

TRIPLE 9 SLEUTHS

DANGEROUS ISLAND



MARANNA CHAN

PRAISE FOR THE TRIPLE NINE SLEUTHS SERIES

“The books are full of excitement. Triple Nine Sleuths is the best detective series I have ever read. I can’t wait for the next book!”—Michelle, 11

“The books are thrilling and the characters are hilarious. I think everyone should read them.”
—Regina, 13

“I couldn’t take my eyes off the book. The author describes the action so well that when I read the part about the murder case, I could really imagine the scene playing in my head. If anyone is looking for a good local mystery series, I would definitely recommend the Triple Nine Sleuths series.”
—Anna, 11

“I got so inspired reading the series that I want to be an author when I grow up, just like Maranna Chan.”—Andrea, 10

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DANGEROUS REVELATIONS

TRIPLE 9 SLEUTHS

DANGEROUS ISLAND



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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters,
places, and incidents either are the product of
the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.
Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead,
events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

For Joanna, Susanna, Jared and Leanna.

I had such a colourful childhood
thanks to my siblings.

A big thank you to Samuel Chia
for arranging the score for “Into the Light”.

MISHA CHUA

TESSERIS: THE HYPERSENSITIVE PERSON

*She was self-absorbed and self-centred.
She desired to stand out as different from others,
to be seen as special and unique.
It led to her being envious of others.
She dwelt on her feelings endlessly and
sank into depression and self-pity.*

She paid for her sins.

CHAPTER 1

“WHAT ARE YOU doing? Writing a novel?” Stacy Rodriguez looked over Corey’s shoulder to see what was in her notebook. It was the second day of their holiday camp on St John’s Island. While Stacy had been all over the island, joining in every single holiday camp activity, Corey Lam had just sat in a corner and scribbled away.

“Remember the disaster movie we watched last week?” Corey asked as she pushed her glasses back up her nose. They kept sliding down as the humidity on St John’s Island made her perspire constantly. Corey was an introverted, mousy Chinese girl who had not made a single new friend so far at the camp. She only spoke to Stacy, who was her best friend, and her own brother, Colton Lam.

Stacy nodded. “Yes, why would I forget? I don’t suffer from short-term memory loss.” Stacy was a pretty Eurasian girl with long wavy hair and a tan. Corey noticed that Stacy had had a growth spurt during

the holidays. She was significantly...taller.

"Well, after the show, Colton remarked that someone should make a local disaster movie in which the whole island of Singapore sinks. With all the digging going on for the new underground MRT trains, it could happen, he said. In the last scene, we'll see Lee Kuan Yew on the rooftop of the tallest building in Singapore. He will be the last man standing on the nation he built and will be broken-hearted, as he watches it submerging into the depths below. Then a helicopter will arrive to take him to safety," Corey told Stacy. "That's the plot we came up with but then we had a disagreement."

"A disagreement about?" Stacy asked, not sure why she was even interested.

"Colton said that Singaporeans would be left with no home and they would all have to migrate to neighbouring countries, like Malaysia or Australia. But I said there might still be enough space for Singaporeans on the other 62 islands."

"What other 62 islands?"

"Singapore is actually made up of 63 islands. If the main island sinks, we still have the other 62 islands."

"Those aren't islands. They're just, like, bumps of

land sticking out of the water. Definitely not enough space for 5 million people," Stacy retorted.

"It won't be 5 million by then. Non-citizens would return to their own countries, leaving about 3 million, maybe? Many would die too, since it would be a disaster, and those who can't swim would probably drown. This reminds me that I should start taking swimming lessons. Anyway, we might be left with less than 3 million people. So now, I'm adding up the land size of all the other islands and dividing it by 250 square feet, which is about how much space a person needs, to see if our islands can hold that many survivors. Then we might not need to depend on our neighbouring countries," Corey rambled.

Stacy blinked at her friend in disbelief. "You are so weird. The answer is no, the 62 islands can't hold all the survivors, so that ends your project. When's lunch? I'm getting hungry." They were going to have lunch with Corey and Colton's aunt, Kathy, who worked at the Tropical Marine Science Institute on St John's Island.

"Are we going now?" Colton appeared and called out to them from the campsite gate. Colton was Corey's brother. Though they were born in the same year—

him in January and her in December—they were very different in looks and personality, so much so that some kids in school didn't even know they were related. Colton had angular features whereas Corey had a rounded face.

The holiday campsite was formerly a detention centre and still looked like one, with the fencing and the barbed wires that remained. Though it was called a campsite, they were not allowed to pitch tents but had to stay in dormitories instead.

Corey, Colton and Stacy were, with 37 other kids and two adults, staying at the holiday camp for four nights. The holiday camp programme had been organised by their neighbourhood community centre and included games and a tour of the Tropical Marine Science Institute. Colton and Corey had wanted to participate so that they could also visit their aunt who worked at the institute. Mr Leong and Miss Betty, who were in charge of the camp itinerary, were quite fun and easy-going. The itinerary gave the campers a lot of free time to wander around the island.

"Stacy, so what did Paula tell you about your parents?" Colton asked as they made their way to the Tropical

Marine Science Institute. Stacy had been brought up by her Nana and had never known her parents. She had been told that her mother, Cybil Rodriguez, had died of lupus when Stacy was just three. Recently, Stacy had created a Facebook account in Cybil's name, in hopes of finding her father. Paula De Souza, Cybil's friend, had revealed to Stacy that her mother hadn't died of sickness, but had gone missing instead.

Stacy's smile was replaced by a frown. She heaved a sigh and said, "I don't really want to talk about it now. I want to enjoy my holiday." Stacy didn't like to think about unpleasant things. Nana was right. Knowing that her mother was a missing person was worse than thinking that her mother was dead. Stacy worried about her mother. It was disturbing to think about what could have happened to her.

The dormitories at the Tropical Marine Science Institute were newer and well-maintained, unlike the ones at their holiday camp. They looked like mini terrace houses with red roofs. Aunt Kathy's room was small and plain but she had added a personal touch to it with some family photographs. She had her own kitchenette and a dining table where the three kids sat

with her. Lunch with Aunt Kathy at her dormitory was the best meal they'd had on the island so far. She had made them vegetarian spaghetti because of Corey's new diet. Colton and Stacy were surprised that a vegetarian dish could be so tasty.

Stacy looked at Aunt Kathy and realised that Corey would probably grow up to look like her. They were both petite with round faces, and their large eyes were framed by glasses. Why did they not think of wearing contact lenses?

"Do you like working here, being so far away from the rest of the world?" Stacy asked Aunt Kathy.

"I go back to the main island regularly. I never stay here more than two nights in a row because there are no shops on St John's Island—not one! I have to go to the main island to buy food and supplies," Aunt Kathy replied.

"What research are you working on now?" Corey asked.

"I'm studying the sonar sounds of dolphins," Aunt Kathy replied. "Echolocations, that sort of thing. How dolphins see and hear underwater."

"Oh, like Daredevil!" Colton said.

"Who?" Aunt Kathy asked.

"Daredevil is a Marvel superhero who's blind. He uses sonar sounds to see, like bats do," Colton said.

"Yes, somewhat like bats. But this is underwater," Aunt Kathy said.

"Don't you need a dolphin for your research?" Corey asked.

"Yes, we've a dolphin here," Aunt Kathy replied.

"Really? That's cool. Can we see it?" Colton asked.

"Sure. Are we done with lunch? Shall we go?" Aunt Kathy asked as she put the dishes in the sink. The children helped her clean up before they left to see the dolphin.

"I need to go to my office to get something from my desk first," Aunt Kathy said to the kids and led them to her office.

"Hi, Angela, meet my nephew and niece, and their friend," Aunt Kathy greeted her Indian colleague. Angela wore glasses too and had short, curly, unruly hair. She was dressed in slacks and a blouse that made her look like she was in her forties, though her face suggested she was only in her twenties. Stacy imagined this place to be the secret headquarters for super geeks in Singapore.

“Hello. I didn’t know it was bring-a-relative-to-work day,” Angela teased and smiled at the kids.

Aunt Kathy laughed and said, “They are staying at the holiday camp for four nights. This is Colton, Corey and Stacy.”

“How do you do,” Angela said formally. “And how old are you kids?”

“We’re 13 and in Secondary One,” Colton answered for them.

“Angela here is doing research on algae,” Aunt Kathy said.

“Fascinating, isn’t it?” Angela said. “Hope you kids enjoy yourselves.”

They continued on their way and saw two researchers in the pantry. They were having their morning dose of caffeine.

“Hi, guys, come and meet my nephew and niece,” Aunt Kathy called out to them. Corey started blushing. Why were they meeting strangers? Where was the dolphin?

“Kids, this is Adeep and this is Jack,” Aunt Kathy introduced them. Adeep, with his clothes a little too loose and his unruly hair, seemed to have an easy-going

personality. Jack wore a deadpan expression and had his hair slicked to one side—with too much gel, in Stacy’s opinion. Both researchers also had glasses with huge black frames that had been fashionable in the 80s. More geeks, Stacy thought.

“Let’s hope the dolphin doesn’t wear glasses too,” Stacy muttered under her breath. Corey stifled a giggle.

“Visitors!” Adeep said enthusiastically, making Colton, Corey and Stacy smile. “You kids like magic?” he asked. They nodded. Adeep showed them his bare hands and then picked a one-dollar coin from Corey’s ear, making her blush even more.

Colton and Stacy clapped and Aunt Kathy laughed. “Doesn’t it get old?” she asked Adeep.

“Not if it’s the first time for your audience,” Adeep said.

“Are you guys working with my aunt on the same project?” Colton asked, hoping to see more men around. He was getting a little tired of being around women.

“No, I’m working on something else, but it’s a secret,” Adeep said, winked at the kids and then added, “I’ll have to kill you if I tell you.”

“We’re predicting patterns in the sea’s current speeds,

tides and salinity. We can then calculate how fast oil spills will spread and can predict the environmental impact on marine life,” Jack announced.

Stacy yawned. Corey nudged her and whispered, “Don’t be rude.”

“It really is more interesting than it sounds,” Adeep said.

“Thanks for the entertainment, guys,” Aunt Kathy said and went to her desk. “Oh, Shawn is here so early today?” Aunt Kathy remarked as she fussed around the messy desk next to hers, tidying it.

“No, I didn’t see him,” Jack said as he looked at his watch. “He’s never this early.”

“Oh, but it looks like he was here,” Aunt Kathy remarked, looking at Shawn’s desk. She shrugged. She went to her own desk, opened her drawer and took out a file. “Okay, I’ve got what I need. Let’s go, little people.” The trio followed behind her, excited that they were going to get up close to a live dolphin. Aunt Kathy continued jabbering about her research.

Stacy wasn’t so interested in the research. “Your aunt has got a thing for that Shawn?” she whispered to Corey.

“I don’t know. Why would you say that?” Corey asked.

“Couldn’t you tell? It was so obvious when she talked about him. Plus, she was tidying his desk for him and scanning the office to see if he was around. Have you seen him before? Is he cute?” Stacy asked.

“No, and I don’t know if he’s cute. It really doesn’t concern you if she likes him or not,” Corey said.

“Yeah, but I’d rather listen to juicy gossip about office romance than hear about...sonar sounds,” Stacy muttered.

Stacy changed her mind when she saw the dolphin. She was even allowed to feed the dolphin some fish, but she was repulsed by the fishy smell left on her hands.

“Can it do tricks?” Stacy asked.

“This is a research lab, Stacy, not Sea World,” Aunt Kathy said.

“Oh.” Stacy pouted.

Aunt Kathy talked about the sonar sounds that dolphins made and how they could help detect objects and wreckage in the sea. “Underwater telecommunication in Singapore isn’t so clear because of the snapping shrimp population, so our research can greatly help to enhance telecommunication in Singapore waters.”

The afternoon with Aunt Kathy went by quickly and it was soon time for the trio to meet up with the rest of their camp mates at the institute's reception area, for the formal tour organised by the community centre.

Aunt Kathy excused herself and went back to work. Her colleague, Camille, showed the camp group around. The kids could tell from Camille's accent that she was from the Philippines. She was plump and jovial. She used simple terms to explain the complicated scientific research. She made the tour fun and involved the children by asking them questions. They visited the main administrative building which had a small library, meeting rooms, seminar rooms, senior scientists' offices and a general office. The adjacent dormitory block had air-conditioned bedrooms that could accommodate up to 20 persons, Aunt Kathy being one of them.

Camille explained some of the institute's core facilities, including facilities for algal cultures and molecular studies, field equipment for environmental studies, and state-of-the-art aquaculture research laboratories.

They toured one of the aquaculture laboratories that contained huge tanks of fish. Each tank had a large pump and filter that made loud whirring sounds. Camille

raised her voice as she explained how the institute had been successful in genetically modifying fish to make them bigger, stronger and less susceptible to diseases.

The kids went nearer the tanks to get a better look at the genetically modified fish.

"This reminds me of the beginning of a superhero comic. Maybe I'll get bitten by a fish and become genetically modified," Colton whispered.

"That'll make you...Aqua Man?" Corey asked.

"No, the Green Moray!" Colton corrected her. "I'll generate electricity."

"Like a moray eel?" Corey asked.

"I have eels for dinner, Mr Unagi," Stacy said and laughed at Colton.

A piercing scream interrupted them. Everyone turned to see what the commotion was about.

"There's a man in the tank! He's dead!" a boy shouted. The other children started screaming as well. Colton, Corey and Stacy tiptoed to get a clearer look but their view was blocked by the taller kids in front.

"We have to get the children out of here now! Someone call the police!" Camille shouted.

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