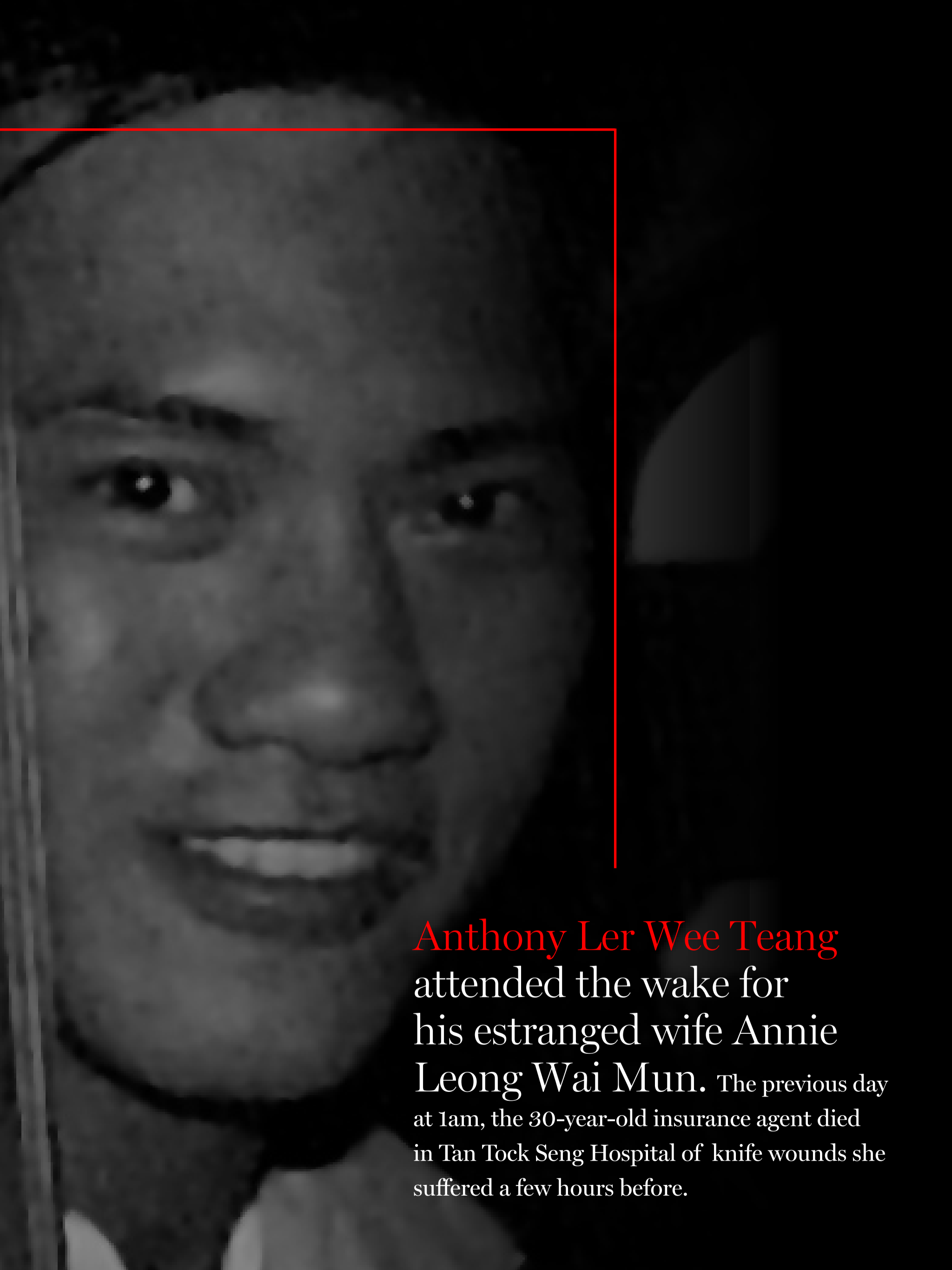
THE

CASE OF

ANTHONY

LER

**He showed no remorse after luring a
teenager into killing his wife
who had wanted a divorce**



Anthony Ler Wee Teang
attended the wake for
his estranged wife Annie
Leong Wai Mun. The previous day
at 1am, the 30-year-old insurance agent died
in Tan Tock Seng Hospital of knife wounds she
suffered a few hours before.

MASTERMIND



Anthony Ler Wee Teang, who hatched a plot to convince a teenager to kill his wife.
— ST FILE PHOTO

VICTIM



Madam Annie Leong Wai Mun, the 30-year-old victim.
— ST FILE PHOTO

She had been stabbed multiple times outside the lift on the fourth-floor of the Housing Board flat where she was living with her mother and her four-year-old daughter.

At the wake, Ler sat down with a New Paper reporter not far from where his wife's body was in a coffin.

He admitted being a bad husband. Yes, he had an affair, “fouled up” their marriage, gambled at the races, was arrogant and an “unlikeable” person.

“She was everything I was not,” he said. “She’s the angel, I am the devil.”

He insisted that despite their issues, they still shared a wonderful relationship.

He said he did not care that he was a possible suspect in his wife's death. Just before she was stabbed, he had met her at the void deck of Block 923 at Hougang Avenue 9. She had gone up to get a pen to sign certain documents he had brought, he said.

He was, he insisted, innocent.

He did not know who killed her right after she left him. He was being framed, he pleaded. He wondered if he did things differently, would she have lived?

“What if I did not ask her down? What if I had brought a pen? What if I had gone up with her? A thousand ‘what-ifs’, but one reality, she’s gone.”

It was all a big act.

He knew exactly who had killed his wife. He



Ler faking sorrow during his wife's wake. — TNP FILE PHOTOS

had, after all, offered the killer \$100,000 and coached him on how to stab Madam Leong in the neck.

Two days after the interview, 34-year-old Ler was arrested at his Pasir Ris home at around 10pm. Four hours earlier, the police already had in custody the hitman. He was a 15-year-old secondary school student.

On May 19, 2001, the pair were charged in court.

The student, a thin, lanky bespectacled boy, showed no emotion when he was accused of murder.

Ler, who was wearing a singlet, was charged with abetting the murder of his wife. The offence carried the death penalty.

The key question then was why did the boy do it?

The answer was provided during a trial which had the courtroom packed.

THE BOYS

Around February 2001, through the 15-year-old, Ler got to know a group of youths who hung out at a McDonald's restaurant at Block 444, Pasir Ris Drive 6.

Vickneswaran Krishnan, 17, Seah Tze Howe, 22, Gavin Ng Jin Wei, 16, and 19-year-old Kong Ka Cheong all testified at the trial.

And they all said the same thing.

After Ler started to meet them regularly, often bringing along his white pomeranian dog,



Gavin Ng Jin Wei (left) and Seah Tze Howe – two of the youth Ler had approached to murder Madam Leong.
— TNP FILE PHOTOS

he broached the subject of murder. He asked if any one of them dared to kill.

The youths played along, thinking it was all a joke. How much, they asked.

Ler replied \$100,000.

Sometime in late April, he started asking them if they could kill his wife for money, or find others willing to do so. He showed them her picture.

“I found it strange that he should mention the subject of killing his wife every time we met,” Vickneswaran told the court. “I thought he was crazy.”

Seah believed that Ler was joking. But one night, when he went to Ler’s flat, he was offered \$100,000 to carry out the killing.

Ler said he will get the money from selling his flat. Seah suggested that he hire a professional killer. Ler asked him to look for one. For the next two days, he called Seah to see if he had found a hitman.

“His tone sounded serious and I felt that he was not joking. I began to feel uneasy and surprised that he would be so persistent,” said Seah, who finally told Ler he could not find anyone.

But for Gavin and the 15-year-old, the two youngest members of the group and who were childhood friends of 11 years, the matter was taken much further.

On the morning of May 9, Ler made a personal appeal to Gavin and the 15-year-old,



The McDonald's at Block 444, Pasir Ris, where Ler met the boys regularly. — ST FILE PHOTO



Ler (above) was charged with abetment to murder, which carries the death penalty. (Right) The crowd watching as Ler is led away in a prison vehicle after sentencing. — TNP and ST FILE PHOTOS

who was never named due to his age.

Gavin testified that Ler said he wanted to kill his wife but if he did, he would be the top suspect. So he wanted Gavin to do the job, because he was “more daring and more gutsy”.

Ler described killing his wife as “easy” — just come up behind her, and slit her throat. He suggested Gavin buy gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints. He should also take her wallet to make it seem like a robbery.

Ler took Gavin back to his flat, where he opened a kitchen drawer and showed him several knives which he said were “most suitable for killing”.

In the living room, Ler took out a “black Japanese knife”, and told Gavin to use it to cut a

sheet of newspaper. “He told me the skin of the neck was as thin as a newspaper.”

Gavin could not do it. So Ler came up with a training exercise. He wrapped a bolster with newspaper, and told Gavin to slash it.

The teenager said he felt confused, and feared that Ler would be able to convince him to carry out the killing. He tried calling his 15-year-old friend to warn him about Ler, but failed to reach him.

On May 16, two days after Madam Leong was slashed, the same friend told Gavin he had done a “very foolish thing”.

“Anthony’s wife, I do already,” the boy said.

THE VICTIM: **ANNIE LEONG**



Madam Leong was 15 when she met Ler in church. He was 19.

After five years of courting, they married in 1995.

She quit her job at a bank to help Ler set up a business. But the soft-spoken woman returned to work after their child was born.

She saved little because of the need to pay Ler’s debts.

She also tried to cope with her husband’s philandering, even as he brought mistress Miss Berlanda Ho to their marital home. But she could only take so much.

In October 1999, she took their daughter and left him.

Still, in August 2000, nine months before she was killed, she returned to help Ler after he tried to commit suicide by taking sleeping pills and landed in hospital.

At the time, he was nearly bankrupt because of a failing publishing business. To him, this was a sign that all would be well again.

But in February, she started divorce proceedings.

LER'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE 15-YEAR-OLD

THE PREPARATION

Don't let anyone see your face

"Anthony said we should get a full-face helmet to hide our face when doing it," the boy told the court.

Don't leave any fingerprints

"Anthony told me to get a pair of gloves from a shop in Beach Road which sells army stuff. He said it was to prevent me from leaving my finger-prints behind."

Use the correct weapon

"He chose a small knife and and said we should use this. The knife had a sharp tip and its edges were jagged. It was small enough to be hidden anywhere in my body. He also told me that the knife was sharp enough to stab and long enough to reach the heart."

Make it look like a robbery

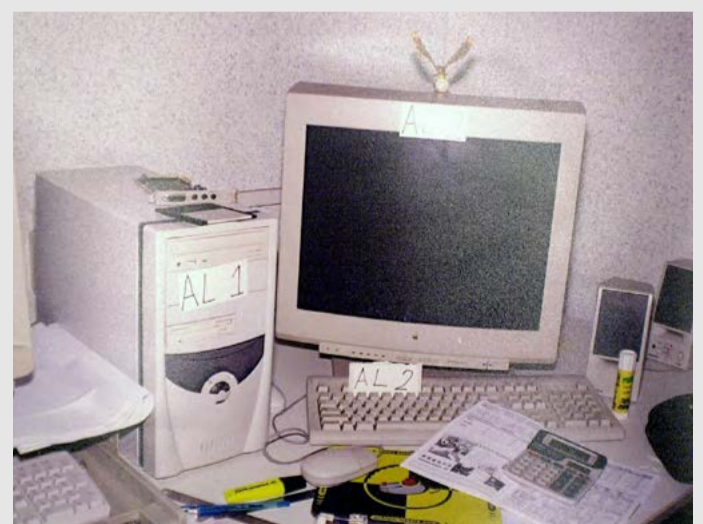
"I am supposed to take her valuables. He told me that his wife normally carried a white handbag and also a Bonia wallet ... When I asked how he knew this, he said that he had been studying her movements and had been planning this for a long time."

Don't let victim hurt you

"He told me to wear a long sleeved shirt so that I will not be injured, in case I was scratched by his wife. He warned me that if my skin tissue gets caught under her fingernails, the police could trace my identity."

Don't leave cigarette butts around

"He also told me that if I decided to smoke, I should not throw the butt there as my fingerprints and saliva would be there."



The computer through which Ler, who believed his home was bugged, "talked" to the boy. — ST FILE PHOTOS

THE COVER UP

Wipe off the blood and fingerprints

"He told me to buy a piece of cloth. I then chose a red checked table cloth. I decided to use the same cloth to wipe the helmet and the knife. To hide the colour of blood, I chose red."

Destroy evidence

"Burn her money if it is stained with blood. He advised me not to be greedy as the money would only be about \$200, knowing that I can get much more."

Avoid suspicion

"He told me to put her identity card and other cards found in her wallet into an envelope and to post it to his address with a note to say sorry ... This he said, was to prevent him from coming under suspicion."

Don't panic

"He told me not to run but walk to the bus stop. He also told me not to panic when I spot the police while waiting for the bus."

Act normally

"He told me that even after my examinations, we should continue to meet at McDonald's, where he would pretend to help me in my studies."

THE 15-YEAR-OLD'S WRITTEN CONFESSION

I got to know Anthony Ler when I was about the age of 10. I used to bring my hamster down to the stone chairs and play with it. Anthony had a dog, so that was roughly how I got to know him.

Anthony shifted away from Block 109 Pasir Ris Street 11, so I lost contact with him. But he did not tell me that he was going to shift to Block 116, Pasir Ris Street 11.

It was only recently I found out that he had shifted to Block 116. Then I saw him almost every night when I went down to the coffee

shop or McDonald's. He met my friends Gavin, Vick, Ka Cheong and Zhi Hao. At first, my friends did not like his company but after some time they accepted him. He started telling us about his wife and even asked us if we would like to kill her. In return he would give us a sum of \$100,000.

All of us rejected, but later on he came and asked me to do it. He told me that nothing would happen to me and asked me to imagine that I'm getting paid about \$2,000 or more per month for the next four years.

Anthony told me that nothing would happen to me if I went according to his plan, he said he had thought and planned this whole thing out for a very long time. He threatened to kill me if I didn't want to do it after knowing so many things about him.

I believed him and agreed to help him because he told me that he killed for a living and until now he did not get caught. He also mentioned that his graphic design job was just a cover-up.

After that, he gave me \$100 to get two M-cards so that he could contact me without people knowing. Then he told me to get a knife, a sharp, pointed one.

After he told me that, I went to a handphone kiosk at Pasir Ris Drive 6 to get two SIM cards, then I got a knife from the hardware shop beside the kiosk. Then I met him at the bus stop across the road so that he could show me the place where his wife lives. He brought me to Block 923, Hougang Avenue 9.

After that, we went back to his place. There he taught me how to murder his wife. He told me to practise it, so that when the time comes, I would not be scared.

On May 13, 2001, Anthony... told me that before he went to McDonald's, he had gone to meet his wife and to see his daughter. He also said that during that time he had tried to kill his wife but did not



The newspaper (top) used to wrap the murder weapon. — ST FILE PHOTO

have the chance because his daughter was around.

I was quite happy when I heard this, because I did not want to do this. I was forced to do it.

I followed Anthony back to his house because he asked me to practise how to kill his wife. On May 14, at about 9pm plus, I went to Anthony's house to practise some more because he kept calling me on my handphone.

At Anthony's house, after practising, he wrapped the knife in newspaper and passed it to me.

I tucked the knife in my jeans. We took a bus over to his wife's place. After alighting from the bus, we went our separate ways, I went to his wife's void-deck while he went to the nearby coffeeshop.

After that, he called me on my handphone and told me to wait for his wife to return home, so I waited. At 10pm plus, he called me to say that his wife has returned home already and he asked me to wait for his wife at the fifth storey.

I did not kill her because their daughter was with her at that time. I then called Anthony to tell him I did not want to do it because his daughter was present. He told me that his wife would be going up alone and he asked me to take that chance.

I attacked her from behind, I slashed her neck and stabbed her in the chest. After that I ran down the stairs and walked to the bus stop where I took a cab to dispose the weapon.

On the way to the beach to dispose the knife, I really regretted doing it – even at this point of time while writing this.

How I wished that I had never known Anthony. I have let my parents down and all those around me. I do not know how people would think of me. I feel very lost and confused.

Anthony did not call me on my handphone until the morning of May 17, 2001. He asked to me to get The New Paper for him, and lunch. Anthony told me the police had looked for him and he would pass me some of the money later on. Anthony told me that I had done a good job.

LER'S STORY

It started off as a “stupid joke” which then escalated into a “game of bluff”. But Ler insisted that he never expected anyone to take him so seriously that they would carry out the murder of his wife.

This was the story he stuck to throughout the trial.



Ler was often seen upbeat and smiling during his court appearances. — ST FILE PHOTO

When he met the group of youths, he tried to be something of a mentor to them, he said.

Some of the boys then boasted about being in fights and how they would not be scared of killing. According to him, Gavin was the one who first said he would take a life for \$100,000.

Gavin asked Ler to name a target, and he

suggested his wife.

But never for a moment did he mean it, Ler said. “I realise now it was a bad joke,” he told the court. “But my wife was the only person the group knew I was in contact with. They knew we were going through a rough patch.

“I had to give him a target. It was more a challenge of their guts and to expose their bluff.”



Ler, after he was sentenced to death.
— ST FILE PHOTO

When asked why he told the boys he could sell his flat to raise the money, Ler said: “Because if I didn’t, they would call my bluff, so I was trying to sustain my point.”

Even when he began discussing with Gavin and the 15-year-old the plan to kill his wife, it

was all part of the bluff — a “challenge of guts”, a phrase Ler kept repeating.

The younger boy was supposed to act as a lookout, because Ler told him he lacked the “guts” to kill. And that comment, suggested Ler, pushed the boy into actually committing the murder in a bid to prove himself. “I think I may have hurt his ego, but I was not aware at that moment,” said Ler.

He only knew what really happened three days after his wife was stabbed.

The 15-year-old went to Ler and confessed. “I sort of screamed,” said Ler of his reaction on being told. “I told him I was joking.”

Yes, he did get the boy to type on his computer because he thought his home was bugged. And he did try to cover up what happened.

But that was because Ler was afraid he would be implicated as well. He believed he was partly to blame since it was his “stupid joke” that began the whole episode before spiralling out of his control.

The prosecution told the court that Ler had two clear motives in wanting to remove his wife.

He would get to keep their \$480,000 maisonette, which his wife wanted to sell.

He would also get complete custody of their daughter.

But Ler rejected both suggestions. He said he could always have gone to live with his mother

QUESTIONING LER

During the trial, Judicial Commissioner Tay Yong Kwang asked Anthony Ler several questions on what happened the night his wife was stabbed.

JC Tay: "Did you not carry a pen with you that night?"

Ler: "Sir, I don't have a habit of carrying a pen."

JC Tay: "But you were going there to sign something?"

Ler: "Yes, I understand. Even when I go to the turf club I don't carry a pen, even when I know I'll be betting. It's just a habit."

JC Tay: "Then you told your wife to go upstairs to get a pen?"

Ler said he wanted his wife to go to a coffeeshop so that they could borrow a pen there, but she was the one who wanted to go upstairs to get one. She told him to wait at the playground with their daughter, Ler added.

JC Tay: "But that was close to midnight already."

Ler: "That was about 11.30pm to 11.45pm, yes sir."

JC Tay: "Surely you are not going to spend a lot of time at a playground at an unearthly hour with a four-year-old? So why didn't you accompany your wife up, go into the house, let her sign the documents?"

Ler: "I could've done that... I should've done that, sir."

JC Tay: "Yes, but the question is why? I would've thought the natural thing to do is to say 'let me go up with you, sign the papers and take it away'... but you just remained downstairs."

Ler: "Because I wanted to go to the playground with my daughter. It is important to me to spend even five minutes with her."

if the flat was sold. And he lacked the money and time to make a better parent than his wife.

'AN ACTOR'

Judicial Commissioner Tay Yong Kwang bought none of Ler's explanation. He said that the only bluff in this whole saga was Ler's story. "The expression of shock, the seeming concern for the dying Annie and the tears at the funeral were nothing more than rehearsed acts performed by an accomplished actor.

"Murder Anthony wrote," added the judge, as he sentenced Ler to death.

He ruled that it was Ler who came up

LER'S OTHER WOMEN



TNP FILE PHOTO

Anthony Ler did not just raise the idea of killing his wife with the youths he met. He also talked about it with his lovers.

Sales and marketing executive Berlinda Ho Wei-lynn (left) told the court that she met Ler in 1997, when she was working as a pub waitress at Boat Quay.

She helped him set up a graphics company but that went bust. Then came a modelling agency and an entertainment magazine. These did not work out as well.

Saddled with a debt of \$100,000, she left him.

During their 3½-year affair, the lovers often fought – physically. She said Ler threatened to kill her several times. He also said he would kill his wife, if she took his daughter away.

"I asked if he was serious about it, he said yes," she told the court.

After Ms Ho, Ler hooked up with Ms Tan Su Fen in October 2000. She borrowed money to invest in Ler's business which went on to fail. When she threatened to commit suicide, he asked her to kill his wife first, she said.

with the idea to kill Madam Leong, showed the youths his wife's picture, coached the boy in how to commit the murder cleanly, cajoled him, and then finally forced him to carry out the deed.

This was no joke but “a serious death match on the chess board of reality where the young men were to be his pawns and he as ‘king’ would direct the demise of his ‘queen.’”

Money was a key motive. When his wife left him in October 1999, Ler was mired in debt. With her out of the way, Ler would have full claim over their maisonette.

HOW POLICE CRACKED THE CASE



ST FILE PHOTO

The police already suspected Ler from the start.

When he was questioned at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, he was hostile and uncooperative.

“This aroused suspicions as, normally, if a man's wife had been murdered, he would have been expected to cooperate and bring the killer to justice,” said Station Inspector Colin Han.

But there was little hard evidence.

It all changed when Senior Staff Sergeant Ravindra Supramaniam, a member of the eight-man investigating team, found a torn piece of newspaper at the Hougang lift corridor where Madam Leong was killed.

The rest of the newspaper which the torn piece came from was found in Ler's Pasir Ris home.

Police also retrieved Microsoft Word files in Ler's computer detailing a conversation between him and his accomplice, three days after the stabbing.

Worried that police were listening, he got the boy to sit beside him and type. He deleted the text but forensic experts were able to access them. One damning sentence read: “Payment might have to wait.”

But if Ler was the cold-blooded murderer, his accomplice appears to be a “rather simple-minded and mild-mannered boy ensnared haplessly way out of season in adult intrigue and machinations”.

“I see no mean miniature monster in him. I detect no vengeful or vicious spirit in this 15-year-old boy before me. I see instead a morose and mortified teenager still trying to come to terms with the cataclysmic events of the last seven months,” said JC Tay, pointing out that the boy was left with just two choices by Ler.


Either kill his wife or be killed.

Because of his age, the boy was spared the death penalty. Instead, he was detained indefinitely.

His parents were still in a state of a shock by it all. His mother said: “He has always been such a good and caring boy. I still can’t understand why he would do such a thing.”

Ler’s appeal was rejected in March, 2002. He was hanged at 6am on Dec 13 that year, on a Friday. He never admitted his crime, never showed remorse. Instead, through his trial, he maintained a cool smile.

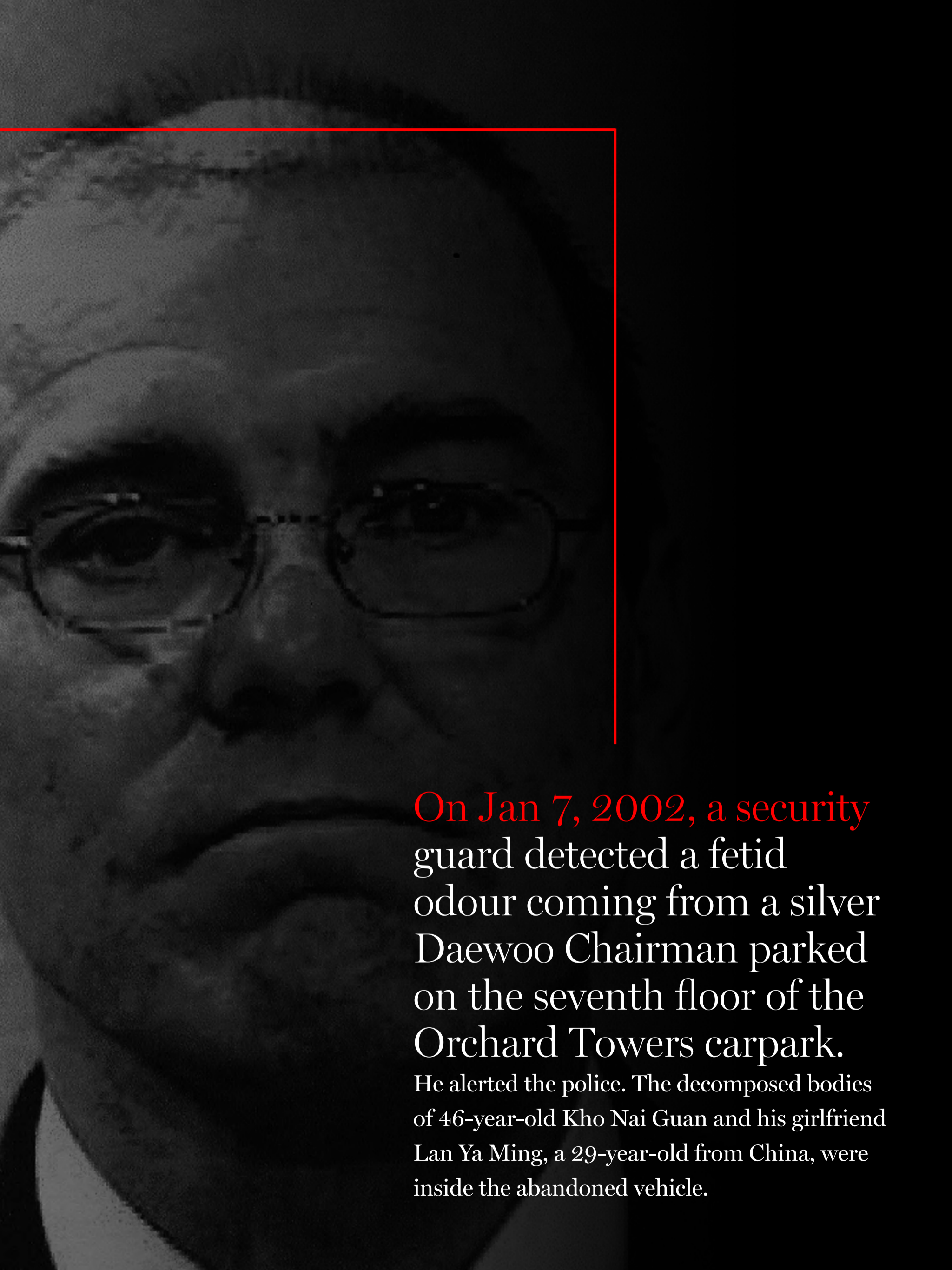
In his 2008 book, *The Best I Could*, Ler’s defence lawyer Subhas Anandan wrote about that smile. “That smile could be a sneer, it could be a smile of confidence, or it could be one that belies some deep fear. For some reason, I have never related his smile to one of happiness. Somehow I felt it was his security blanket”.



2002

ORCHARD TOWERS MURDERS

Michael McCrea tried to escape justice by fleeing Singapore but finally paid the price for killing a woman and his driver – a man he called his brother



On Jan 7, 2002, a security guard detected a fetid odour coming from a silver Daewoo Chairman parked on the seventh floor of the Orchard Towers carpark.

He alerted the police. The decomposed bodies of 46-year-old Kho Nai Guan and his girlfriend Lan Ya Ming, a 29-year-old from China, were inside the abandoned vehicle.

Mr Kho's body was stuffed in a wicker chest at the back. The chauffeur's legs were bent out of shape, his face was battered, and his corpse crawling with maggots.

Madam Lan was in the boot of the Daewoo, dressed only in a spaghetti-strap blouse. Her head was wrapped with blue plastic recycling bags, tied at the neck.

Her body was wrapped in blankets and bedsheets, and tied with wire.

Autopsies showed that both had been strangled.

The \$146,000 car was bought and gifted to Mr Kho by his employer, former financial adviser Michael McCrea, after paying the initial deposit of between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

Three days before the grisly find, the Briton and his Singaporean girlfriend-cum-secretary Audrey Ong Pei Ling had already fled to London.

It was more than three years later that McCrea was back on Singapore soil to face charges of murder.

By then, details of what happened between him and his victims were already made clear.

The deaths were not, as McCrea initially claimed, a result of a fight because Mr Kho had stolen his money to buy drugs.

Yes, there was a fight, but it had started because of a Chinese phrase Mr Kho had called Ong.

Translated, the phrase meant slut.

'BROTHERS'

McCrea and Mr Kho were as close as brothers – so close that they and their lovers lived together in a Pinewood Gardens apartment rented by the British man.

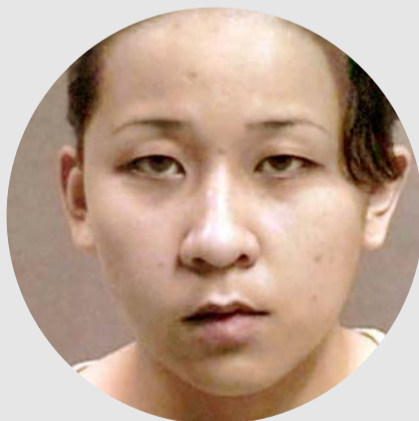
The 44-year-old McCrea, whose pregnant

KILLER



Michael McCrea killed his driver and a Chinese national, and was sentenced to a total of 24 years in jail.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

ACCOMPLICE



Audrey Ong Pei Ling was sentenced to 12 years' jail after pleading guilty to two charges of helping McCrea dispose of the two bodies.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

THE KILLER: MICHAEL McCREA

He left school without a single O level, but that did not stop the press back home to recognise his business savvy.

A 1980 profile described McCrea as "Nottingham's Million Pound Man" after bringing in £1.2 million in nine months for a financial-services firm he worked for.

He first came to South-east Asia in the early 1990s and met his Australian wife Brunetta Stocco in Singapore.

For many years, he was a financial adviser who enticed expatriate clients with his "Expatriate Survival Kit" – a plan to grow an offshore nest egg that could not be detected by tax authorities.

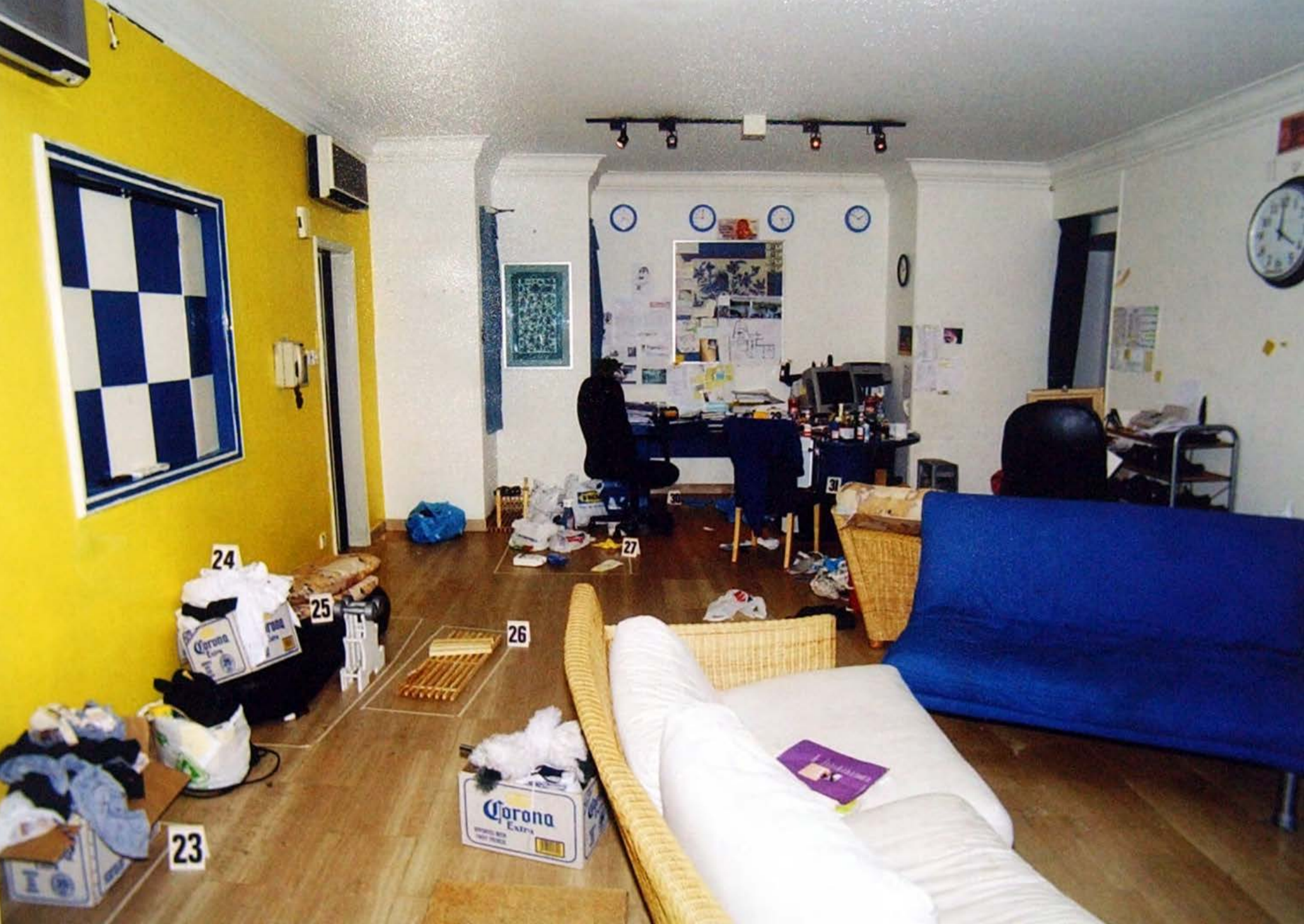
It seems he once had a run-in with the Singapore authorities and was fined for flouting financial regulations.

His \$2,000-a-month apartment in the Pinewood Gardens Condominium at Balmoral Park, was decorated with designer pillows by Versace and there were candles all over. He had a punching bag attached to the living room ceiling since he had been an amateur boxer.

He threw noisy parties at the condo's poolside, which caused neighbours to complain on several occasions.

Mrs McCrea told a British newspaper that she left Singapore while pregnant with their first child as "she didn't like the lifestyle he was living".

Their marriage was over, she said, after he turned up unexpectedly on her Melbourne doorstep with his girlfriend and co-accused Audrey Ong.



The Pinewood Gardens apartment in Balmoral Park where the double killing took place just after New Year in 2002.

— ST FILE PHOTO

wife was in Australia, was with 22-year-old Ong.

Mr Kho, a father of three who was estranged from his wife, lived with Madam Lan. She too was married, with a husband and twin boys in Fujian.

Former financial adviser McCrea paid Mr Kho \$6,000 a month to drive him around, but also took him out to business meals and all the parties he attended.

He even gave “Ah Guan” – his affectionate name for Mr Kho – a \$20,000 bonus a month before their falling-out.

It all came apart just after New Year’s Day

of 2002, when, after some champagne, the chauffeur called the boss' girlfriend "jian huo" and spat at her.

This infuriated McCrea, who pounced on Mr Kho, pushed him against the wall and punched his face. He retaliated by breaking a vase on his employer's head, but this had little effect on McCrea who kicked him, fracturing his ribs.

The Briton, who was an amateur boxer, also punched Mr Kho repeatedly in the face, and held him in an arm-lock so tight that it fractured the small bones in his throat.

When Madam Lan came at McCrea with a knife, he knocked her unconscious.

At about 4.30am, McCrea and Ong realised Mr Kho was dead when they found that his

The wicker basket containing the body of Mr Kho Nai Guan and some clothing. A dumbbell was placed in it by Ong to weigh the basket down if it was to be disposed of in water.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO



body was cold and that his legs had turned purple.

In desperation, Ong attempted mouth-to-mouth resuscitation while McCrea tried to jump start Mr Kho's heart with a massage

THE VICTIMS



Mr Kho Nai Guan, McCrea's chauffeur and good friend. — WANBAO FILE PHOTO

MR KHO NAI GUAN

In the 1980s, his electronics dealership was lucrative enough for him to own four cars. But that collapsed in 1989.

After working in his brother's a pet-food business, he decided to set up his own company in the same line. But that folded in 1992, and left him with over \$18,000 in debts.

Still, friends knew him as well-spoken and friendly.

In 1997, he was one of 50 picked when Yellow-Top Cab needed cabbies for its new fleet of Mercedes-Benz E-250 taxis. He even went on to receive a Singapore Courtesy Council award for his customer service.

In 1998, he met Michael McCrea and six months later became his personal driver. But his relationships with foreign women caused a rift in his marriage to a postal worker, with whom he had a son and two daughters. In 1999, he moved out of his home. After his death, his family identified his body from the Thai tattoos on his back.



Madam Lan Ya Ming, a married mother of two and Mr Kho's girlfriend. — SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

MADAM LAN YA MING

She was 30-year-old teacher from Fujian province. According to her husband Lin Jia Song, who then worked in a telecommunications company in Fujian, they had been married for eight years.

She came to Singapore in October 2001 on a social visit pass to apply for a teaching position and visit a friend here. She called home once every week after leaving. The last he heard from her was on Dec 29. The couple had eight-year-old twin boys.

It was only 10 months after her body was found that her 32-year-old husband identified and claimed her body.

machine. It was too late.

Ong saw Madam Lan moving slightly and took her to Mr Kho's bedroom.

McCrea suggested they stow the body in a luggage bag, but Ong pointed to the large wicker basket which was used as a coffee table in the living room.

She emptied the basket and they put the body inside.

THE COVER UP

What followed were frantic arrangements to hide the killing – as well as an attempt to get whatever money Mr Kho had, especially the bonus he had been given the month before.

So Madam Lan, lying dazed on Mr Kho's bed, was pressed for where it could be hidden.

Meanwhile, McCrea sought help from a friend, Englishwoman Gemma Louise Ramsbottom, who used to do his business paperwork. She had introduced McCrea to Ong about six months earlier, while the latter was working in a Boat Quay pub.

The three talked about what to do with Mr Kho's body.

Ong placed dumbbells in the basket in case they decided to throw it into the sea. The chest, also filled with Mr Kho's belongings, was sprayed with air freshener to mask any smell.

Through the day, Ong popped in and out of the apartment to help run errands for Ms Ramsbottom. She claimed Madam Lan was



The decomposing bodies of a man and a woman were found in a silver Daewoo Chairman left unattended for days in the carpark of Orchard Towers. The man's body was in a wicker basket left on the back seat, while the woman's body was discovered in the boot. — SHIN MIN FILE PHOTOS

very much alive then.

But when she returned to the flat at about midnight on Jan 3, Madam Lan's body was on the floor and Ms Ramsbottom was being threatened with death by McCrea if she told anyone what had happened.

Investigations revealed that he had placed plastic bags over Madam Lan's head and secured them with ties when she appeared to be going into convulsions.

The trio wrapped her body in blankets and bedsheets, securing the bundle with wire. They took measurements of the wicker chest and the

back seat of the Daewoo.

When the coast seemed clear at 4am on Jan 4, the chest was loaded onto a trolley and brought down in the lift. All three lifted the basket and placed it on the back seat. It was then back to the apartment to get Madam Lan's body, which McCrea carried on his shoulders and placed in the boot.

Then came the big question of where to dump the bodies.

The trio could not find a suitable place despite driving – Ms Ramsbottom and McCrea took turns at the wheel – from Jurong to Tuas. The sea off Punggol was no good as there were people on the jetty and it was getting bright.

At about 10am, Ms Ramsbottom was sent home as she needed to pick up her two young daughters from the babysitter.

Finally, McCrea and Ong settled on the top seventh floor of the Orchard Towers carpark. They took a taxi back to the apartment, and planned to dissolve the bodies with acid.

But Ong's friend, Mr Cheo Yi Tang, said he could not get his hands on so much acid.

He turned up at the apartment instead with bleach, rubber gloves, sponge and paint – to help remove bloodstains on the walls and floor.

The next day, Jan 5, McCrea booked two air-tickets and left for London with Ong. They later went to Melbourne, to stay with McCrea's pregnant wife.

In late May, Australian police went to the



British businessman McCrea sitting in a police van leaving the Subordinate Courts. He had been flown back from Australia following a three-year extradition battle.
— ZB FILE PHOTO

South Melbourne home to attend to a domestic dispute. McCrea was detained when they found irregularities in his passport and visa.

He was arrested formally on June 13 after it was discovered he was wanted in Singapore. Ong had been nabbed a week earlier.

On November 10, 2002, she landed in Changi Airport and was taken into custody by Singapore police, having agreed to surrender the month before.

She was jailed for 12 years. after pleading guilty to two charges of helping to dispose of the bodies and removing bloodstains from the apartment.

While the defence argued for leniency given

that she had turned herself in and testified against McCrea, District Judge Richard Magnus pointed out that she made no attempt to contact authorities here after the duo first ran away.

“The accused’s overall conduct was sordid, macabre, callous, shocking, reprehensible and grossly offensive to any right thinking member of the public,” he said.

Meanwhile, McCrea was fighting tooth and nail to avoid facing justice, all the while being remanded at the maximum-security Port Phillip Prison in Melbourne.

EXTRADITION FIGHT

To bring him back to face trial, Singapore had agreed that he would not be hanged even if found guilty of murder. Australian law forbids anyone from being extradited to a country where he could receive the death penalty.

A Law Ministry spokesman said at the time: “Without the undertaking, extraditing McCrea and bringing him to justice is not possible. We will then have a situation where an accused will completely escape trial in Singapore or elsewhere.”

In November 2002, an Australian magistrate ordered his extradition. The next month, McCrea petitioned the country’s Minister for Justice and Customs and failed.

Then he went to the country’s Federal Court, and was turned down again.

By now it was August 2005, and McCrea had one last hope – Australia’s High Court, which expedited the hearing given the many delays already.

In September, it took Australia’s highest court less than an hour to turn him down.

McCrea was kept in a straitjacket for two weeks after the final rejection, to stop him from harming himself.

On Sept 27, the 46-year-old boarded Singapore Airlines flight SQ228 and was flanked throughout the seven-hour trip by plain-clothes officers. His hand was constantly cuffed to a detective.

At about 9.30pm, a shackled McCrea finally set foot in Singapore.

Two days later he was formally charged with the murders of Mr Kho and Madam Lan.

THE TRIAL

In June 2006, he pleaded guilty to two counts of manslaughter and of causing evidence to disappear.

He was given the maximum of 10 years in jail each for each person’s death and another four for disposing of their bodies. Justice Choo Han Teck ordered the terms to run one after another.

He also did not backdate McCrea’s jail term to 2002, when he was first detained in Australia, ordering that the jail term start with effect from the day of sentencing.

McCrea was shocked to realise that he would spend the next 24 of years of his life in prison.

Justice Choo made it clear he did not buy McCrea's plea for a lighter sentence because he was remorseful. He pointed out that Mr Kho was extensively battered over a "relatively small matter".

As for the death of Madam Lan, also known as Suzie, the judge said: "He had not only prevented Suzie from leaving the flat, but had kicked her in the head before killing her, all because he wanted to find Ah Guan's money – right after he killed him."

He wanted the two sentences to run one after the other as there was "a sufficiently long break" between the two killings to warrant their treatment as two separate offences.

As for McCrea's request to backdate his sentence, Justice Choo pointed out that he chose to stay four years in an Australian jail to fight efforts to extradite him to face trial here.

"It would be invidious for him to ask that his jail sentence commence from the date of his initial remand on account of his own filibuster."

McCrea appealed, and almost got his 24-year jail term raised.

Before the three-judge Court of Appeal, his lawyer Kelvin Lim had argued that the judge who punished McCrea did not consider his client's remorse, and described how he had tried to resuscitate Mr Kho.

Justice Andrew Phang pressed Mr Lim on

what he would have done if he was in McCrea's shoes.

"Your best friend, your brother, is dying. Put yourself in your client's position. What would you have done?"

Mr Lim replied: "I would call an ambulance."

Justice Phang shot back: "Yes. It's common humanity."

Allowing McCrea to serve the two 10-year jail terms concurrently would have meant he need serve only 14 years in all.

Justice Phang told Mr Lim: "There are two deaths and you are asking for a concurrent sentence? Two lives were lost."

At one point, Justice V.K. Rajah raised the possibility of exercising his powers as a judge to increase the prison term. McCrea could have been jailed for up to an additional three years for disposing of evidence.

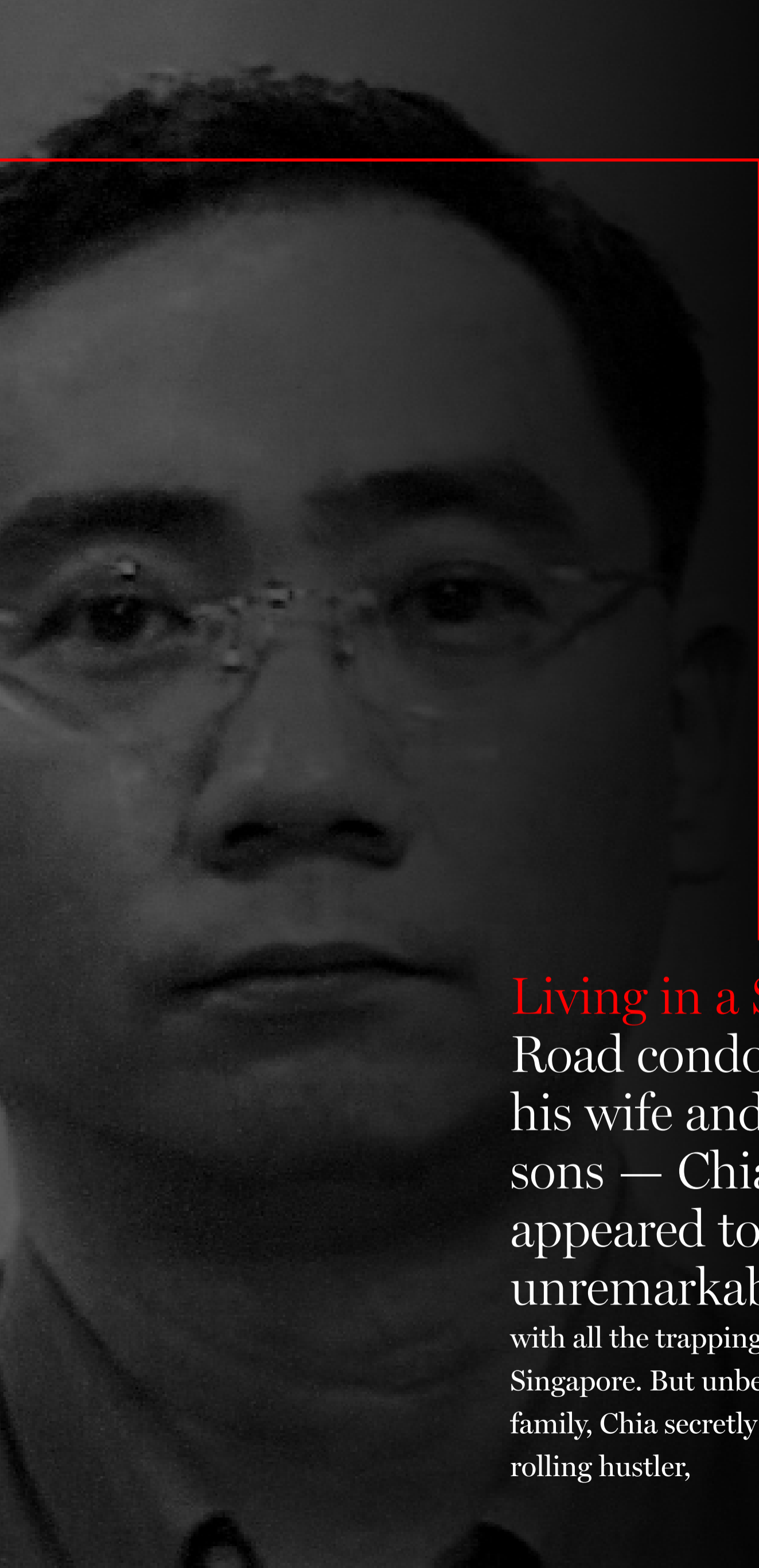
But the judges decided against this and kept the original sentence, after finding "the appeal wholly without merit".



2004

HIGH- ROLLING HUSTLER

**“Unremarkable” family man, who led
double life as the darling of offshore
casinos, cheated banks of millions**



Living in a Serangoon
Road condominium with
his wife and two teenage
sons — Chia Teck Leng
appeared to most as an
unremarkable family man,
with all the trappings of upper middle-class
Singapore. But unbeknownst to his friends and
family, Chia secretly led a double life as a high-
rolling hustler,

complete with flashy cars, luxury apartments and a girlfriend half his age.

He was the darling of offshore casinos — gambling operators would personally fly him in on private jets so he could have a flutter in their betting halls.

To feed and fund his gambling addiction, he swindled four foreign banks out of \$117 million from 1999 to 2003, using his position as the financial manager of Asia Pacific Breweries (APB). The case at that time was Singapore's biggest involving commercial fraud.

In 2004, the then 44-year-old was sentenced to 42 years in jail by High Court Judge Tay Yong Kwang — the longest for a case of commercial fraud.

“Bankers knocking on his door were there to meet the man... to forge a business relationship, but the man they met was unfortunately in the business of forgery,” said Judge Tay at the sentencing.

Chia had been a compulsive gambler since at least 1994, when he was a financial controller with Swire Pacific Offshore, a marine services company.

He had plunged deep into debt during 1995 to 1996 and owed several banks about \$100,000 in the form of overdrafts and credit card dues. But fortune smiled on him the next year when he began visiting Star Cruise ships almost every fortnight, to try his luck at the gambling tables.

CHIA'S DOUBLE LIFE



Accountancy graduate Chia Teck Leng began his career at accounting firm Arthur Andersen before taking on a host of high-flying positions, including assistant vice-president at UOB, before becoming finance manager at Asia Pacific Breweries on Jan 20, 1999, with an annual salary of between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

To colleagues, his wife and two teenage children, he was a hard-working executive and an unassuming family man.

But behind that veneer, was a high-rolling casino gambler with a mistress and a "hedonistic" lifestyle.

He had been gambling since 1994. Since July 2000, he had been flying in private chartered jets to Melbourne where he would gamble at the Crown Casino. He was given VIP treatment, staying in its most expensive room, complete with butler service. A night there cost A\$25,000.

He was also a regular at London Ritz's Club, where he could gamble even higher stakes.

From \$200 bets during his Star Cruise days, he went up to single bets of A\$20,000 and 25,000 in British ones. He even played for A\$400,000 a hand at the Crown Casino.

He met his mistress, Chinese national Li Jin, in April 2002 at the casino on board a cruise ship.

She was then a croupier. He won \$1 million from her that night. From then on, he would ask to gamble against her - his "good luck" charm.

Such were the losses suffered that she was eventually given a day off whenever he came on board. The Nanjing University graduate later left her job to be with Chia in Singapore.

He got her a forged passport for \$10,000, under the name Chu Chiao-Ling, to enter and leave the country.

He spent lavishly. He bought a \$150,000 Mercedes-Benz, a \$530,000 apartment in Grange Road, and gave gifts totalling \$300,000 to various people, including his girlfriend.

He won on several occasions and was offered a credit line of \$75,000. In less than a year, his winnings grew to about \$1 million.

However, the tides turned in August 1998. In a gambling spree that lasted a fortnight, he not only lost all his previous winnings, but racked up new debts as well.

By the time he joined APB in 1999, the debts had mounted sky-high, and he was a desperate man. He trained his sights on four foreign banks, one after the other — Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB), Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC), the Mizuho Corporate Bank and the Bayerische Hypo-und Vereinsbank Aktiengesellschaft (HVB).

BANK'S CLAIMS

Bayerische Hypo-und Vereinsbank (HVB), Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB), Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and Fuji Bank, now known as the Mizuho Bank, sued Asia Pacific Breweries seeking repayment for the fraud committed by its employee Chia Teck Leng.

First Mizuho withdrew its suit, then Sumitomo's was dismissed. This was followed by HVB and SEB's cases also being dismissed.

Justice Belinda Ang, in her judgment against HVB and SEB, said that the banks had made themselves "easy prey" by ignoring their own banking procedures and failing to notice discrepancies or irregularities in documents that were "staring bank officers in the face".

The banks were so eager to do business with APB that they willingly gave out loans of millions of dollars without doing due diligence to verify that Chia was authorised to act for the company, she said.

Submitting forged documents, he was able to open accounts in APB's name, with himself as the sole signatory. With SEB he had a credit facility for \$500,000 — which he intended to use for himself.

Meanwhile, APB had no idea of what its finance manager was doing behind its back. Chia remained in sole control of all these accounts by forging director board resolutions that authorised him to receive the credit and loan facilities provided, sign all transactions and operate the bank accounts on behalf of APB.

To forge the signatures of the various directors of APB, he obtained specimens from annual reports and internal documents. He practised the signatures till he was sure they would pass muster.

Chia's modus operandi was to draw money from SMBC, Mizuho and HVB, and transfer it to the SEB account. From there, the money was siphoned into his two personal accounts with DBS before it was remitted to casinos in Australia, Britain, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines.

He rolled over funds provided by the banks, making timely deposits to each account whenever repayments were due, thus creating the impression of a credit-worthy customer.

During a crunch situation in November 1999, he even withdrew \$53 million from an APB account with OCBC. He managed to



Li Jin, 22, a Chinese national, faced charges of using a forged passport to enter and leave Singapore. She was the girlfriend of Asia Pacific Breweries executive Chia Teck Leng, who cheated four banks of more than \$117 million. — ST FILE PHOTO



Properties belonging to Chia Teck Leng in Grange Road. — ST FILE PHOTO

replace the entire amount by October 2002, escaping detection. As the amount of illegal money available increased, so did the stakes for which Chia gambled.

In 2002, he met his girlfriend, Chinese national Li Jin, 22, on one of his gambling trips onboard a cruise ship. Li was a croupier in the VVIP (Very Very Important Person) room.

He won \$1 million from her and, from then on, she became his “good luck charm”. To make sure his luck continued rolling in, he spared no expense. Chia purchased a \$530,000 apartment in Grange Road for her and bought

her branded goods and jewellery.

He also bought a \$10,000 forged passport so Li could enter Singapore easily. She used it twice — in 2002 and 2003 — and was jailed six months for the offence.

But as the adage goes, the casino always wins and the Commercial Affairs Department got wind of Chia's activities. He was arrested on Sept 2, 2003. Before his four-year run ended, he had withdrawn \$117.1 million. Of this, only \$34.8 million was recovered. The authorities estimated that he lost \$62 million feeding his gambling habit.

While he was in jail, Chia wrote a 13-page paper as a form of penance. Called "Taming the Casino Dragon", he shared his experience as an insider to the world of high rollers.

Self-deprecating at times, and hoping others would not make the same mistakes he did, he wrote that "like an inexperienced teenager succumbing to the lure of a newly discovered vice, I was soon hooked". 81

2004

HUANG NA'S MURDER

When the eight-year-old went missing, Singaporeans from all walks of life helped in the search. But she was already dead — killed by a man she treated as an uncle



Like any other study mama from China, Huang Na's mother brought her to Singapore in early 2003 for a better education. The girl's dream was to be a doctor so she could in turn give her mother a better life. Huang Na also learnt to be street-smart and independent, as her mother had to shuttle between Singapore and Fujian to care for her 11-month-old half-sister.

On Sept 27, 2004, a day before Huang Na's eighth birthday, her mother returned to their hometown for two weeks.

Huang Na, who once even took a flight back to China alone, was left in the care of friends, who lived with her and her mother in a small room on the upper floor of a fruit and vegetable company at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre.

The bubbly girl would go to school herself, take her meals at a nearby food court and sometimes even cook for her and her neighbours. She showered in a common toilet. The centre's auction hall was her playground.

On the afternoon of Oct 10, Huang Na called her mother from a phone booth and asked her to buy a computerised English dictionary and a pair of sandals. They spoke for about six minutes.

That was the last time Madam Huang Shuying heard her voice. And it was the last day Huang Na was seen alive — barefooted and wearing a blue denim jacket and bermudas.

On Oct 31, her badly-decomposed body was found stuffed inside a brown cardboard box less than half her size. The box was found in dense undergrowth at Telok Blangah Hill Park, just hours after Penang-born Took Leng How was grilled by police.

The vegetable packer, who worked at the wholesale centre and had previously shared a flat with Huang Na and her mother, admitted

VICTIM



Huang Na, who was a Primary 2 student at Jin Tai Primary School, was killed in a storeroom at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre (below).
— ZB FILE PHOTO



Huang Na was killed in a storeroom at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre (below). — TNP FILE PHOTO

to strangling the girl with his bare hands in a storeroom where he had lured her for a game of hide-and-seek. The news left a nation shocked.

NATIONWIDE SEARCH

Huang Na's disappearance was first made public in newspapers on Oct 14, four days after she was last seen at around 1pm at the food court less than 500m from her home. The Primary 2 pupil of Jin Tai Primary School was described as 1.2m tall, with a fair-complexion and straight dark hair.

Police urged anyone with information to come forward.

Coffeeshop assistant C.B. Lim, who described her as a familiar figure, was one of the last to see her alive. "As she passed by, I asked her why she had no slippers and she just smiled and went."

Madam Huang, who had returned to Singapore two days after the disappearance, combed the island for her girl, even searching construction sites and ditches.

She showed photographs of Huang Na to strangers, asking if they had seen her. She also scoured Bukit Timah Hill and Mount Faber after her niece dreamt she was being held on a mountain.

"I looked everywhere, from Clementi to Geylang, from Race Course Road to

KILLER



Penang-born Took Leng How was sentenced to death for the murder of Huang Na. — ST FILE PHOTO

Woodlands. I've tried them all, but there is no news," she said.

She could not imagine why anyone would want to harm her daughter. "I work here to earn money for my daughter to study," said Madam Huang, who worked at a vegetable stall at the wholesale centre. "We lead a simple life. I didn't make any enemies or offend anyone."

Police searched Huang Na's favourite haunts, including West Coast Park and the IMM building. Hospitals and transport companies were roped in to keep a lookout for her.

A 60-year-old retired businessman offered a \$10,000 reward to anyone with information. Another Singaporean added another \$5,000.

Mr Joseph Tan, the founder of Crime Library, a voluntary group which looks for missing people, and employees of his recycling company handed out leaflets to passers-by near where Huang Na disappeared. The general



(Left) Madam Huang Shuying combed Singapore in taxis, armed with a mobile phone and photos of her missing eight-year-old daughter. (Right) She even went to Bukit Timah Hill after being told by her niece that she dreamt Huang Na was being held on a mountain. — WB & SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

manager of an online design company set up a website to gather tip-offs.

Taxi company ComfortDelGro asked its cabbies to join in the search effort.

In Malaysia, 30 cabbies placed posters of Huang Na on the rear windscreens and front seats of their vehicles. At least five coffee-shop owners in Johor Jaya, Taman Yew and Skudai put up posters.

Those who tried to help Madam Huang said it was heart-wrenching to watch news clips of the mother clutching her daughter's toys, clothes and pictures, walking through neighbourhoods with tears in her eyes, calling out her name.

SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOUR

On Oct 21, police released a picture of Took and asked for information on his whereabouts.

The Malaysian, who was 22 then, had disappeared after police twice interviewed him in connection to Huang Na's disappearance and he agreed to take a polygraph test. He had claimed to police that he had seen four gang members abduct the girl. Despite having surrendered his passport, he was able to sneak into Malaysia.

Those who worked at the wholesale centre said Took and Huang Na were close, and that he would give her rides on a motorcycle. He was also one of the last people seen with her.

But Madam Huang did not believe Took,



(Top) A broadcast alert was sent out to ComfortDelGro's taxis to look out for Huang Na.
(Above) Even cabbies in Malaysia joined the search. They displayed posters of the girl and distributed flyers to their customers. — COMFORTDELGRO & ST FILE PHOTO



Huang Na often rested on this makeshift bed at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre while her mother was at work.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

whom her daughter called “shu shu” (uncle), could be involved in anything sinister.

“I don’t believe he’s the one who took my daughter. He has no reason to — we’re just acquaintances,” she told the media. “He was very fond of her. He always bought things for her to eat, but never took her outside of the market. I know he would never hurt her.”

Took’s 52-year-old father in Penang, who sold fried kway teow at the family’s coffee shop, told the Malaysian press that his son, the second of four siblings, had phoned him and said that he had not kidnapped the girl.

He only ran from Singapore because he felt pressured by the police, the father added.



Huang Na used to cook meals in this kitchen at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre. On the right is her bedroom. — ST FILE PHOTO

Took's Indonesian wife You Li, who was living with his father, also revealed that he had called her to say that he was in Johor, and that someone else had taken Huang Na.

He claimed that the last time he saw the girl, he gave her two mangoes and sent her on her way. Took's brother described his older sibling as a "timid" man, who did not have the courage to borrow money or get into fights – let alone kidnap a child.

Nine days after being on the run, Took surrendered to police in Penang and was brought back to Singapore on Oct 30.

He claimed that he secretly entered Malaysia because he wanted to see his 14-month-old son



Took's Indonesian-Chinese wife Yuli. — ST FILE PHOTO

but failed to do so. The past nine days were “hell”, he insisted. “How good can it be, hiding here and there?”

In the interview he gave to the Malaysian press, he also claimed that he sympathised with Madam Huang. “I want to tell her, I also love Huang Na because I have a child myself. I hope that people won’t make wild allegations about me, because the truth can be dug out.”

BODY FOUND

In the morning of Sunday, Oct 31, some three weeks after Huang Na went missing, a team of 20 police officers and trackers fanned out to search the slope at the Telok Blangah Hill Park. They were acting on

information provided by Took.

After 30 minutes, at 10.30am, officers came across a box measuring 50cm by 40cm by 30cm in thick vegetation. The box, which resembled those used at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre, was sealed with masking tape. Still, a foul smell emanated from it.

Inside was the naked body of a young girl, forced into a crouching position. It was so



The search for Huang Na ended some three weeks after she went missing. Her body was crammed into a brown cardboard box measuring 50cm by 40cm by 30cm. Huang Na was 1.2m-tall, so her assailant had forced her into what pathologists described as a "crouching position". — ST FILE PHOTO

decomposed that forensic tests had to be done before it was confirmed that the body was Huang Na's. But the girl was also visually identified by her mother. Took was arrested for murder and charged the following day.

The park was just minutes away from Took's Telok Blangah flat, and about a 15-minute drive from the wholesale centre where Huang Na was last seen.

Police also revealed for the first time that they had uncovered signs of a struggle in a storeroom at the wholesale centre.

The size of a three-room Housing Board flat's living room, it was rented by Took's boss for storing vegetables and dried goods. The shutters in the room were always drawn.



Took being taken through the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre by police officers. — ST FILE PHOTO



The storeroom where Huang Na was murdered. — ST FILE PHOTO



More than 1,000 people turned up at Huang Na's wake in Clementi. Her coffin was decorated with her favourite Hello Kitty soft toys. Her parents (above right) were inconsolable.
— ST FILE PHOTO

Police believed that was where Huang Na was attacked.

On Nov 5, Took, his hands bound, was led through the wholesale centre where he was questioned by investigators.

The news that the girl was found dead left many horrified.

Mr Tan, who had been organising the search through his website crime-library.org, said as he choked back tears: "I can't imagine what that little girl had to go through. How could anyone have done this?"

On Nov 8, more than a thousand people, many of them strangers, attended her funeral.

They followed the procession which went to

the West Coast Market, a playground and Jin Tai Primary School – places which Huang Na frequented.

The lid of her coffin was covered with her favourite Hello Kitty soft toys, the sides plastered with Hello Kitty stickers and a Hello Kitty toy hung from each corner of the hearse. Mourners brought many of her favourite sweets and snacks. She was cremated at Mandai.



Huang Na's remains being collected by her mother, Madam Huang (left), and stepfather Zheng Wenhai. — SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

It was later revealed that Huang Na's stepfather, who had flown to Singapore for her funeral, her mother and natural father all had trouble with the authorities here previously.

Her stepfather Zheng Wenhai was jailed for two years and four months in 1999. Huang Na's natural father Huang Qingrong had also been jailed for working illegally in October 1999, when he was employed as a vegetable packer at the wholesale centre.

It was the second time Mr Huang had entered Singapore. In 1996 he had landed a job here, but was sent back in 1997 after it emerged he had lied about having a degree.

In 1999, Madam Huang had also been repatriated for overstaying her visa. After this revelation, she was put under investigation again for entering Singapore illegally, but



Took's parents with defence lawyer Subhas Anandan (right).
— ZB FILE PHOTO

was let off with a stern warning. By the end of November, she returned to Fujian carrying Huang Na's ashes.

THE TRIAL

Took, who was defended by famous criminal lawyer Subhas Anandan, was put on trial on July 11, 2005.

According to the prosecution's case, Took's colleagues last saw him at 1pm on Oct 10 walking side-by-side with the girl near the storeroom, with a bag of mangoes in his hand. Several workers were surprised to see Took hanging around the wholesale centre, as there was little work on Sundays.

At about 1.40pm, Took coaxed the girl to play hide-and-seek with him in the storeroom and offered her mangoes to eat. Remnants of the fruit were later found in her stomach during the autopsy.

Took stripped her, bound her limbs with raffia string and sexually assaulted her.

To make sure she could not report what he did to her, Took smothered her. He covered her mouth and nose for at least two minutes, until her body was limp.

To ensure she was dead, he stamped on her and kicked her before packing her body inside nine layers of plastic bags. He then put the bundle in a cardboard box and sealed it with adhesive tape.

It was still daytime, and so too risky to

dispose of the box. So Took rested until 5.30pm at the wholesale centre. Then he borrowed a motorcycle from a friend who also worked at the centre. He went home to his Telok Blangah flat and watched TV.

At about 8pm, he returned to the storeroom to retrieve the box, tied it to the back of the motorcycle and drove up to Telok Blangah Hill Park, where he dumped it. At 9pm, he returned the motorcycle to his friend. An hour later, Huang Na's guardian, Madam Li Xiu Qin, told police the girl was missing.

"The accused was often Huang Na's playmate despite the age difference," said Deputy Public Prosecutor Lawrence Ang.

"How was she to know that the person whom she trusted most among all the people at the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre would soon ravage her and snuff out her life, cruelly and mercilessly?"

Forensic evidence played a big role in the trial.

Analysis showed that the adhesive tape used to seal the carton came from the same roll of tape found in the storeroom.

Part of Took's fingerprints were also found on the roll.

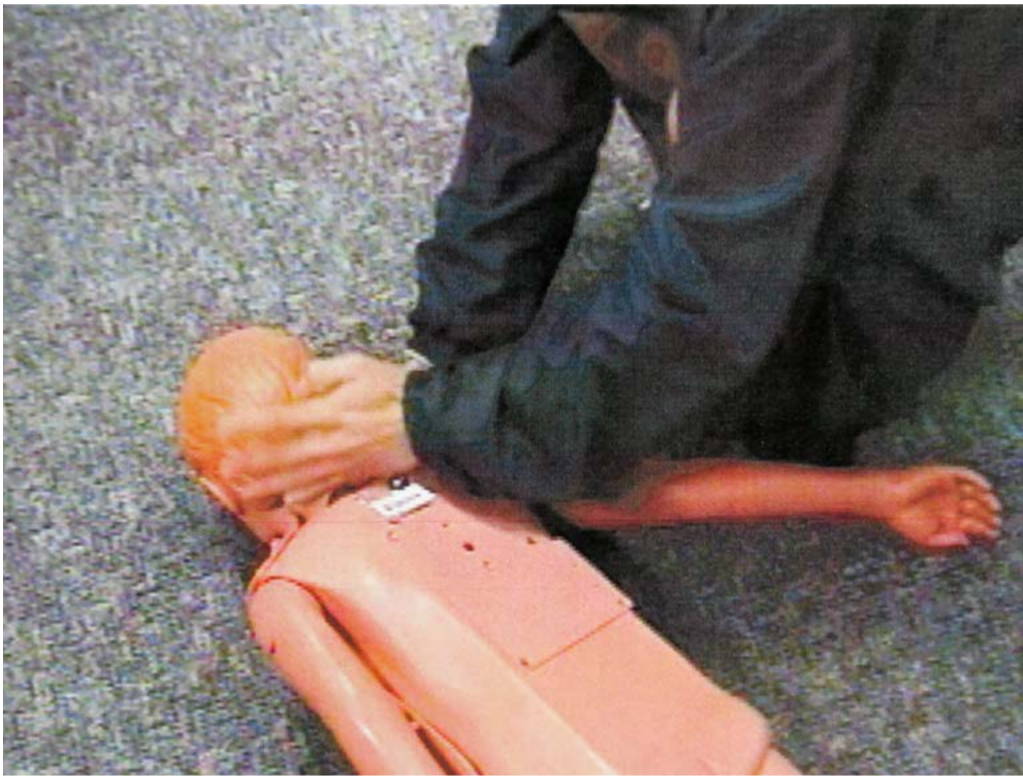
The bags used to wrap Huang Na's body were found to be similar to ones in the Pasir Panjang shop where Took

The box containing Huang Na's body had been sealed by running two strips of adhesive tape across its breadth at both ends, then three strips along its length, before a final strip was run across the centre of the box. The final strip down the middle would "ensure that it is taped tightly". It was also noted that the carton had been sealed "in a systematic manner". — ST FILE PHOTO



worked. Hundreds of cloth fibres from both Took and Huang Na's clothes were also found in the storeroom.

The statement Took gave police after his arrest was also presented as evidence. He claimed that Huang Na knocked her head while they were playing a "special" game of hide-and-seek in the store room. It involved him tying her ankles with raffia string with the lights off. "If she was able to untie herself before I finished counting and switched on the lights, then she would be the winner," he said.



A scene from the chilling five-minute video in which Took re-enacted what he did to Huang Na. — ST FILE PHOTO

But he heard a loud thud and flew into a panic when he saw Huang Na on the floor having spasms, with her eyes wide open. Blood was trickling from

the corner of her mouth.

He strangled her. Then using his hand, he "chopped" Huang Na on the back of the neck three times to "put her out of her misery". He also stamped on her neck three times. He then stripped her and molested her with his fingers "so that people will think she was being raped".

Next, he used scissors to cut her clothing to "make it real". A chilling video of him demonstrating these actions on a dummy of a child was played in court.

He also told police that he fled to Malaysia

“

HOW WAS SHE TO KNOW THAT THE PERSON WHOM SHE TRUSTED MOST AMONG ALL THE PEOPLE AT THE PASIR PANJANG WHOLESALE CENTRE WOULD SOON RAVAGE HER AND SNUFF OUT HER LIFE, CRUELLY AND MERCILESSLY?

Deputy Public Prosecutor Lawrence Ang

because he feared being hanged.

Took's colleagues who took the stand had seen him scolding the girl on several occasions, and said he had even hurt her at least once.

Took's employer Kelvin Eng Chow Meng recalled confronting him after seeing bruises on the girl's hand back in July 2003.

“The accused claimed that Huang Na was making too much noise and he was unable to sleep,” he told the court.

Another witness, packer Tan Ban Tiong, recalled “one or two” occasions when Took tied the girl's hands with raffia string to “teach her a lesson not to disturb us”.

Madam Huang, the murdered girl's mother, returned to Singapore to take the stand.



People queueing to attend
Took's trial.
— ST FILE PHOTO

She said she had seen Took lose his temper and throw things when he was agitated. She recounted an incident in which she claimed Took had hit Huang Na when they all went on a crab-catching excursion.

“I told him that if he wanted to play with a young child, he should not lose his temper. If he was offended, then he shouldn't have been playing with her,” she said.

She also told the court she first came to Singapore in 1999 on a social visit pass to visit her first husband. But after she found out he was cheating on her, she decided to stay on to look for a job.

She was jailed for overstaying in 2001, after immigration officers raided the Pasir

HOW IT ALL UNFOLDED

○ Oct 10, 2004

Huang Na reported missing

○ Oct 13

Police appeal for information

○ Oct 17

Public put up posters at bus stops

○ Oct 20

Family friend Took Leng How, 22, disappears; Retired company director Yeo Aik Seng, 60, offers \$10,000 reward

○ Oct 26

Missing person posters are up in Johor Baru; Mr Low Tiam Soon, 48, offers \$5,000 as a reward

○ Oct 29

ComfortDelGro Corporation urges its taxi drivers to be on the lookout for the girl

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

Panjang shop where she worked. While she was in prison, she realised she would have problems returning here to work after she was repatriated to China, as the immigration authorities had a record of her fingerprints.

But her fellow inmates taught her how to “beat” the system.

After serving her sentence, she returned to China and “scarred all my fingers on the right hand and the left thumb on a hot iron plate”. After the injuries healed, she paid a trafficker \$8,000 to arrange for her and Huang Na to come to Singapore in May 2003. Shortly after they arrived, they met Took.

DIMINISHED RESPONSIBILITY

The accused never took the stand in his defence. Instead, Took relied on the testimony of defence psychiatrist Dr R. Nagulendran to claim diminished responsibility and escape the noose.

The psychiatrist told the court that Took’s “irrational” and “inexplicable” strangling of Huang Na, whom he “considered as a daughter”, and his reactions to her death indicated schizophrenia. That meant Took could not be fully accountable for his actions.

The accused’s family, he said, also told him how Took had acted strangely whenever he returned to see them in Penang. His mother Loo Swee Heow said her son talked about “having spirits in him” and “often smiled to

HOW IT ALL UNFOLDED

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Oct 30

Took surrenders to police in Penang, returns to Singapore

Oct 31

Police find body of a young girl at Telok Blangah Hill Park

Nov 1

Took is charged with murder

Nov 8

Huang Na is cremated

July 11, 2005

Took's trial begins

Aug 26

Took is found guilty and sentenced to hang

Jan, 2006

His appeal is rejected in a rare split decision by the Court of Appeal

Nov 3

Took is hanged

himself”.

Dr Nagulendran added how Took looked to mediums for help on two occasions, once in Kulai, Malaysia, and another time in Geylang.

Prosecution psychiatrist G. Sathyadevan however argued that it was not possible that Took could have been suffering from delusions and hallucinations, much less schizophrenia, when he killed Huang Na.

He said: “I have never seen such a case in my entire years as a psychiatrist where a patient becomes mentally ill right at the time when the offence is committed. There are usually disturbances before that.”

Took was not mentally dull either, he added, even though his IQ of 76 put him just above the mentally retarded bracket, which is usually considered 70 or below.

In its submissions, the prosecution also pointed out that he had no history of mental abnormality, and there was nothing disorganised about the way he went about killing Huang Na.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Ang said: “He had calmly and systematically gone about killing the deceased. His every action during the killing was pregnant with reason.”

On Aug 26, after a 13-day hearing, Took was found guilty and sentenced to hang.

Justice Lai Kew Chai noted the meticulous manner in which Took had planned the disposal of Huang Na's body and clothes. He



Took Leng How posing for the camera and smiling in a photo taken by a prison warden, just days before he was hanged. — TNP FILE PHOTO

chose a rubbish bin that was not monitored by a camera to dump her clothes.

He wrapped her in nine plastic bags, encased her in a box and used the cover of night to dump the body.

“His conduct after the killing was clearly the product of a cold and calculated mind.”

In January 2006, Took’s appeal was rejected in a rare split decision. Chief Justice Yong Pung How and Justice Chao Hick Tin both upheld the conviction, but Justice Kan Ting Chiu dissented.

Forensic pathologist Paul Chui testified that Huang Na had been smothered to death, most likely by Took pressing his hand over her mouth and nose, but he also said that signs on Huang Na’s body — a bruised tongue, vomiting and loss of bowel control — were consistent with her having a seizure.

While the pathologist told the court that the seizure was part of the “dying process” and not the primary cause of death, Justice Kan was not satisfied that there was enough conclusive evidence.

A last ditch appeal to the President for clemency also failed.

Took was hanged in Changi Prison on Nov 3, 2006, but not before choosing his own obituary picture after a photo-taking session in prison, dressed in new clothes brought by his family.



2005

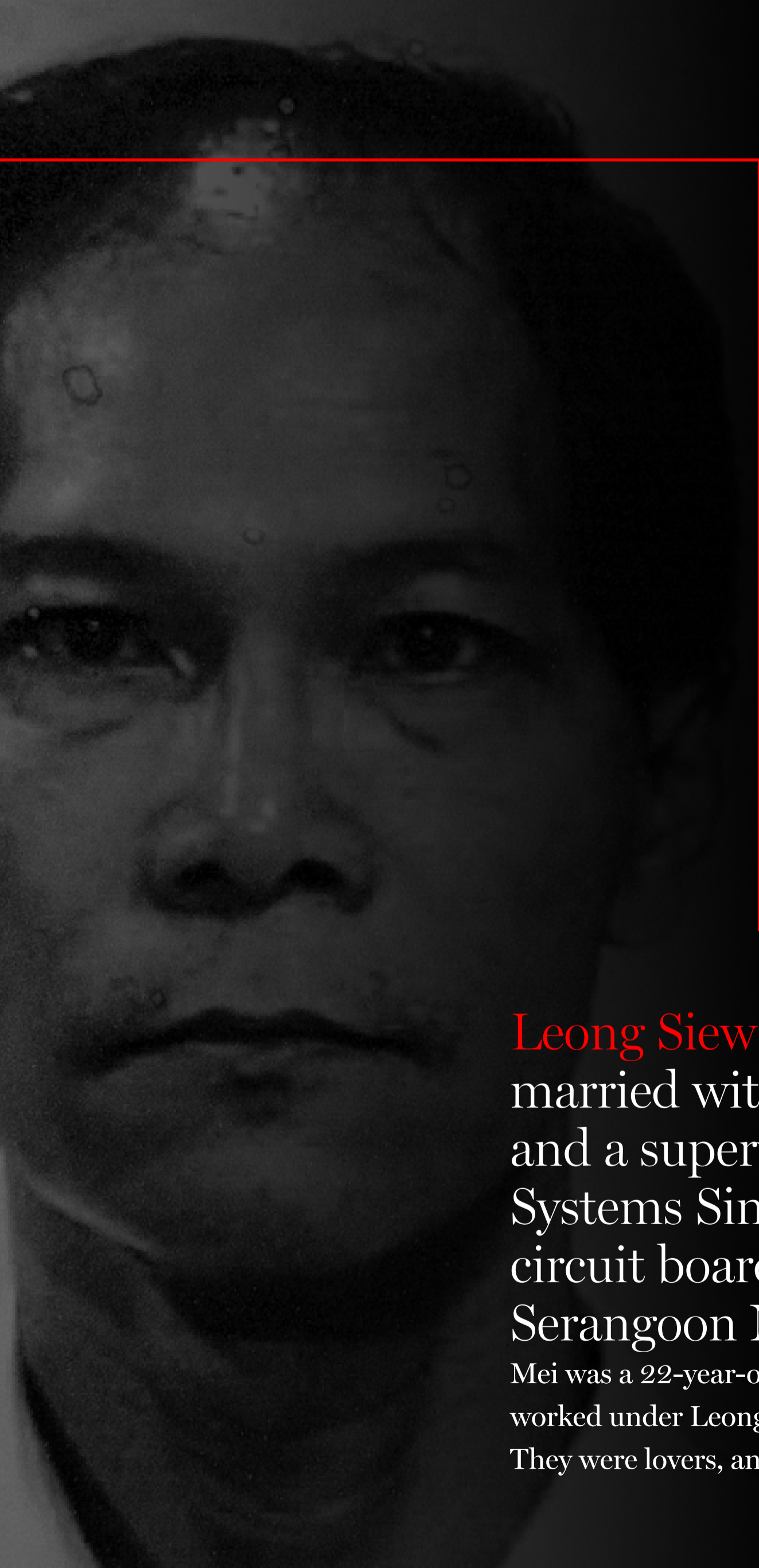
KALLANG

BODY-

PARTS

MURDER

He stole his young lover's ATM card and withdrew her money. Then fearing that she would identify him, factory supervisor Leong Siew Chor killed and dismembered the body into seven parts



Leong Siew Chor was 50, married with three children and a supervisor at Agere Systems Singapore, a circuit board company in Serangoon North. Ms Liu Hong Mei was a 22-year-old from China, who worked under Leong as a production operator. They were lovers, and had been for a year.

But that did not stop Leong from killing Ms Liu — all to prevent police from finding out that he stole her ATM card and withdrew \$2,000 from her account.

It was 9.15am on June 16, 2005, and cleaner Murugan Kaniapan was going about his daily rounds when he spotted a waterlogged, brown cardboard box sealed with masking tape on the banks of the Kallang River, a popular spot for sea-sports enthusiasts.

Curious, the 27-year-old tried to pick up the parcel to throw it away but the water damage was too severe.

The box fell apart in his hands, revealing its contents: a green plastic bag containing what looked like fresh meat.

Suspicious aroused, he used a twig to pull apart the loosely-knotted bag. “That was when I saw the lower half of a woman’s body,” he said. Decomposition had not set in and “the flesh looked very fresh, like she was not dead”.

Her naked body had been cleanly severed at the pelvis and knee joints.

Mr Murugan added: “There was no blood and no smell. I could see the bone at the knee was very white.”

Soon after, police found a red and white box 300m downstream on the opposite bank.

In it was another green plastic bag.

It contained the upper torso of a woman’s body. The arms and hands were intact. The decapitated head however was missing.

KILLER



Leong Siew Chor, who was married with three children, killed his lover and chopped her body into seven parts.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

VICTIM



Ms Liu Hong Mei was a 22-year-old from China, who worked under Leong as a production operator.
— ST FILE PHOTO

A massive search was conducted for the other missing parts, including the woman's feet.

A 30-man battalion of Special Operations police officers scoured the banks and bushes surrounding the river. Police Coast Guard boats patrolled the river up to its opening with the sea.

Two days later, a decomposed head wrapped in newspaper and stuffed into a yellow plastic bag labelled "Artfriend" and legs were found at a Tuas incinerator plant. The bags had been picked up at the Singapore River and brought to the plant by garbage collectors.

By then police already had Leong in custody.

After the first of the shocking finds, police compared fingerprints to a database of foreign workers. Colleagues of Ms Liu, who came to Singapore in 2003 to work, had already lodged a police report that she was missing.

That very night, police went to Agere Systems and questioned Leong, who worked the night shift.

He appeared nervous, according to Acting Inspector Roy Lim — he stammered and his hands trembled.

Leong was arrested the next day.

Police soon pieced together how the gruesome murder happened.

On June 13, the couple had gone to Hotel 81 at Geylang Lorong 20. Leong stole her POSB ATM card from her bag while she was in the



Ms Liu's torso, without head or legs, being taken away by police after it was found by a cleaner at the Kallang River. — ZB FILE PHOTO



The murdered woman's head was found at an incineration plant in Tuas. — ST FILE PHOTO

shower, after having sex. He used it to make withdrawals and to buy items. He took out most of her savings — over \$2,000.

The next day, Ms Liu made a police report about her missing ATM card. That evening, she told Leong about the report and how she was advised that she could look at CCTV footage to see if she could identify the thief.

On June 15, he brought her back to his flat in Block 114, Geylang Lorong 3, then strangled her. Using a chopper and a rubber mallet, he cut her into seven pieces: two feet; two legs above the knee; lower torso; upper torso; and

“

THE FLESH
LOOKED VERY,
LIKE SHE WAS
NOT DEAD.
THERE WAS
NO BLOOD
AND NO
SMELL.

Cleaner Murugan Kaniapan, 27, telling The Straits Times of his gruesome find at the beach next to Kallang Riverside Park along Crawford Street on June 17, 2005.

head.

He dumped the parts in different parts of Singapore. He threw her feet and clothes in rubbish bins at Ubi Road, after cycling there.

Her handbag went into a bin outside Ang Mo Kio MRT station on his way to work.

But the parts he had thrown into the Kallang River proved his undoing. They surfaced and drifted to the banks.

The trial next year set the stage for the gory retelling of Leong's crime. More than 280 photographs of Ms Liu's body parts were shown, to the horror of the gallery.

It looked like cuts had been made to her private parts. Her upper torso had an open wound on the left shoulder. Her stomach and decomposed organs could be seen.

Masking tape with strands of hair, a chopper and a black rubber mallet were found in Leong's home. A stack of Chinese newspapers and green plastic bags were also found. Traces of blood were discovered on three pails, on the kitchen toilet wall and on the back of the toilet bowl. Pictures of his 24-year-old son's room showed several yellow bags with the word "Artfriend". The sides of a lift in the block also had blood stains.

Leong claimed the couple had decided to commit suicide but he chickened out.

On the morning of June 15, he said, he and his lover had gone to his flat. After hugging and kissing for 20 minutes, she asked him to follow

HOW HE KILLED AND CHOPPED HER UP

Leong first brought Ms Liu to his flat and then strangled her using a towel. Using a chopper and a rubber mallet, he cut her into seven pieces: her two feet; two legs above the knee; lower torso; upper torso; and head.



“

LIU HONG
MEI DIED A
VERY CRUEL,
HEART-
BREAKING
DEATH.

Justice Tay Yong Kwang

her to China, he claimed.

Leong did not want to — he was too old to start afresh; and could not abandon his wife and three children. He said she suggested that they die together.

She wanted to go first to show her sincerity, he said. Leong then strangled her with a towel. “It was the look on her face that made me decide not to strangle myself,” he said.

On May 19, 2006, Justice Tay Yong Kwang sentenced Leong to death.

He rubbished the claims of a suicide pact, finding that Ms Liu, “a lively, young woman in the vernal stage of her life”, who was doing well in her job, was keen to forward her studies, and looking forward to attending her sister’s wedding, had no reason to want to end her life.

“In the classic tragic tale of ill-fated love, the luckless lover committed suicide. Here, Romeo killed Juliet. It was a most disgusting and despicable murder. Liu Hong Mei died a very cruel, heartbreaking death.”

Afraid that Ms Liu would point him out as the person who stole her ATM card after watching CCTV footage, possibly costing him his job and family’s respect, Leong had decided “to silence her forever and save himself”.

“The accused stole the deceased’s heart, then pilfered her card and hard-earned savings, and finally robbed her of her life.”

In September that year, his appeal was rejected by a three-judge panel.

Ms Liu's coffin was covered by 260 crimson roses. Undertaker Roland Tay organised the funeral for free. In the picture is his wife and assistant Sally Ho. — TNP FILE PHOTO



STRANGERS AT HER FUNERAL

Ms Liu Hong Mei's funeral on July 11, 2005, was attended by 150 people — from well wishers to curious gawkers. Many said they were sorry for the victim. Undertaker Roland Tay and his wife Sally Ho led the ceremony. Ms Liu's sister Hong Wei could not bear to attend, and had her own personal difficulties. Mr Tay, who collected more than \$20,000 in donations, said he would hand the money to the sister. He was also told to take Ms Liu's ashes back to her family in Chang Chun village in China. An 80-year-old retiree who turned up for the funeral commented: "Some of those here look as if they are here to see a show." Chinese newspapers reported that some who came hoped to find lucky lottery numbers. Ms Liu, whose coffin was filled with her favourite toys, books and clothes, was cremated in Mandai that day.

Justice V.K. Rajah again rejected the claims of a suicide pact. “If he could not bear to leave his family, why would he want to take his life away?”

Justice Choo Han Teck added: “Which man who claims to love a woman so much that he follows her to her death would steal her ATM card and money?”

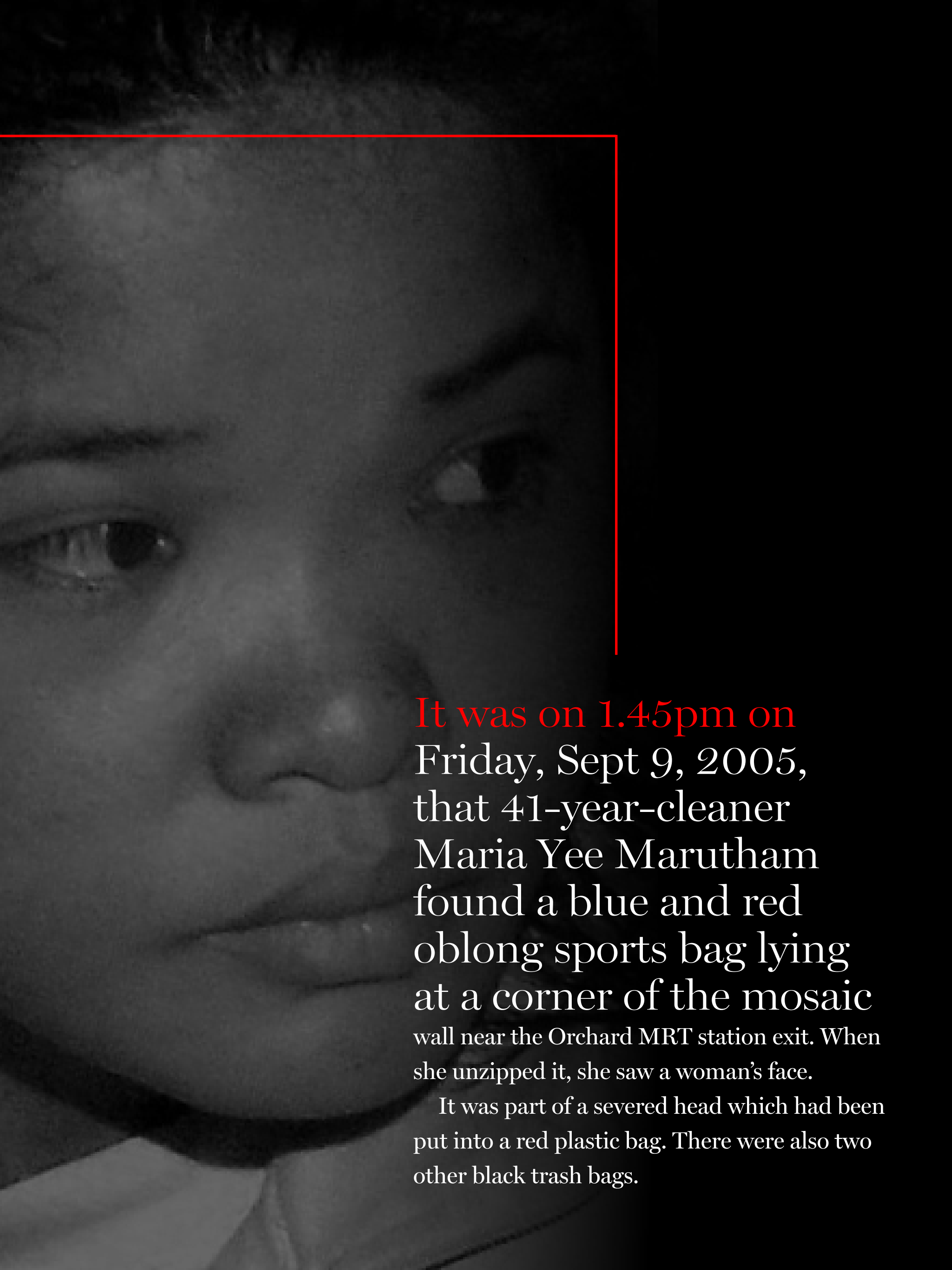
After his clemency appeal was rejected, he was hanged on Nov 30, 2007.



2005

BODY PARTS IN ORCHARD ROAD

They were the best of friends, until a dispute over money led to one maid killing another, then gruesomely disposing the body in separate bags



It was on 1.45pm on Friday, Sept 9, 2005, that 41-year-cleaner Maria Yee Marutham found a blue and red oblong sports bag lying at a corner of the mosaic wall near the Orchard MRT station exit. When she unzipped it, she saw a woman's face.

It was part of a severed head which had been put into a red plastic bag. There were also two other black trash bags.



Body parts were found in a bag near the Orchard MRT station on Sept 9, 2005.

— TNP FILE PHOTO

VICTIM



Filipino maid Jane Parangan La Puebla. Her body was found in bags dumped in two locations.

— ST FILE PHOTO

They contained arms, which had been severed above the elbow, and legs.

At 6.10pm, it was civil servant Alvin Lim Seng Leong's turn to make a grisly find. He was walking to a bus stop on Lornie Road, when he cut in front of the MacRitchie Reservoir canteen and found a black trolley bag. The police were called.

In the bag was the rest of the dead woman's body.

In the space of 12 hours, police had a suspect in custody — 29-year-old Filipino maid Guen Garlejo Aguilar. Married with two young sons,

KILLER



Filipino maid Guen Garlejo Aguilar killed her best friend.
— SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

she was arrested at her employer's eighth-floor apartment at the SunGlade condominium at Serangoon Avenue 2. An 18cm cleaver in a red plastic bag was also taken from the flat, where the murder was believed to have taken place.

The victim was her best friend, who also worked as a maid. Her name was Mrs Jane Parangan La Puebla. She was 26, and also married and a mother of a nine-year-old boy. Police had identified her from the fingerprints lifted from the hands found in the sports bag.

By the next day, Aguilar was charged with murder. The big question was why did she kill a woman who was described as being a “sister” to her. Speculation centered around the possibility of a love triangle.

The pair had often been seen at the popular maid hangout next to Orchard MRT station with a local Indian man. The “tall and handsome” man was seeing Aguilar, but the rumours were that the victim was also vying for his affections.

But the truth was far more simple. The reason for the killing was a dispute over money.

THE FIGHT

Two days before Mrs La Puebla's remains were found, she and Aguilar were cooking in the kitchen of the condo where the latter



The trolley bag found near MacRitchie Reservoir. It contained the victim's torso, which was dressed only in undergarments.
— TNP FILE PHOTO

worked. They had been chatting about their problems when she mentioned a \$2,000 debt Mrs La Puebla owed her.

Half the money came from a third Filipino, who borrowed it from a Singaporean loanshark and was charging Aguilar an interest of 20 per cent. Mrs La Puebla became agitated and raised her voice when Aguilar suggested that she sell her video and digital cameras to pay off the debt.

Aguilar tried to calm her down, but when she mentioned selling the cameras again, they began to fight. They wrestled, pulling each other's hair and grabbing each other's necks. Aguilar also bit her friend on the right forearm.

The struggle spilled into the laundry

The severed right arm of Mrs La Puebla which was found in Orchard Road. A bite mark on the arm matched her killer's dental record.

— PHOTO COURTESY OF DR TAN PENG HUI





The killing took place in the home of Aguilar's employers at SunGlade Condominium at Serangoon Avenue 2.
— ST FILE PHOTO

area and into the bedroom, and left Mrs La Puebla's blood on the floor, mattress and walls. According to Aguilar, she grabbed a cushion from her bed and used it to smother her friend.

After a few seconds, she removed the pillow and started to cry because she thought her friend was dead. Nevertheless, when Mrs La Puebla started moving again, Aguilar strangled her until she stopped breathing.

For the next two days, unbeknownst to her employers, she hid the body in her room, inside a luggage bag. Then on Sept 9, after her employers went to work, she went to Mustafa Shopping Centre in Little India and bought a chopper, an axe and black rubbish bags. She also bought a pair of canvas gloves and another pair made of latex — to wear while dismembering the body, a bolster, two pillowcases and a bedsheet to replace blood-stained bedlinen, and even green wallpaper



Officers returning to the condominium to look for evidence. — ZB FILE PHOTO

matching the one used in her employers' flat.

When she reached the flat some time after 9.30am, she dismembered the body and placed Mrs La Puebla's head, arms and legs in separate plastic bags, then wrapped them in rubbish bags. She stuffed the body parts and some newspapers into a travel bag.

The torso, clad in brown underwear, was wrapped in newspapers and a black rubbish bag.

This done, she scrubbed the blood traces with water and detergent and used the wall paper to cover up the stains which could not be fully removed.

At about midday, she brought the bag

containing Mrs La Puebla's head and limbs, and took a taxi to Orchard Road. She dumped the bag next to a mural wall at the Orchard MRT Station at about 12.35pm, a stone's throw from the park where the friends used to meet every Sunday.

Aguilar returned to the flat at 1.25pm. Half an hour later, she put the bag with the torso into a bigger piece of luggage bag and took a taxi to MacRitchie Reservoir. Near the bus stop along Lornie Road, she took the smaller bag out and left it next to the footpath.

Inside the bag was an International Herald Tribune newspaper with a sticker on the front page bearing the name and address of Aguilar's employers. That led police straight to her.

A 'TORTURED MIND'

Before her trial began in May 2006, the charges against Aguilar were reduced to manslaughter. This was after defence lawyers had written to the Attorney-General's Chambers to get the charge reduced on the grounds that the death resulted from grave and sudden provocation, and because Aguilar suffered from a psychiatric condition, later revealed to be depression.

She pleaded guilty.

The court could have sent her to prison for life, but sentenced her to 10 years in jail.

The judge, Justice V.K. Rajah, noted that Aguilar appeared to have recovered from



Monks pray for Mrs La Puebla at the Orchard Road spot where her body parts were found. —ST FILE PHOTO

her depression, which was compounded by financial woes, and that family support and counselling would “further diminish any risk of future offences”.

While he described her conduct in dismembering Mrs La Puebla’s body as “grotesque and abominable”, he said Aguilar was hardly trying to conceal her victim’s death.

“By choosing to plant the deceased’s head and torso in two very public places, her behaviour strikes one as nothing short of incoherent and incomprehensible,” he said. Instead, it showed the workings of “a tortured mind”.



2006

THE

ONE-EYED

DRAGON

Gangster Tan Chor Jin was so-called because he was blind in one eye. He repeatedly shot a nightclub owner, killing him, before conducting his own defence in court and failing miserably



He burst into the
Serangoon flat on the
dawn of Feb 15, 2006,
armed with a knife and
Beretta pistol. It was the
home of his long-time
friend and nightclub

OWNER Lim Hock Soon. The gunman first
ordered Mr Lim to tie up his wife, maid, and
teenage daughter. He then aimed his pistol at
41-year-old Lim, firing five shots into his left
thigh, left arm, back, right cheek and right

temple before fleeing with accomplice Ho Yueh Keong, a Malaysian.

And so began an international manhunt for Tan Chor Jin, dubbed by the media as the One-eyed Dragon because he is blind in his right eye.

It took just 10 days before he was caught after police stormed a room at the five-star Grand Plaza Parkroyal hotel in Kuala Lumpur – launching a murder trial in which Tan conducted his own defence, before being found guilty. He was hanged in 2009 at the age of 42.

KILLER



Tan Chor Jin ran to Malaysia after killing nightclub owner Lim Hock Soon. But it was not long before the law caught up with him. — ST FILE PHOTO

HIS CAPTURE

Tan, better known as Tony Kia to his associates, was part of the Ang Soon Tong gang which operated in both Malaysia and Singapore. The gang, which had existed since the 1950s, was known for conducting criminal activities such as gun-smuggling, drugs, illegal moneylending and illegal gambling.

Malaysian police were on Tan's trail soon after he fled to Johor Baru with Ho in a Proton Wira.

Once the suspects got there, they split up.

Tan got a crew cut, presumably to change his appearance, before calling on a gang lord in the town.

That man was already being watched by Malaysian police. When the police spotted Tan, they started trailing him as well and soon realised that he was the one wanted by

VICTIM



Mr Lim was gunned down at his home at Block 223, Serangoon Avenue 4. — ST FILE PHOTO

ACCOMPLICE



Malaysian Ho Yueh Keong allegedly helped Tan escape to Malaysia in 2006. After nine years on the run, he was arrested and extradited to Singapore in July 2015. — ST FILE PHOTO



Found during the raid to nab Tan were six semi-automatic pistols, 203 bullets and 4kg of the drug ketamine. — ST FILE PHOTO

Singapore police.

Tan and his gang were clever enough to switch hotels at least once every two days.

But he made a wrong move when, instead of keeping a low profile, he chose to stay in expensive hotels before going into hiding in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

His craving for Hainanese chicken rice played a role in his capture. It was around midnight, when he ordered the dish through room service at the five-star Grand Plaza Parkroyal hotel in Kuala Lumpur, where he went to procure a fake passport.

An undercover Malaysian cop posed as a waiter and delivered the food to Tan's room on the 13th floor. He used the chance to gather intel, for instance the room's layout and how many were with Tan – his wife, and two other couples. A listening device was stuck on one of the dishes.

At 2am, the other two couples returned to their beds in adjoining rooms. Two hours later on Feb 25, when nothing but snores could be heard, 12 officers rushed into the three rooms.

Tan's room was clean. But in the others, police found six guns, 203 bullets, two pairs of handcuffs and 4kg of ketamine, with a street value of nearly \$22,000.

Tan, despite his supposed fear of flying, was brought back on March 1 to Singapore on a Singapore Airlines flight, escorted by six Singapore detectives.



Tan the "One-eyed Dragon" (centre) in the SIA flight from KL to Singapore. Next to him are CID officers from Singapore. — ST FILE PHOTO

RETURN TO THE SCENE

An hour after he was charged on March 3, Tan was bought back to the scene of the crime. That was where he was seen by his victim's wife, who was next door in her mother-in-law's flat, for the first time since he pointed a gun at her and her family.

"Give me back my husband!" Madam Kok Pooi Leng, then 33, screamed at the killer. She had been married to Mr Lim for 14 years.

Mr Lim's elderly mother also yelled in Mandarin: "Go and die!"



Tan being brought back to the murder scene at Serangoon Avenue 4. There, he was shouted at by the victim's wife and mother. — ST FILE PHOTO



Mr Lim's widow and mother at their kitchen window, scolding Tan vehemently.
— ZB FILE PHOTO

Although Tan did not say anything, a slight grin crossed his face.

His original charge of murder was later amended to discharging a firearm, which also carries the death penalty.

Despite the serious nature of the crime, he insisted he did not want any lawyer to represent him even though he could have asked the court to assign him two, pro bono.

WIDOW, DAUGHTER AND MAID'S TESTIMONY



Tan's flat was at Hougang Avenue 4. This is the view of the living room from the corridor. Mail addressed to Tan can be seen on the living room table. — ST FILE PHOTO

At 6.55am, a man clad in a black short-sleeved round-necked T-shirt and black Armani pants barged into their four-room flat in Serangoon, holding a pistol in his left hand and a short knife in his right.

He had surprised Mr Lim Hock Soon's teenage daughter while she was at the doorstep putting on her shoes to get ready for school. He barged past the then 13-year-old and declared that he wanted to rob the family.

He kicked Mr Lim, known in secret society circles as "Guni Ter", or Milk Pig, who was sleeping on the mattress in the living room.

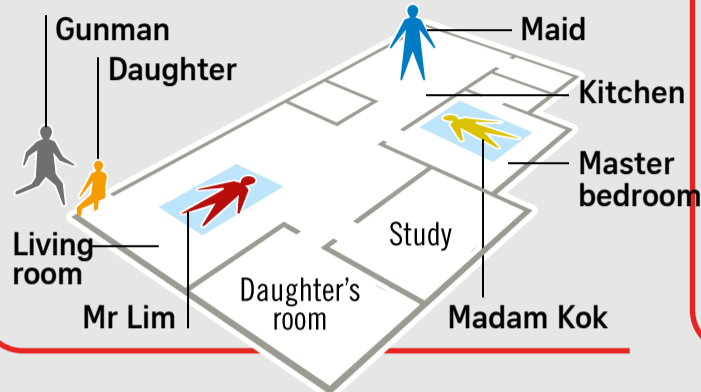
Mr Lim demanded to know what Tan wanted.

"I have a gun. Do you want me to shoot?" came the reply.

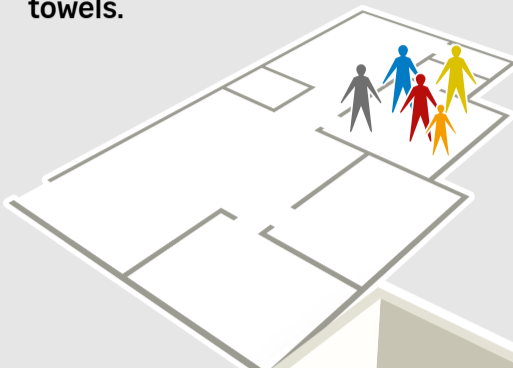
Madam Kok Pooi Leng, who was asleep in the master bedroom, was woken up by the family's Indonesian maid Risa Erawati Ning Tyas, then 22.

Three witnesses recall night of terror

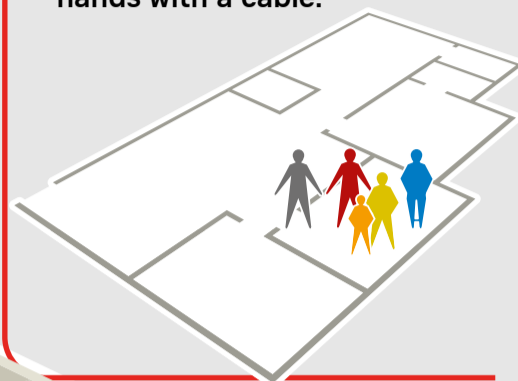
- 1 » Around 6.55am, the daughter is putting on her socks and shoes for school.
» Her parents are asleep and the maid is in the kitchen.
» A man armed with a gun and knife enters the flat. He wakes Mr Lim up.



- 2 » Madam Kok is woken up. She is told to put her valuables into a bag for the gunman.
» Mr Lim is told to tie up his wife, daughter and maid with towels.

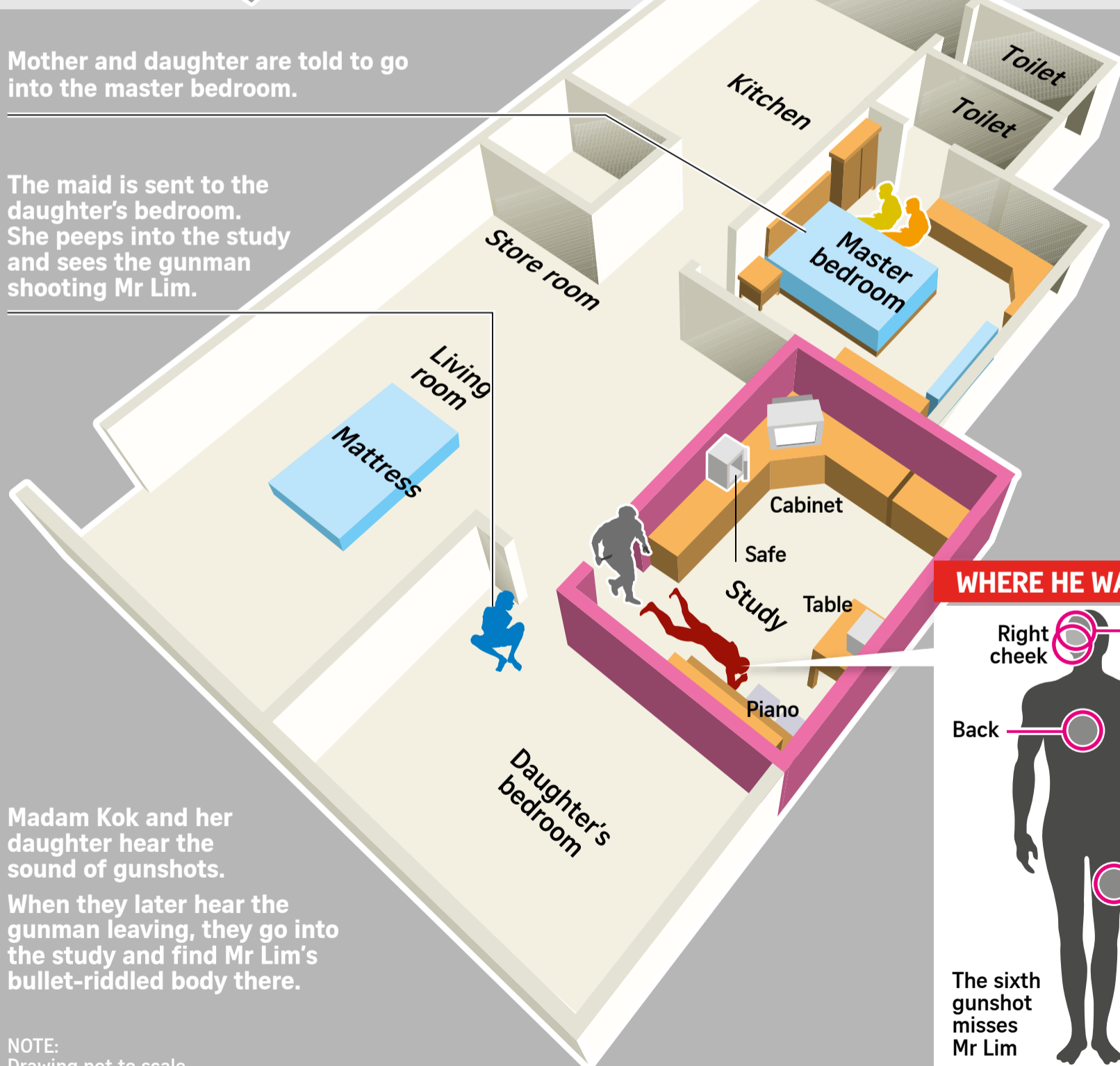


- 3 » The gunman tells them to go into the study. There Mr Lim is told to put the valuables in the safe into the bag.
» Madam Kok ties up Mr Lim's hands with a cable.

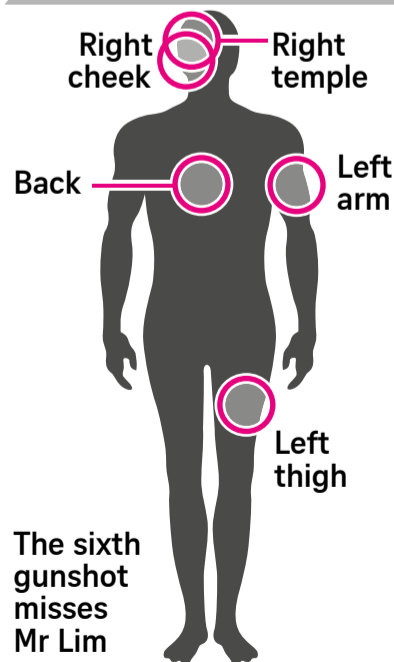


Mother and daughter are told to go into the master bedroom.

The maid is sent to the daughter's bedroom. She peeps into the study and sees the gunman shooting Mr Lim.



WHERE HE WAS SHOT



NOTE:
Drawing not to scale



Tan was the first man in more than 16 years to conduct his own defence while accused of a capital crime. — ST FILE PHOTOS

“
I GIVE YOU
YOUR LIFE.
DON'T
IDENTIFY
ME OR ELSE
I WILL KILL
YOUR WHOLE
FAMILY.”

Tan warning Madam Kok before fleeing the crime scene

She was ordered by Tan to collect all her valuables from the master bedroom and put them in a bag.

The gunman then told Mr Lim to tie up the family members with towels.

He made all of them go into the study, where Mr Lim was forced to open the safe.

Jewellery and cash in five different currencies also went into the bag.

Madam Kok was told to tie up her husband's hands with TV cable wire. She used her teeth to tie the knots as her own hands were bound.

Then she and her daughter were told to go to the master bedroom.

In the study, Tan pointed his gun at the maid's forehead.

“Uncle, please don't kill me. I here working,” she pleaded.

Mr Lim told the gunman not to do anything to her. According to the maid, this was when Tan pointed the gun at him.

“Sir knelt down and begged the gunman not to kill him,” she testified.

Ms Risa was then moved into the girl's bedroom, but she was able to peek into the study.

“The gunman fired one shot at Sir's face. Sir cried out in pain. I saw Sir fall backwards, I saw Sir's body hitting against the black chair behind him.”

More shots followed.

Tan then went to the master bedroom where he told Madam Kok in Mandarin: “It is your husband who went too far.” Before fleeing he warned Madam Kok: “I give you your life. Don't identify me or else I will kill your whole family.”

HOW IT ALL UNFOLDED

○ Feb 15, 2006

Nightclub owner Lim Hock Soon, 41, is shot dead in his Serangoon Avenue 4 flat by a gunman. Mr Lim's daughter, wife and maid are tied up and put in the other rooms. The gunman, who was dressed in black, flees from the scene with cash and jewellery.

○ Feb 16, 2006

Lim Choon Chwee, 38, the man believed to have driven the gunman to the flat, surrenders to the police. The police identify two other men in connection with the case: Tan Chor Jin and Malaysian Ho Yueh Keong. International police are put on alert. The gun used in the shooting is found in a canal in Sengkang.

○ Feb 21, 2006

Mr Lim, the victim, is cremated after a five-day wake.

○ Feb 25, 2006

Tan is arrested in Kuala Lumpur in the five-star Grand Plaza Parkroyal hotel. Tan's wife, Madam Siau Fang Fang, 25, is arrested with him.

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

TAN DEFENDS HIMSELF

He was the first man in more than 16 years to conduct his own defence when facing the death penalty in Singapore.

Tan was full of confidence when he began, often seen laughing and joking with the guards, even giving the thumbs-up to his friends seated in the public gallery. When he got a satisfactory answer from a witness, he would wink and smile at his wife, Madam Siau Fang Fang.

But as he went on, he began to be filled with doubts.

He warned Mr Lim's daughter not to lie about him pointing a gun at her father.

He asked the maid how she could have remembered details of the shooting when she could not even remember which one was his bad eye.

He repeatedly asked Justice Tay Yong Kwang to allow him to smoke in prison, arguing that "a car without petrol cannot go; my mind without cigarettes cannot think".

He insisted that he had only wanted to scare Mr Lim, whom he believed was plotting to kill him.

He claimed that he and Mr Lim ran an illegal horse racing and football betting ring, in which he accepted bets placed by Mr Lim's runners.

By April 2004, he said, the runners had chalked up losses of \$220,000 but Mr Lim refused to settle the debt. In 2005, he claimed

HOW IT ALL UNFOLDED

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

○ **March 1, 2006**

Tan is extradited back to Singapore and charged with murder. In August, the charge is amended to discharging a firearm with intent to cause physical injury, which also carries the death penalty.

○ **Jan 22, 2007**

The first day of Tan's trial in High Court.

○ **May 22, 2007**

Tan is found guilty and sentenced to death.

○ **Jan 30, 2008**

His appeal fails.

○ **Jan 5, 2009**

It is revealed that his application for clemency was denied by the President.

○ **Jan 9, 2009**

He is hanged at dawn.

he found out that Mr Lim had sent people to kill him.

He bought a semi-automatic Beretta .22-calibre pistol in Johor for defence.

He brought the gun with him to the showdown with Mr Lim to balance the scales since he was half-blind — the result of a 1999 traffic accident when glass pieces flew into his right eye.

He insisted it was Mr Lim who had first attacked him with a chair.

He claimed the gun misfired while he was warding off the blows.

“When I was talking to him, he suddenly grabbed hold of a chair to attack me. I panicked and opened fire,” he had told police.

He added that he had been drinking from the evening before, and was in a blur about events.

But many of his arguments fell flat.

The prosecution noted that Mr Lim would not have been able to lift a bulky chair, since he had been tied up.

Tan asked weapons specialist David Loo from the police's Armament Branch if the gun, which was found in a canal a day after the shooting, could have gone off on its own.

The answer was a clear no said Mr Loo, since he was able to test-fire the gun without any malfunctions.

Tan called for more tests be carried out.

The judge asked: “Even if the pistol was to

misfire, would it fire more than one bullet?”

Mr Loo said it would not.

Tan had asked for a doctor to testify on how alcohol could have affected his mental state. But he decided not to call on Dr Lim Yun Chin, a consultant psychiatrist in private practice, when he realised the doctor was unable to support Tan’s contention that alcohol had an “overriding effect” on his state of mind at the time.

Tan instead chose to call senior consultant

THE GANGSTER’S TWO “WIVES”



Tan’s wife Siau Fang Fang told the court that she received threatening SMS messages on her mobile phone.

— ST FILE PHOTO

When he was in prison after being caught, he told his wife he had a mistress, with whom he had a daughter and was expecting a son.

“He told me to tell her to look after their two children well. I was angry and shocked. But at that time, I was too much at a loss to know what to do,” said Madam Siau, who married Tan in 2001 before they settled in her parent’s bungalow in Muar, during an interview with The Straits Times.

The “second wife”, 28-year-old Yi Hua found out about his arrest from watching Malaysian television news. He called her, urging her to contact Madam Siau.

Madam Yi, whom he set up in an apartment in Johor Baru, said: “There was a lot of tension when we first met. But we talked and conceded that being angry was also no use. We were both in the same boat.”

He shuttled between his two homes, making time in between to run his business, a chain of four Chinese medicinal shops in Johor Baru, Muar and Skudai that also dabbled in the antique trade.

Both his women received an allowance of at least \$2,000 a month.

AN ACCOMPLICE TURNS PROSECUTION WITNESS



Lim Choon Chwee drove Tan to Mr Lim's flat.
— ST FILE PHOTO

At about 3am, childhood friend and his secret society underling Lim Choon Chwee drove Tan Chor Jin to Mr Lim Hock Soon's home at Block 223, Serangoon Avenue 4. Lim did not know that the black leather clutch bag Tan had with him contained a loaded Beretta pistol, some spare rounds and a small knife.

Lim waited in the car.

Ten minutes later, Tan returned, and as they left, he asked Lim where he could steal a Rolex watch.

Tan confided in Lim that he was down on his luck and had money problems.

The two spent about two hours watching football at a friend's house.

At about 6am, Tan again asked Lim to drive him back to Mr Lim's place. Tan told him to wait in front of Peicai Secondary School.

About half an hour later, Tan returned appearing flustered. Lim saw that he was also carrying a white plastic bag which appeared to be full. It was later revealed that the bag contained about \$170,000 in cash and property, including assorted jewellery, four Rolex watches and stacks of foreign currencies.

Tan then told Lim to drive to a canal in Sengkang, where Tan got rid of the pistol and the bullets.

They then returned to the friend's flat and called up a man called Ho Yuen Kong.

Tan, Ho and Lim returned to the carpark, where Lim saw Tan transfer the white bag to a Malaysian-registered car.

Tan and Ho then left for Malaysia.

Lim was given a discharge not amounting to an acquittal for abetment of murder, and was sentenced to six months' jail for failing to report a robbery.

psychiatrist R. Munidasa Winslow as his sole defence witness. But he testified that even though Tan was possibly drunk at the time, it did not affect his mental responsibility for the shooting.

In a surprise move one day, Tan also urged the court to hang him, since his death would protect his wife, whom he claimed was receiving threatening SMS messages.

He said: “I don’t want to fight. I want to surrender. I don’t want to get my wife into trouble.”

Madam Seow even showed reporters the messages later that day. One said: “If your husband doesn’t die, you’ll have to die.”

Deputy Public Prosecutor Chew Chin Yee described Tan’s testimony untruthful, evasive and at times so ludicrous it only reinforced his guilt.

Close to the end of the trial, Tan seemed to realise he had made a foolhardy decision in rejecting proper representation.

When Justice Tay asked Tan if he needed anything to prepare for closing submissions, Tan replied: “If I say I need a lawyer now, how?”

GUILTY

The High Court rejected Tan’s multi-pronged defence: that he had been drunk, that the shots were fired accidentally, and that he had acted in self-defence after Mr Lim threw a chair at him.

Labelling his actions as those of an “assured and accomplished assassin”, he was sentenced to death. Justice Tay dismissed Tan’s claims of an accidental shooting as a “laughable fantasy”,



Madam Kok, the 33-year-old widow, reaches out to touch Mr Lim’s coffin. — ST FILE PHOTO

because pulling the trigger required strength and a firm grip.

After the judge read out the sentence, Tan’s first question was: “Will I be hanged tomorrow?” Again, he asked if he could smoke in prison.

Veteran criminal lawyer Subhas Anandan represented Tan in his appeal, which was rejected in January 2008.

Before facing the noose on Jan 9, 2009, he requested that his kidneys, liver and cornea be donated.

It is believed that the 42-year-old asked for one of his kidneys to go to retail magnate Tang Wee Sung, the second son of Tangs' late founder Tang Choon Keng.

THE FUNERAL

On Feb 26, less than two days after the dramatic shooting, Mr Lim's wake was held at the void deck of the block where he was killed. It drew hundreds of curious onlookers – some of whom simply wanted to catch a glimpse of the hostesses and mamasans who had worked at his popular KTV lounge Las Vegas Nightclub in Havelock Road.

Others wanted to see if secret society members would turn up. During the final rites, Mr Lim's widow broke down, along with several hostesses.

At the cremation, Madam Kok was too distraught to go inside the viewing hall.

Outside, she fainted and laid on a bench. When she came to, she staggered towards the viewing hall, screaming "Ah Pui!", but was held back by relatives.

She had affectionately called her husband "Fei Lo" or "Ah Pui". The phrases mean fat man in Cantonese and Hokkien respectively.



2006

THE

SUNSHINE

EMPIRE

Self-styled entrepreneur James Phang Wah promised huge returns through his firm's "revolutionary" investment plan, but it was nothing more than a Ponzi scheme



Stepping into the plush Toa Payoh Central office of multi-level marketing firm Sunshine Empire, few investors would have thought that they would be duped by its charismatic founder, who saw himself as Asia's answer to Warren Buffet, lived in a luxurious three-storey landed property in Jurong West and drove a shiny black Mercedes.

For 15 months between August 2006 and November 2007, thousands of unwitting Singaporeans bought almost 26,000 “lifestyle packages” ranging from \$240 to \$12,000 from the company, which had an office featuring gold trimmings and lush carpeting.

In November 2007, the police’s Commercial Affairs Department raided the fraudulent firm, owned by entrepreneur James Phang Wah, in what was to be the unravelling of Singapore’s biggest Ponzi scheme.

Most investors would get back little or nothing, with the authorities recovering only \$21 million out of more than the nearly \$190 million swindled from ordinary Singaporeans, including retirees and students, lured by the promise of high returns. Only a few who invested in the early months of the scheme made any money.

In July 2010, the court which sentenced Phang to nine years’ jail and a \$60,000 fine for criminal breach of trust described his scheme as a “premeditated, sustained, sophisticated fraud on a large scale” which no “unsuspecting mind could have easily seen through”.

Phang, the mastermind, came from humble beginnings.

He grew up on a Lim Chu Kang vegetable farm, and left school after his O levels.

To pay for his A-level classes which he attended at night, he worked in a shipyard and as a construction worker.

FRAUDSTER



James Phang Wah, the founder and head of the infamous Sunshine Empire.

— ST FILE PHOTO



The lush office space
of multi-level marketing
firm Sunshine Empire.
— HANDOUT PHOTO

WHAT IS A PONZI SCHEME?

It is a scam in which investors are promised high rates of return, but with little risk. The returns come from the funds put in by new investors. Earlier investors may see some returns, but the scheme collapses when the supply of new investors runs thin.

At 19, he went door-to-door selling stainless steel cooking utensils, health items and other products. After graduating from the National University of Singapore with a degree in arts in 1983, he joined Shin Min Daily News as a feature writer from 1984 to 1990.

In 1990, he started multi-level marketing firm Number One Product, which sold magnetic mattresses.

He set up the Empire Group Alliance — an intricate network of different businesses from property to telecommunications, of which Sunshine is a part — in 2003. He was its founder, director and international president, and boasted that its assets exceeded \$300 million. He claimed that it took him five years to come up with a “revolutionary” business model for Sunshine.

First, people pay to become a Sunshine merchant, allowing them to buy thousands of

Sunshine's director Jackie Hoo Choon Cheat (left) was given a seven-year jail term, while Phang's wife Neo Kuon Huay (right) was fined \$60,000 for falsifying payment vouchers. — ST FILE PHOTO



items, from health supplements to lingerie, from its online platform. They were then supposed to sell on these items. But that was not the lure. The bait were the so-called Consumer Rebate Privileges, which translated into monthly cash payouts.

Someone who bought a Gold package for \$12,000 for instance could end up with total payouts of \$19,200 after 15 months — an impressive return of 160 per cent. Since the company was not earning real profit, the payouts for older investors came from the fees paid by new investors — the very definition of a Ponzi scheme.

Still that did not stop people from being fooled, pouring in tens of thousands to buy multiple packages, and then convincing friends and family members to join. Youth were a particular target for Sunshine.

After training sessions, Empire “managers” will take trainees out for supper. They would



Phang and his family lived in a luxurious three-storey landed property in Jurong West. — SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

be dressed in black suits, carry expensive Montblanc pens and wallets, with some driving luxury cars such as BMWs.

This was the “lifestyle” the company was trying to sell.

But the only real winners were Phang and his accomplices.

Phang was paid over \$7 million in “consultancy fees”, Sunshine’s director Jackie Hoo Choon Cheat and Phang’s wife Neo Kuon Huay, who claimed that she was Sunshine’s sales director, collected about \$950,000 each.

Right till the end, the bespectacled Phang, who was called Lao Da or Big Brother by his supporters, kept up his air of confidence.

In a interview in 2008, after news broke that Sunshine was under investigation and as reports emerged that the projects boasted by his company never even existed, he compared himself to the United States investment guru, saying: “I’m a legend. I’m very good – better than Warren Buffet.”

He also told The Straits Times: “We acquire companies like you go to the market buying beancurd.” **ST**


2006

KILLING

OF

NONOI

When a two-year-old girl went missing, her stepdad joined the search. But it was he who had murdered her, and hidden the body



When two-year-old
Nurasyura Mohamed
Fauzi, affectionately known
as Nonoi, suddenly went
missing on March 1, 2006,
relatives, neighbours and even
road sweepers joined police in a massive search.
The MacPherson Residents' Committee helped
distribute 5,000 fliers in four languages,
seeking information on the little girl's
whereabouts.



Madam Mastura Kamsir, the mother of two-year-old Nurasyura Mohamed Fauzi, with a poster of her missing daughter. — ST FILE PHOTO

She had disappeared from her grandparents' ground floor unit at Block 62, Circuit Road.

On the morning of March 4, her step-father Mohammed Ali Johari told his wife and his mother-in-law that Nonoi was dead and he was responsible.

That day, the 29-year-old led police to the Aljunied Flyover along

the Pan Island Expressway.

Under the lowest portion of the flyover, was a gap less than half a metre high and which police had to crawl on their bellies to get to.

It was there that they found the nude body of a female toddler with shoulder-length hair. It was partially decomposed and covered with litter and debris. DNA tests confirmed that it was Nonoi.

When Ali was later brought by police to his flat at Pipit Road and that of his parents just 500m away, he was confronted by enraged neighbours, who shouted expletives at him.

Ali had put up a charade by joining in the search for Nonoi, putting up posters asking for witnesses and offering special prayers.

The autopsy found that her lungs were waterlogged and over-expanded, consistent

KILLER



Mohammed Ali Johari pretended to look for Nurasyura, his step-daughter, before confessing that he killed the girl. — WANBAO FILE PHOTO



Police officers with the suspect Mohammed Ali at the Aljunied flyover where he had disposed of Nurasyura's body. He was brought there to retrace the steps he took. The third picture shows the crevice where the girl's body was found.
— WANBAO FILE PHOTO

with being drowned or immersed in water. Ali admitted that he had repeatedly dunked her head in a pail of water to stop her from crying.

Nonoi was also found to have injuries consistent with having been sexually assaulted. There were cuts to her external genital area and her hymen was completely destroyed.

Ali repeatedly denied raping the girl.

ALI'S STORY

He married Nonoi's mother Mastura Kamsir in late 2005.

By then, Madam Mastura, in her early 20s, was already a mother of three. The youngest was her son with Ali.

The other two were from her first marriage. Her first son was born in 2000. She gave birth



After searching under the flyover, police finally find a partially decomposed body matching the description of the missing Nurasyura. — ST FILE PHOTO



As Ali was being taken away from Block 90, Pipit Road, several onlookers shouted abuse at him. — ST FILE PHOTO

to Nonoi in 2003 while serving a jail sentence. During the trial, tests revealed that Nonoi's father was not Madam Mastura's first husband but another man.

Ali, who was a cough syrup and marijuana addict, had three children with his first wife, whom he divorced after getting Madam Mastura pregnant.

When he and Madam Mastura wed, they moved into a small rental one-room flat. They lived with the son they had together and Nonoi, and developed a routine.

Ali, a dispatch rider, and Madam Mastura, a traditional masseuse, would take the two children to his parents' Circuit Road flat and bring them back to their Pipit Road home after work.

VICTIM



Nurasyura Mohamed Fauzi was repeatedly immersed into a pail of water by her stepfather. — SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO



Madam Mastura after her husband was arrested for the killing of her daughter. — TNP FILE PHOTO

On the day of the murder, they walked to his parents' place at noon and left the children there to go window-shopping since it was Madam Mastura's payday.

After lunch, he sent his wife to work at about 2pm.

He was not working that day so he returned to the Circuit Road flat at about 2.15pm.

After a short while, he told police that he decided to bring Nonoi for a walk.

Then she started crying.

He took her to a provision shop but she did not want him to buy her sweets. He went to his friend's flat nearby but he was not in. Ali then went back to his flat.

All through this, he said, the little girl was crying on and off. She insisted on going back to her grandparents' home.

"I switched on the TV and radio. Noi began to cry. I got very angry and demanded her to stop crying," he told police. "I slapped her face, body and punched her thigh. She cried even louder."

He also said: "They were not real punches that would injure her badly. If I had punched her hard, my wife would know and scold me."

He told Nonoi to be quiet or else "Papa masuk dalam air (Papa put you in water)".

She did not stop, he said.

"I pulled her hand and forced her into the toilet in the kitchen. I kept on threatening to put her into the water. She cried loudly. There

was one red plastic pail in the toilet.

“It was half-filled with water. I removed her shirt and pants. She did not struggle but kept on crying. She was wearing pampers.

“I gripped both her legs, just slightly above the ankles, and raised her upwards. I then pushed her legs up and her head was facing the pail. I threatened her again that I would put her in.

“She still kept on crying.



A family photo from happier times. (From left) Madam Mastura, Nurasyura and Ali.

“I lowered her legs and her head was submerged into the water in the pail. The head touched the bottom part of the pail.”

He held her there for a few seconds then took her out. Given that she was all wet, he took off her pampers and asked her to “cebok” (to wash the private parts). She was not

doing it fast enough so “I hurriedly used my left hand to wash her buttock and private parts. I did it in a hurry and used more strength”.

Nonoi kept on crying.

He put her in the pail again, having filled it with more water.

When he took her out, she fell and the back of her head hit the floor. “I rubbed her head and I felt there was a bump.”

Nonoi continued to cry.

He put her in the pail again.



The toilet where Nurasyura met her untimely end. — ST FILE PHOTO



The pail into which Nurasyura was repeatedly dunked. — POLICE FILE PHOTO

“I pressed her downwards some more until both her legs were in the pail and her body was in a foetus position.

“At this point of time, my handphone rang.”

He went to answer it and had a short conversation. He could not recall who he spoke to.

“When I returned to the toilet, Nonoi was already motionless.”

He pressed her stomach and blew air into her mouth but Nonoi did not move.

“When I saw Nonoi like this, I became scared because she had died. I did not have the

intention to cause her death. I love Nonoi very much,” he told police.

THE CHARADE

He dressed her in the same clothes she had on earlier, carried her back to his parents’ flat, put her onto a bed, then left.

The Circuit Road flat has both front and back exits, making it possible for people to enter and leave easily.

Nonoi’s step-grandfather Johari Mohd Yus, a retiree, saw her at around 7.20pm — not realising that she was already dead. As he began his evening prayers, Ali returned and took Nonoi’s body with him.

He said in court that he wept and talked to her as he placed her lifeless body in a drain under the Aljunied flyover and covered it with rubbish. “Nonoi, get up, Nonoi. I leave you here for a while,” he said he told the two-year-old.

After performing his evening prayers in the living room, at around 7.35pm, Mr Johari found that Nonoi was missing from the bed.

Ali blamed his father for her disappearance. He told his wife when he went to fetch her.

After they searched around the estate, Nonoi’s mother finally made a police report at 11.20pm.

A few days later, Ali could not keep the secret any longer. In front of his wife and mother-in-law, he broke down and cried: “Nonoi, no more.”



Nurasyura’s step-grandfather, Mr Johari Mohd Yus, 59, told police after the girl disappeared that she had wandered out of their ground-floor flat while he was praying.
— ST FILE PHOTO



Nurasyura's body was buried under some rubbish in a crevice between the Aljunied flyover and the ground. — ST FILE PHOTO, POLICE HANDOUT



At 11.45am, he turned himself over at Bedok Police Station.

THE TRIAL

Prosecutors in Ali's murder trial in early 2007 charged that he had sexually assaulted her, and made up the explanation of how she died to cover it up.

He vehemently denied this, saying: "I hope this is the last time that I tell the court that I would not do such things."

Police also obtained Ali's phone records from MobileOne for the period between Feb 27 and March 4. It showed several incoming calls on March 3. But on the day Nonoi died, Ali did not answer a single call on his phone.

In court, he changed his story. He said that he did hear a "ringing" sound, but was not sure whether it came from his phone or the radio. He claimed he never left the toilet to answer any calls, and was confused and scared when he gave his statements to police.

Instead, Nonoi grew weak after he dunked her for the third time, which he demonstrated live in court using a pail and dummy.

Two alternative causes of death were also considered in court: an unexpected abnormal



Nurasyura's paternal grandmother, who fainted in grief outside the mortuary, being carried to a car by relatives.
— SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

heart rhythm or an onset of fits.

Justice Kan Ting Chiu ruled that, with insufficient evidence to support those two possibilities, death was caused by the “effects of the immersions”.

He said that “the accused intentionally kept Nonoi immersed in the water for a longer duration on the third occasion and it was not accidental”.

On Aug 31, 2007, he sentenced 31-year-old Ali to death.

THE APPEAL

During his appeal, Ali's lawyer R.S. Bajwa argued that his client had no intention of



(Top) Nurasyura's father, Mr Mohamed Fauzi Abdul Kadil, carrying her body for burial preparations at the Pusara Aman Mosque. (Above) Madam Mastura refusing to leave her daughter's side after she was buried. — BERITA HARIAN, ST FILE PHOTO



Madam Mastura (left) with relatives at the court hearing of her husband. — BERITA HARIAN FILE PHOTO

causing the child bodily injury. Even if he had, the intended injury — which was to deprive her of air temporarily — was minor.

Judge of Appeal V.K. Rajah did not mince his words when he replied: “Wouldn’t it be apparent to any person that dipping a young child into a pail of water, not once but three times, would cause not just minor but major injuries?”

“It’s the cruelest thing you can do to a young child.”

Mr Bajwa also noted that the trial judge had “side-stepped” the issue of whether Ali had molested Nonoi, which he argued was critical because the prosecution had built a case that he had sexually abused and then silenced her.

The three-judge appeals court however decided that there was enough evidence to show that Ali had been responsible for the sexual injuries found on Nonoi.

The appeal was dismissed.

On Dec 19, 2008, Ali was hanged at Changi prison.



2008

YISHUN TRIPLE MURDER

A tumultuous love affair ends with a
Chinese national viciously killing his lover,
her daughter and their flat-mate



Being humiliated by his lover for not giving her money to buy crabs for dinner was the last straw for Wang Zhijian. That night, he got up from bed naked, took a knife and stabbed Ms Zhang Meng, 41, over and over again. He turned the knife onto her 17-year-old daughter Feng Jianyu, killing her too.

KILLER



Chinese national Wang Zhijian killed three women, including his lover and her daughter.
☒ ST FILE PHOTO

VICTIMS



Ms Zhang Meng shared an intimate relationship with Wang.
☒ SUPREME COURT FILE PHOTO



Ms Feng Jianyu was 17 when she was killed by Wang.
☒ SUPREME COURT FILE PHOTO



Madam Yang Jie fell to her death as she tried to hide from Wang.
☒ WANBAO FILE PHOTO

Then he went after another mother-daughter pair who were staying in the rental apartment. Ms Li Meilin, who was 15 at the time, survived the repeated slashings.

Her mother Yang Jie, 36, fell to her death from the sixth-floor kitchen window of the flat in Block 349, Yishun Avenue 11. She had escaped onto the narrow ledge outside but Wang, who was 42 at the time of the killings, cut her hands which were holding onto the bamboo pole holders.

As if the shocking details were not enough, the perpetual grin Wang had for the cameras during his trial added another layer of menace.

CRAZY LOVE

Tattoos on Wang's body gave an inkling of his tumultuous love-hate relationship with Ms Zhang.

In May 2007, her face and half-body were



To prove his love for her, Wang had a picture of his girlfriend tattooed in May 2007.
☒ SUPREME COURT FILE PHOTO

put on his back, with a rose at the bottom. This, he said, was to express his “sincere” love for her.

Eight months later, he put a snake on his left shoulder to symbolise her viciousness, and a skeleton and heart on the right one. He said: “The skeleton resembled the ‘dead god’ (Ms Zhang) slowly and gradually swallowing my heart.”

They first met in 1996 at a brokerage firm, where Wang went to trade in stocks. The introduction was done by his colleague.

There was hardly any contact between them, even though they lived in Tianjin, where Wang



Eight months after getting the first tattoo, Wang put another one of a head god to show how his lover was wallowing his heart, and a snake to symbolise what he called her vicious nature.
 SUPREME COURT FILE PHOTOS

worked as a supervisor at a port. In 2004, he divorced his wife, saying they were just incompatible.

The next year, to his surprise, Ms Zhang called him and asked to meet at a coffee house, where Wang poured his heart out about his ex-wife.

From then on they met once a week. This went up to twice a week. In early 2006, she asked him if he loved her and he said yes. They had sex for the first time on March 17 — a date which Wang clearly recalled.

In June, she revealed she was married.

He said he wanted to break up with her, and then again when he suspected her of having other lovers. “She told me that since the first glance at me, she had fallen in love with me. She wanted to be with me for the rest of her life,” Wang told police.

He described how she used a needle to prick her finger and wrote “I love Wang Zhi” in her blood. Not being able to stand the pain, she asked Wang to continue using his blood and he did, writing “...jian, I want to marry him”. When she asked him to express his love for her, he put “I love her until I die” in blood as well.

In November 2006, her husband Feng Jinqiang called Wang to a meeting and asked his wife to choose between them. She picked Wang. Soon, Ms Zhang’s family started to harass Wang, who claimed he was beaten and threatened with death. He said they also looked



Despite facing the death penalty,
Wang often had a grin for the
cameras. ☒ WANBAO FILE PHOTO



Madam Yang with her daughter Li Meilin (left), who was the only one to survive Wang's murderous rampage. ☒ WANBAO FILE PHOTO

for him at his workplace, so he took early retirement and got 400,000 yuan.

He said that in $3\frac{1}{2}$ months, he spent a quarter of the money on branded clothes and expensive meals for Ms Zhang, who divorced her husband in 2007.

But when her ex-husband suffered a stroke, she decided to stay and take care of him. The affair ended, but only for four months, after which Ms Zhang and her daughter moved in with Wang.

Jianyu then got a place in Northview Secondary School in Singapore and moved here with her mother in December 2007.

A few months later, the couple broke up again. Then Ms Zhang returned during the March school holidays, tracked down Wang and they reunited.

Two months later, she asked him to follow her to Singapore. He told her he did not have the money to support her lavish lifestyle. She promised she would take care of him.

He believed her.

SINGAPORE VISITS

He visited Ms Zhang three times in 2008 on social visit passes and, according to him, was subjected to bizarre and humiliating treatment.

Wang claimed that he spent his money on food for her and her daughter, cooked for them while he ate their scraps, and hand-washed their clothes, including undergarments.

He said he was forced to stay in the bedroom naked because Ms Zhang did not allow him to leave the room when her daughter and sub-tenants were around. Since there was no toilet there, he had to defecate and urinate into plastic bags and newspapers.

He claimed he did not resist her because he was afraid she would come up with even harsher rules. “She might even bite me,” he said.

For his first trip to Singapore in July, Wang said the 2,800 yuan he brought with him was spent within four days, mostly on food for Ms Zhang. This included \$140 for a crab meal at a nearby seafood restaurant.

After he returned to Tianjin, she called him to say her friends said he could get a job at a logistics company and urged him to return as soon as possible.

His second trip was on Aug 3.

She introduced him to agents who quoted various charges to help him get a job, but she refused his request to pay for him first, saying she did not have enough money. They quarrelled more than once before he left on Sept 2.

Ms Zhang then called him to say that Jianyu would be transferred to Raffles Girls’ School and asked him to come to help her arrange the move.

He withdrew 7,000 yuan — nearly all that was left of his life’s savings — and arrived on Sept 9. Within five days, he spent 2,000 yuan,

including \$120 for two crabs, which he cooked for mother and daughter. Two pieces were left for him. “But Jianyu told her mother she wanted them for her breakfast. I was left with no crab,” Wang told police.

On Sept 18, at about 8pm, Ms Zhang came into his room and told him she and Jianyu wanted to have crab again.

“I told her they just ate crab a week ago and reminded her that every time we spend more than \$100 on crab,” he said.

An argument broke out, lasting nearly an hour.

“Zhang humiliated and used vulgarities on me. She scolded me poor fellow... I told her I have spent all my savings on her. What does she expect from me? She even said that I was produced by dogs and donkey... On hearing all these, I became very angry.”

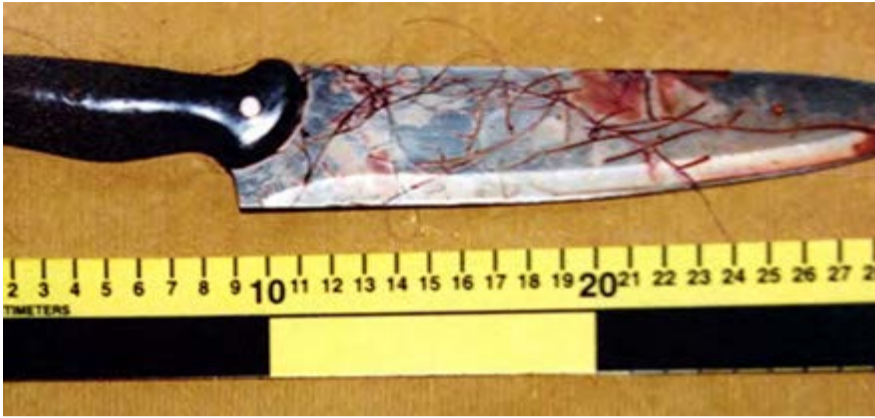
NIGHT OF HORROR

After the argument, Ms Zhang went to sleep at about 9pm, wearing only her panties.

Wang, who was naked, laid down on the mattress in the same room but could not fall asleep. He claimed to be in a daze.

“I felt that I couldn’t breathe. My whole body was trembling... My mind was a blank. The blood was gushing to my head, I did not see anything before my eyes, everything was red. I was unable to control my thoughts.”

He thought about how “wicked” she was and



The weapons found in the Yishun flat after the triple killing. (Clockwise from top left) A knife, a metal spatula, a serrated knife and a chopper. ☒ SUPREME COURT FILE PHOTOS

how she was spending his money “although she has not been faithful to me”.

After about an hour, he went into the kitchen and remained there for some time. Instead of cooling down, he grabbed a knife. He returned to the bedroom and closed the door. The lights were still off.

“I grasped the knife with my right hand and thrust it 45 degree downwards at Zhang’s abdomen region. At that moment, she screamed and struggled a little as if she wanted to sit up.

“I thrust her many times with the knife continuously and I could not remember the exact number of times. It happened very fast and vaguely I remember she continued to struggle and move her body. I thrust her abdomen region with the knife until she became motionless. My knife went in and out of her body.”



The bedroom where Wang attacked Ms Li, who was repeatedly stabbed before she managed to escape into the kitchen toilet. ☒ SUPREME COURT FILE PHOTO

The door to the bedroom opened.

It was Jianyu. “I was near to the doorway and I stepped forward towards that person. I lost my mind and I could not control my emotion. I went forward to stab that person’s abdomen region,” Wang told police.

“I gave that person a few thrusts at the abdomen region with the same knife. That person did not struggle. She staggered forward when I gave her the subsequent stabs. She collapsed on the same mattress, beside Zhang.”

The mother and daughter suffered a total of 98 stab and slash wounds.

Wang claimed that the door to the other bedroom then opened, and he saw two people standing there. He rushed in to kill them.

But the court found that this was not how it happened, especially since no traces of blood from the other tenants were found on the knife used to kill Madam Zhang.

Instead, he had first gone back to the kitchen to get another weapon, this time settling on a chopper. That was when he entered the other bedroom to silence Madam Yang and her daughter.

SURVIVOR SPEAKS

On Nov 22, 2011, Ms Li, who like Jianyu had been in Singapore to study, took the stand

“

I KNOW THIS HAS BEEN A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE FOR YOU. IT ~~IS~~ A MIRACLE YOU ~~ARE~~ ALIVE. THANK GOODNESS YOU MANAGED TO SURVIVE THIS INCIDENT... UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE TO ASK YOU TO RELIVE THE INCIDENT, SO TO SPEAK.

Justice Chan Seng Onn to Ms Li Meilin before she gave her testimony. She suffered 41 wounds on her face and neck during the attack. Her right eyeball was ruptured and 80 per cent of her right ear was torn off

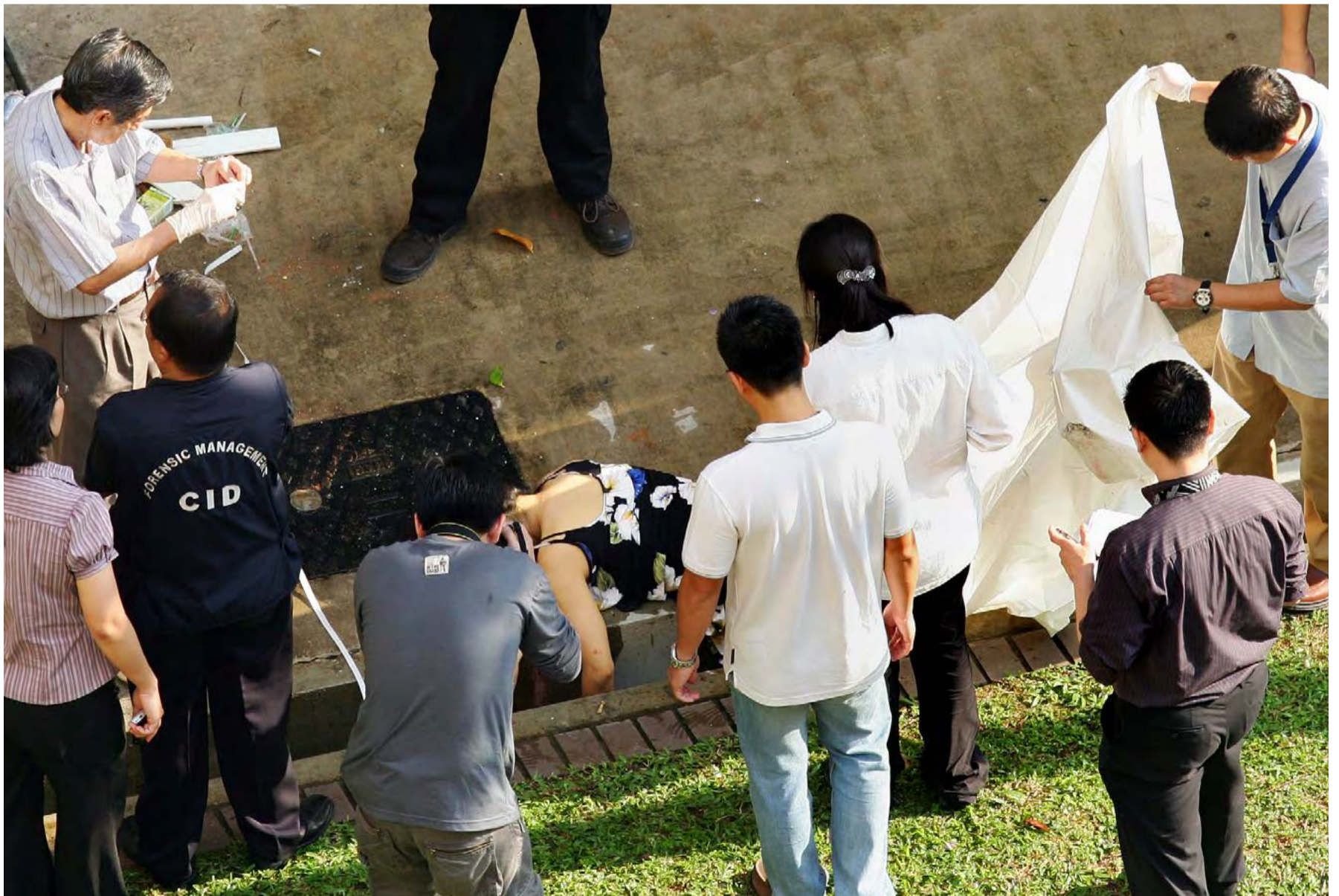
against the man who killed her mother and gave a harrowing account of what happened that night.

Already 18 then, she testified that both she and her mother were sleeping when she was awakened by the sound of heavy breathing outside her bedroom — as if someone was suffocating.

She then heard Jianyu shouting auntie and uncle in Mandarin, then cutlery falling. She and her mother, who was awake by this time, debated on whether to call the police. Then, the door swung open and Wang rushed in.

Ms Li screamed, and he started slashing her while her mother rushed out. She put

The body of Madam Yang was found at the foot of Block 349 in Yishun. ☒ ST FILE PHOTO





Ms Li, still recovering from her wounds, being wheeled by her grandmother and father into the funeral hall at Mandai Crematorium.
 ☒ TNP FILE PHOTO

her hands up as she squatted with her back to the wall, but Wang continued using the chopper on her.

Then he left to go after Madam Yang. From outside, he warned Ms Li not to move.

Bleeding heavily, she went to the bedroom door to shut it but Wang burst in again. He pushed her onto the bed and continued to stab and slash her. She kicked him in the thigh and he fell, giving her the chance to run out

of the room and into the kitchen toilet.

She closed the foldable plastic door but Wang hacked at it until it collapsed, she said, before slashing her head, face and neck until she fell to the toilet floor.

When he left her, her only thought was: “God, let me die.”

He returned and stabbed her in the lower back, right ear and back of the neck.

When she regained some consciousness, she could hear Wang speaking to police, who eventually rescued her. What she did not



Ms Li takes a final glimpse of her mother. ☒ TNP FILE PHOTO

realise at the time was that her mother's body was on the ground floor.

Madam Yang had died from acute haemorrhage due to multiple injuries after landing on her head and left hip. She also had two wounds on her right and left fingers which were not consistent with a fall.

It was the prosecution's case that Madam Yang had climbed out of the kitchen window to stand on the narrow concrete overhang, holding on to the laundry pole holders right below the window sill.

Worried that she might escape, Wang used the chopper to cut Yang's fingers, causing her to lose her grip.

Forensic experts did not find Madam Yang's blood within the flat. Instead, it was found on the exterior wall of the kitchen beside the bamboo pole holders, which proved the prosecution's case.

☒ DON'T REMEMBER ☒

Wang stuck to the story that he could not remember how he attacked his four victims, claiming his mind had gone blank from rage. He said he did not know how he had a knife in his hand and why he attacked Ms Zhang and the others.

He said it was only when he was taking



Forensic officers taking with them evidence from the Yishun Avenue 11 flat where the killings took place.

☒ ST FILE PHOTO

a shower after the attack that he realised something had happened.

The prosecution however pointed out that not only did he remember to shower to wash the blood, he also then wore his clothes, put plasters on his injured finger, packed his bag, took his travel documents, and wore his socks and shoes.

He was clearly thinking well enough to realise he had to flee.

Wang disagreed, saying if he had wanted to escape, he would have packed all his things and used a better bag. He also claimed he did not remember putting on socks and shoes after his shower.

“I do not remember” became a mantra for him through the trial.

Interestingly, psychiatric experts for the

prosecution and defence agreed that Wang was suffering from an “adjustment disorder”. However, they disagreed on whether it was enough to impair him so much to reduce his responsibility for the attack.

Justice Chan Seng Onn decided that the anger at the way he had been treated had built up in Wang only to explode in a frenzy after that final argument. He was still in that state when Jianyu came into the room.

But after that came a longer series of events – including taking the time to search for a new weapon and having the awareness to warn Ms Li not to run while he searched for her mother – in which Wang could have regained his senses.

And “having killed the very person he was angry with and who had caused him much stress and misery, there ought to have been a considerable degree of release of his bottled up anger and emotions”, the judge said.

He found Wang guilty of culpable homicide in the deaths of his lover and her daughter, but of murder when it came to Madam Yang. Wang was sentenced to death.

THE APPEAL

In November 2014, Wang, by then 48, failed in his bid to escape the gallows. But it went beyond just losing his appeal against his conviction of murdering Madam Yang. The three-judge court allowed the prosecution’s

appeal and found Wang guilty of murder in the cases of Ms Zhang and Jianyu as well.

The judges were not convinced that Wang lost control because of his mental condition.

Instead, he had killed Ms Zhang out of extreme anger to “finish her off so that she would never feature in his life again”. As for Jianyu, he wanted to eliminate her because she was a witness.

Wang showed no emotion when the verdict was read. This time, there was no smile.

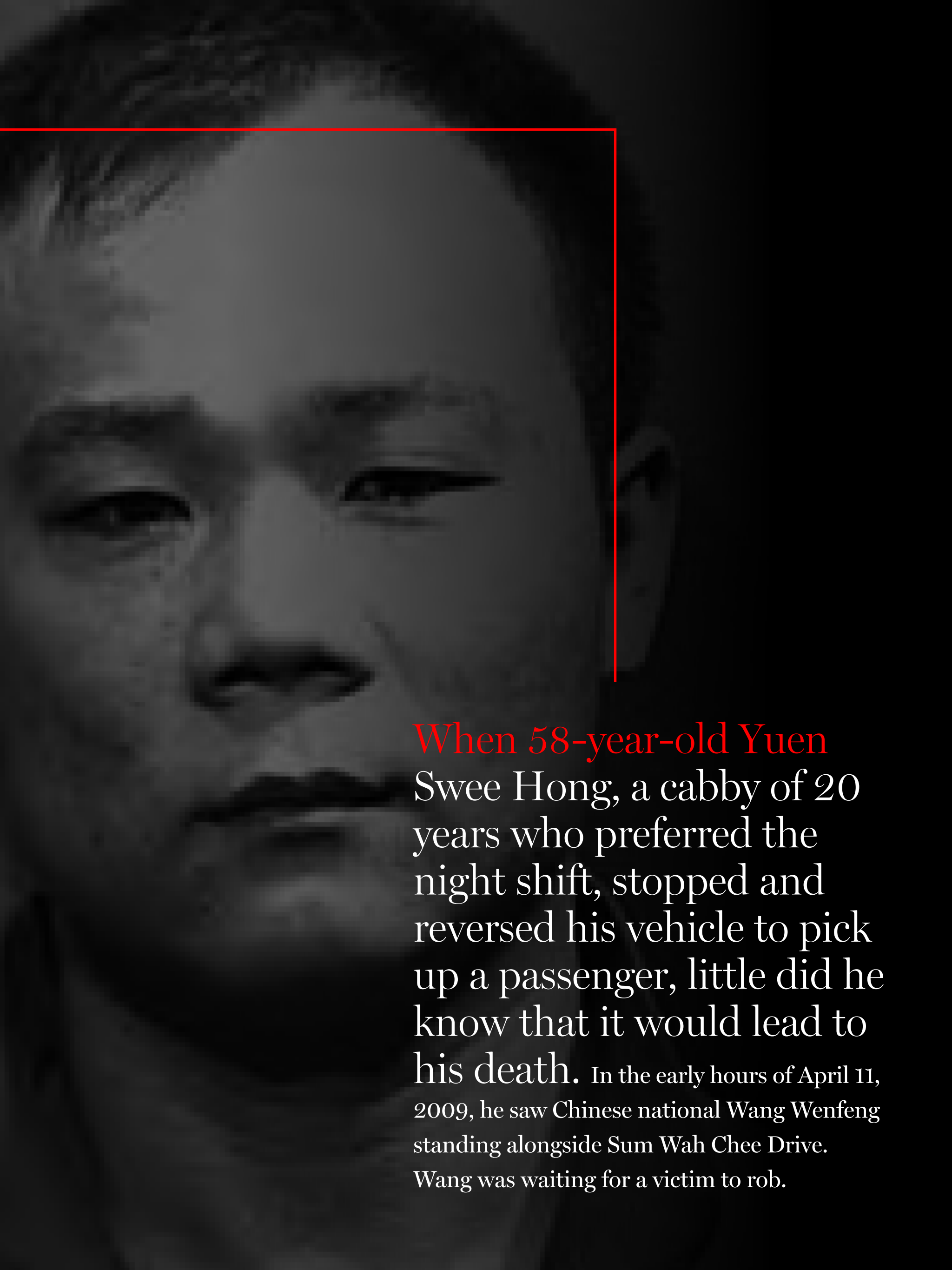


2009

TAXI

MURDER

**Robbery ends in death of cabby, but
that does not stop Wang Wenfeng from
demanding ransom from dead man's wife**



When 58-year-old Yuen
Swee Hong, a cabby of 20
years who preferred the
night shift, stopped and
reversed his vehicle to pick
up a passenger, little did he
know that it would lead to
his death. In the early hours of April 11,
2009, he saw Chinese national Wang Wenfeng
standing alongside Sum Wah Chee Drive.
Wang was waiting for a victim to rob.



Police at a forested area near Sembawang Beach, where the body of taxi driver Yuen Swee Hong, 58, was found. — SHIN MIN FILE PHOTO

MURDERER



Chinese national Wang Wenfeng killed Mr Yuen in the morning of April 11, 2009.
— POLICE FILE PHOTO

The odd-job worker boarded Mr Yuen's taxi and directed it to a nearby restaurant.

On the way, he put on a pair of gloves.

When the taxi arrived, Wang placed a knife over Mr Yuen's chest and demanded money.

A struggle ensued. The cabby was stabbed and started bleeding heavily.

Thinking that Mr Yuen was dead, Wang carried his body into a forested area off Sembawang Road and left it there covered in leaves after taking money from his pocket.

He washed the blood off himself at the seaside, then abandoned the taxi at a multistorey carpark at Canberra Road. He tried

THE RANSOM ATTEMPT



Madam Chan Oi Lin, the wife of taxi driver Yuen, received a call for ransom from Wang even though her husband was already dead. — ZB FILE PHOTO

Worried that her husband had not returned in the morning, Madam Chan Oi Lin called his mobile several times.

She was shocked when it was finally answered at around 9am by someone with a mainland Chinese accent.

When she revealed that she was Mr Yuen Swee Hong's wife, he warned that her husband was going to die unless she came up with \$150,000 for his

(CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE)

to wash the blood off the vehicle as well, but ran out of water.

He also cut the wires of the credit card machine, thinking it was a GPS device.

When Mr Yuen's widow, Madam Chan Oi Lin, called her husband's phone at 9am, Wang answered and demanded \$150,000 for her husband's safe release, leading her to believe that he was alive.

Madam Chan's son contacted the police, who found the abandoned cab that very day at about 11.30pm.

By then, Wang had decided to escape to China. He borrowed \$300 from a friend but the travel agencies in Chinatown had no available plane tickets for the next day. He went to Changi Airport but the flights offered were too costly.

He was arrested on April 13 at People's Park Complex, where he had just bought an air ticket for the next day to return home.

On April 17, he help police to find the body, which by then was badly decomposed. Its identity could be confirmed only through DNA testing of Mr Yuen's family members.

Then 10 days later, he brought them to another forested area in Nee Soon Road, and showed where he hid a haversack containing two knives and items such as clothes, gloves, cable ties, adhesive tape and nylon rope.

Senior consultant forensic scientist Dr Tay Ming Kiong found five stab cuts ranging from

THE RANSOM ATTEMPT

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

release. "He is going to die. He is now in my hands," he said.

She told him she did not have money and pleaded that he not harm her husband, not realising that he was already dead.

After meeting with relatives, her husband's older brother advised her son to call the police.

Wang called again at about 11am. Prompted by police, she told him she had \$80,000. Wang told her to deliver the money to Sengkang MRT station by 3pm.

He called her again at 3pm, but she said she needed more time, and so far had raised \$5,000.

The next day, he told her to deliver the money to Marsiling MRT station. He then called again, this time telling her to remit the money to a bank account.

After talking to her brother-in-law, Madam Chan decided not to release the money. The family believed Wang would not release her husband.

7mm to 30mm in the chest area of the cabby's shirt.

Dr Tay said it was likely that Mr Yuen had been stabbed in the chest several times from behind, through the space between the driver's seat and front passenger seat.

Numerous spatter stains of blood on the dashboard, the right side of the windscreen and front doors also indicated that Mr Yuen had put up a struggle.

Chinese national Chen Yongquan, a cook, who shared a room with Wang and four others, testified that on the night of April 10, Wang left their residence on his bicycle.

Mr Chen said that when he asked Wang where he was going, he simply replied: "Robbery."

"I thought he was joking," said Mr Chen.

Wang's wife, Madam Gong Wenying, who worked for an electronics firm in Boon Lay and lived in the workers' quarters there, only meeting him once or twice a month, also took the stand.

She told the court that Wang, with whom she had a daughter who was living in China, was desperate for money as his mother was suffering from stomach cancer.

Madam Gong said her husband had once told her that he intended to sell his organs to raise money; on another occasion, he said he wanted to kill himself by jumping in front of an MRT train.

Wang told Dr Lee Cheng of the Institute of Mental Health that he was in low spirits before the killing, because of his mother's condition. His work permit had also not been renewed.

He also told the psychiatrist that while in remand, he had heard voices telling him he might as well die. But Dr Lee had no doubts that Wang was fit to stand trial.

Wang, when questioned by prosecutors, insisted he never meant to kill the taxi driver.

He claimed Mr Yuen had suddenly grabbed his hand as he was holding the knife and he held on it as he was afraid the cabby would snatch it away.

"I did not stab him. I only pulled back my arm, and he became motionless. Whether I had stabbed him, I'm not sure, it was very chaotic then."

In 2011, Wang was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

Justice Lee Siu Kin pointed out that if Wang was trying to make sure the cabby did not take his knife away, it would have been natural for him to draw the knife away from the cabby rather than pull it towards him.

The judge also found that the stab wounds were so deep that Wang could only have pulled the knife with the aim of inflicting injury.

"Not only did he not manifest any remorse for killing (Madam Chan's) husband, he tried to exploit the situation to extract money from her," the judge added, "He thought nothing of



Madam Gong Wenying, the wife of Wang, claimed her husband was desperate for money as his mother was suffering from stomach cancer. — ZB FILE PHOTO

“

I DID NOT STAB HIM. I ONLY PULLED
BACK MY ARM, AND HE BECAME
MOTIONLESS.

Wang Wenfeng insisted in court that he never meant to kill taxi driver
Yuen Swee Hong

prolonging her agony by making her believe
that (Mr Yuen's) life was in grave peril and that
she could save him only by paying a large sum
of money.”

However, in 2013, Wang was re-sentenced
to life in prison and 24 strokes of the cane,
following changes in the law that allowed
judges to impose either the death penalty or life
imprisonment for certain categories of murder.

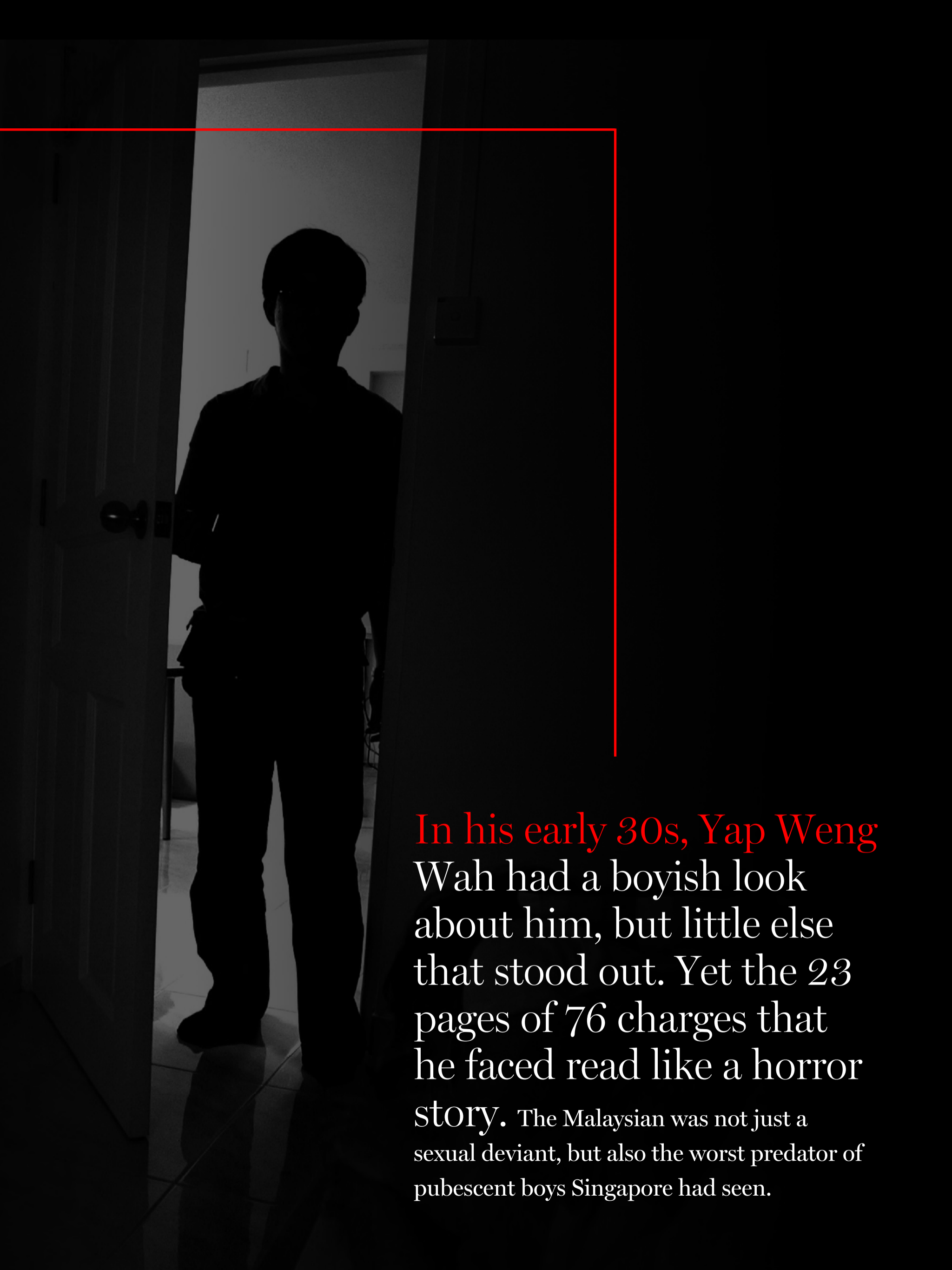
This was because the murder was not pre-
meditated.



2015

YAP WENG WAH, SEX PREDATOR

**After abusing at least 31 boys in Singapore,
the Malaysian engineer gets 30 years in jail
and the maximum 24 strokes of the cane**



In his early 30s, Yap Weng Wah had a boyish look about him, but little else that stood out. Yet the 23 pages of 76 charges that he faced read like a horror story. The Malaysian was not just a sexual deviant, but also the worst predator of pubescent boys Singapore had seen.

The phrase “did penetrate” was repeated 74 times in the chargesheet. The other two charges involved him causing a 15-year-old boy “to penetrate” Yap’s mouth, and directing a 12-year-old to send a video of the child doing a sexual act.

Among the charges, seven involved 11-year-olds, 13 dealt with 12-year-olds and four with 15-year-olds. The bulk involved boys ages 13 and 14 – 32 and 20 charges respectively.

The abuse happened at a variety of places.

He brought the boys to flats in Yishun, Woodlands, Hougang, Aljunied and Changi, a chalet at Downtown East, and a Hotel 81 in Geylang.

The abuse also took place in toilet cubicles at public pools in Hougang and Kallang Bahru,

Of the 76 charges which Yap Weng Wah faced, three involved sexual acts he performed on a 13-year-old boy in a toilet cubicle at the Hougang Swimming Complex on Feb 4, 2010.
— TNP FILE PHOTO





On Sept 25, 2011, Yap got a 14-year-old to perform oral sex on him in a toilet cubicle at the Tampines Stadium.
— TNP FILE PHOTO

malls and the Tampines Stadium.

The offences were committed over a period of three years, until June 2012 when the sister of an 11-year-old checked his mobile phone. She found SMS exchanges between Yap and her brother. They went to the police.

When Yap's Yishun home was raided after the 31-year-old's arrest in September 2012, police found more than 2,000 videos on his laptop of him having sex with others, including young boys. The videos had been meticulously catalogued with the boys' names, ages and the year he met them.

From the footage, the police managed to trace 31 victims in Singapore. Some boys, however, could not be identified.

There were also videos made during his annual visits to Malaysia between 2009 and

2012. These clips involved at least 14 other boys below the age of 16.

The quality assurance engineer, who moved to Singapore for work in 2009, looked online for boys who lived or who went to school near his rental apartment in New Upper Changi Road, and later in Yishun.

Once he found his targets, he would befriend them on Facebook using different identities such as “Wai Loon” or “Loon”, but usually claiming to be an 18-year-old polytechnic student.

Some of the boys accepted his friend request after seeing that they shared mutual friends.

He gained their trust by portraying himself as an older brother or mentor – chatting or messaging them over several weeks or months sometimes.

They talked about hobbies, movies, sports and computer games. He would also deviously find a way to bring up the topic of sex.

He would ask the boys to meet him on a variety of pretexts – to hand them gifts, to swim, to let them play computer games or to give them body-building tips.

Between November 2009 and June 2012, he persuaded 30 of the boys into consenting to having anal or oral sex with him – even when they were reluctant, or said no, or cried or insisted they were “not the type”.

Yap, who never used a condom, recorded most of the sex acts on his mobile phone. When

the boys protested, he promised to delete the footage. But he stored the videos on his laptop for him to watch again and again.

In one case, after chatting with him on Facebook for a few months, Yap met a boy at a shopping centre. After having lunch and playing arcade games, he took the boy to his room to watch cartoons online, while his landlord was in the living room.

An hour later, he took off the boy's clothes and sodomised him. Yap promised the boy that it would not happen again. But it did, each time the boy came over.

Yap would then take him out for meals or movies.

In another case, he arranged to meet a 13-year-old at Hougang Swimming Complex some time in early 2010. In a toilet cubicle, he told the boy to remove his school uniform. He then sodomised the boy and recorded the act with his phone.

Around March 2010, he took a 15-year-old to a hotel. Yap undressed and tried to kiss the boy. Even when the boy protested, Yap performed oral sex on him.

He pleaded guilty to 12 counts of sexual penetration of a minor, and the rest of the 64 charges were taken into account during sentencing.

Arguing that Yap was a “clear and present danger to society” as he was at high risk of committing sexual offences again, Deputy

HEBEPHILIA VS PAEDOPHILIA

Hebephilia: Having sexual interest towards children who are experiencing puberty — basically those between the ages of 11 and 14

Paedophilia: Having sexual interest towards children yet to start puberty — generally those 11 and below.

Public Prosecutor David Khoo argued for a lengthy sentence to protect the public. He also pointed out the high degree of planning Yap did in order to carry out his abuse.

The Institute of Mental Health's Dr Bharat Saluja found that Yap had hebephilia – a sexual interest in pubescent youth, typically between the ages of 11 and 14. The psychiatrist also noted that Yap's risk of re-offending was high.

As part of his mitigation, it was claimed that Yap had a nine-month sexual relationship with his maths teacher when he was 12. He thought what he did with the man were acts of love and intimacy.

It was also claimed that Yap was rejected by a female classmate and humiliated by her while in school. This led to him having a fear of approaching women.

He insisted he was sorry for his acts and promised to change.

In March 2015, Justice Woo Bih Li sentenced him to 30 years' jail and the maximum 24 strokes of the cane.

He made it clear that the high-risk offender needed to be put away for a long time to protect society and as a warning that such heinous acts would not be tolerated.

Justice Woo said Yap's premeditated use of the Internet to hunt for a large number of victims, and breaching the boys' trust after earning it, were aggravating factors.

It was made worse by Yap recording videos

of the sex acts despite the boys' protests. The videos were at risk of being circulated if they fell into the hands of third parties, said Justice Woo.

"There is... a strong public interest in the present case to deter potential sexual offenders from using the Internet to lure young victims," he said.

The judge also pointed out how Yap also tried to hide the extent of his crimes. When he was first questioned, he told the police that he had sex with just three boys. The truth was far more shocking. **ST**

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I PURSUE JUSTICE FOR THE DEFENCELESS

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