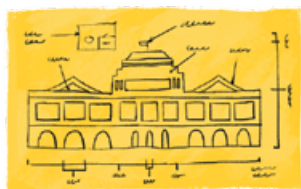


OPEN HOUSE ADVENTURES

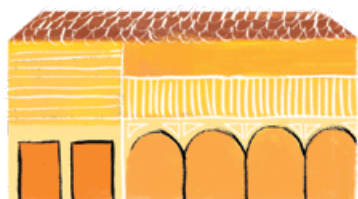


THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE ISTANA



written by
ANGELE LEE

illustrated by
ELVIN CHING





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Since the Istana was built back in 1869, it has become an important part of the nation's history. Over the years, the Istana has played a major role not only as the official residence of the president but also as the consummate host to visiting foreign dignitaries. In recent times, Singaporeans from all walks of life have also been warmly welcomed to spend the day enjoying the rich heritage and lush greenery of the Istana grounds, by way of open houses, receptions and picnics throughout the year.

The Istana Open Houses naturally became the setting for *Open House Adventures*, a three-book series that has been specially commissioned to commemorate the Istana's 150th anniversary. I cannot think of a more wonderful way to bring forth the well of amazing stories that lies behind the Istana and its grounds than through the eyes of four intrepid young children—much like you—

who embark on some wildly unexpected adventures at the Istana.

In *The Hidden History of the Istana*, Priya, Zulkifli, Jing Kai and Julailah meet the knowledgeable Uncle John, a friendly volunteer gardener who leads the children on an exciting experience to explore some of the Istana's rich history and heritage. If you ever wondered what you could discover if century-old walls could talk, then you might find this book rather hard to put down.

Through these fun, imaginative stories proudly told and illustrated by our fellow Singaporeans, it is my wish that you, the future of Singapore, can share in the magic of the Istana. I hope you will enjoy reading *Open House Adventures*!

Mdm Halimah Yacob

President of the Republic of Singapore

CHAPTER ONE

“Hold my hand, Jul!”

Julailah looked up from behind her floppy fringe and reached for her older brother Zulkifli’s hand. She wasn’t going to protest today—not when Zul was taking her to the Istana!

Zulkifli, the oldest at the grand age of 12, was naturally expected to lead the others—though you wouldn’t have known it from the way Priya, just a year younger, was bossing them around, Julailah thought.

Priya, as usual, was in front of the pack. She was an athlete in school and somehow, even walking, always seemed to leave everyone in her wake.



Combat troops from the Gurkha Contingent and Singapore Infantry Regiment stood guard at the Istana from 1959 to 1968. Subsequently, the Singapore Armed Forces Guards Unit, and later, Military Police Command, took over as the Istana Ceremonial Guards.



She called out now, “Come on, you guys! The gate is already open! I can see the sentries standing guard.”

“They are *greeting guards*,” Zulkifli teased.

“Is that supposed to be a pun?” Jing Kai asked, tentatively.

“Yeah, as in *greeting cards*,” Zulkifli grinned.

Julailah’s eyes widened. “I don’t get it,” she said.

“It’s not even funny,” Priya growled. “Hurry up!”

“Coming!” Jing Kai responded, though he waited for Zulkifli and Julailah to catch up. Nine-year-old Jing Kai was secretly glad for the breather. The walk from the MRT station had been barely three minutes but perspiration was already rolling down his forehead.

The four neighbours and best friends from Yishun had been counting down to this day, one of the few Open House events that the Istana threw every year. Singapore’s eighth president, Madam Halimah Yacob, had lived in their very same block in Yishun, and even though they did not know her, they were terribly proud of the fact. Today, they might actually get the chance to see her at the Istana!

“Good morning!” Julailah called out to a guard as they came up to the Istana gates. Five-year-old Julailah with her big eyes never failed to charm, and even though the soldier was not supposed to respond, Jul was convinced that he had cracked a tiny smile at her.

Zulkifli admonished his sister, “He can’t answer you. The sentries are supposed to be serious all the time—watch!”

Zulkifli jumped in front of a guard, arms akimbo. “What do you call an insect standing guard? A *sentrypede!*” Zulkifli laughed uproariously at his own joke, before turning to the others, saying, “See?” If the sentry rolled his eyes, the friends didn’t notice. Julailah giggled happily. Insect jokes—anything to do with insects—were her favourite.

Priya laughed but said, “I wouldn’t hire an insect! I’d get bunnies—because they are good *bouncers.*”

“And if you cross an insect with a rabbit you’ll get...*Bugs Bunny!*” Zulkifli added. Laughing, they entered the Istana grounds.

“Waaah...” The friends were amazed at the size of the garden they found themselves in.

“Where do we go now?” Jing Kai asked. The four looked around them, a little overwhelmed. Zulkifli, for once, was lost for words.

The 101-acre Istana grounds include six ponds and over 10,000 trees and palms!

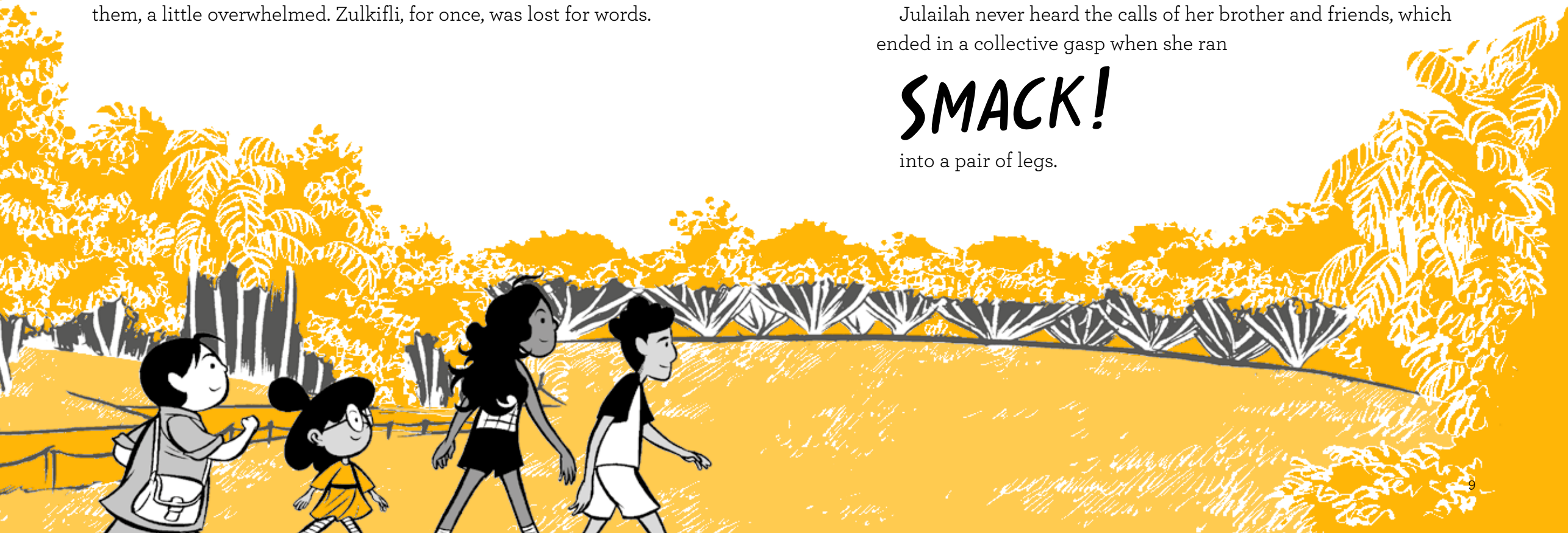
Priya took charge (of course). “This way,” she said, marching forward. But Julailah had noticed a butterfly flitting by, its black wings with rose-red dots and white streaks a striking contrast to its bright red body. It wasn’t one she’d seen before, so it was definitely worth a chase! Before the others could react, she was off after it.

“Jul! Jul!” “Come back!” “Yoo-hoo! This way, Jul!”

Julailah never heard the calls of her brother and friends, which ended in a collective gasp when she ran

SMACK!

into a pair of legs.



Shell is proud to partner with the President's Office to bring you this special trilogy of children's books. Did you know that this is the first time that the President's Office has commissioned books on the Istana specially for young people like you? This is because the national monument is celebrating its 150th birthday. Through these three books, you will follow four young adventurers as they discover the history, people and nature of the Istana.

Like the Istana, Shell's history in Singapore also goes back to the 19th century, specifically to the year 1891. That was when Shell started Singapore's first kerosene storage depot on Pulau Bukom, an island five kilometres south of Singapore. In 1961, we built Singapore's first oil refinery and we have not looked back since.

Over the years, Shell has grown with the country, investing in our assets here, investing in the people who worked to grow our business and investing in the community that we are a part of. Shell is proud to call Singapore home, and we want to continue to provide you and your families with more and cleaner energy solutions for a sustainable future. Let's continue to power progress together.

 **Aw Kah Peng**
Chairman, Shell Companies in Singapore

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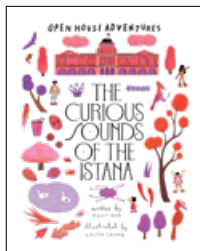


Best friends Zulkifli, Priya, Jing Kai and Julailah are hoping to meet the President at the Istana Open House, and end up in a wild escapade. ≡

The four friends discover the Istana's OLDEST SECRETS from the most unexpected place.

PLUS! * BONUS ACTIVITIES including a ✦ mini Istana ✦ * cut-out *

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