

# TRIPLE 9 SLEUTHS

DANGEROUS SCHEMES



FIND  
MYSTERY CODE  
EMBEDDED  
AND UNLOCK  
SECRETS!

MARANNA CHAN

**DANGEROUS  
SCHEMES**

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# TRIPLE O SLEUTHS

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**MARANNA CHAN**



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First Edition

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## For Dad Come back

STANLEY OEI

EPTA: THE LOVER OF PLEASURE

*He cared only about his own gratification.  
He always wanted more and nothing satisfied him.  
He allowed his desires to run amok and  
was greedy, selfish and insensitive to others.  
He kept seeking new experiences and adventures  
to avoid feeling empty or unhappy.*

*He paid for his sins.*

# CHAPTER 1

“YOUR DOG LOOKS funny,” Stacy said to her best friend Corey. Stacy was a lively Eurasian girl with long wavy hair, almond-shaped eyes and a tan. She was lying on Corey’s bed, stroking Snowy, a white Scottish Terrier.

“It’s all Colton’s doing. He has been snipping Snowy’s fur,” Corey said. She squinted, pushed her thick glasses up from the edge of her nose, and returned to reading her book. Corey was a mousy Chinese girl with braces. Stacy and Corey had been friends since they were toddlers. They had shared the playground near their HDB public housing flats, and had gone to the same kindergarten, primary school and secondary school. As Corey was painfully shy and liked solitude, she had no friends other than Stacy.

“Why did your brother cut Snowy’s fur? What is he now? A dog groomer?” Stacy asked as she went back to surfing the Internet on Corey’s laptop.

Colton peeked through his sister’s door. “Hey, are you girls talking about me?” he asked, grinning.

“We’re talking about your dog. Poor Snowy! Look what you’ve done to him!” Stacy said. “I’d be embarrassed to walk around the estate with my dog looking like that.”

“Oh, it’ll grow back. At least I didn’t cut his skin. He woke up and jumped while I was snipping that part off. I’ll work on the rest when he sleeps on his other side,” Colton explained. Colton was Corey’s older brother and they were born in the same school year—Colton, in January and Corey, in December. However, they looked nothing alike. Many in Yuan Hwa Secondary School still didn’t know that they were siblings. Colton had definite features with a strong jawline but shy Corey had a round pinkish face which turned red often enough.

“What are you reading?” Colton asked Stacy. She was so engrossed staring at Corey’s laptop that Colton’s curiosity was piqued.

“An article about the Children’s Museum,” Stacy whispered.

“Isn’t it still under construction?” Colton asked.

“They finished the building months ago! They’re opening in two weeks—just in time for the September school holidays,” Stacy answered.

“Wait. *You* are reading about a museum? You? Stacy Rodriguez?” Corey couldn’t believe it.

“This is the new museum at Sentosa, right?” Colton asked.

“Yes,” Stacy said, “and *he’s* going to be there next week before the opening.”

“Who?” Colton and Corey asked in unison.

“Samuel Oei!” Stacy stressed. “My could-be father! I’ve checked his Facebook and I’m following him on Twitter. He’s going to the museum this Saturday to see that the exhibits he loaned out are arranged perfectly for the premiere on Sunday.”

“Oh, so that explains the sudden interest in the museum.” Corey finally understood.

“Yeah, like I’d ever be interested in palaeontology or ecology or archaeology or whatever ‘-ology’ they feature in museums,” Stacy retorted. “I’ve got a brainwave! Let’s look for him at the Children’s Museum so I can ask him if he’s my father!”

“Why don’t you just look for him at his workplace and ask him there?” Colton asked.

“His workplace is in Shenton Way,” Stacy said. “I found out he’s some sort of motivational speaker or

life coach. I've no business being there. It's better if I bump into him 'coincidentally' at Sentosa and casually ask if he's my father."

Stacy's parentage was shrouded in a cloud of mystery. Her mother had gone missing when she was three and she had never known her father. She lived with her grandma and was now on a quest to find out what had happened to her parents. Her mother's best friend, Paula, had given her a picture of her parents. Colton and Corey insisted that the man in the photograph looked like a younger version of Mr Oei. Paula had also said that her father's name began with an 'S', hence Stacy suspected Samuel Oei to be her father. Plus, he had acted very unusual when the trio had returned his lost dog to him a few months ago.

"Yes, you're already stalking him. Better to know for sure," Colton said.

"I'm not stalking him!" Stacy defended herself. The word 'stalking' sounded fanatical.

"So, that's the plan? To bump into him when he is at the museum?" Corey asked.

"Yes. He's going to be there after lunch," Stacy confirmed.

"What's he loaning them?" Colton was curious.

"His entire *Star Wars* figurine collection, all in mint condition. That's what he said on Facebook," Stacy said.

"Wow! That's so cool! I only have Yoda, which my dad found at Grandma's two years ago. It's no longer in mint condition after what Snowy did with it. I would love to see an entire collection!" Colton remarked.

"We're not going for a tour," Stacy said. "We're on a mission! I'm just going to meet him 'coincidentally' and ask him casually if he's my father."

"How casual can it be with a question like, 'Are you my dad?'" Colton remarked. "Sounds pretty intense to me."



## CHAPTER 2

COREY LOVED THE school holidays because she could have breakfast every morning with her parents. She loved sipping on Milo and listening to adult conversations, which she found more riveting than the usual topics Stacy and the other girls talked about.

Pa put the papers down and took a bite of his toast, which was covered with a thick layer of kaya. “Oh no...” he said. “Looks like we should cancel our trip to Legoland this weekend. The traffic jam is going to be horrendous.”

“They still haven’t found that Eugene Loy yet?” Ma asked. “Hopefully, they’ll catch him by then.”

“I seriously doubt it. With the 10 million he stole from such a big bank like Bartell, he just might be able to leave Singapore and disappear, never to be found again,” Pa said.

“You mean they haven’t recovered the millions yet?” Corey asked.

“No,” Pa grunted and returned to his newspaper.

“How did he escape from prison?” Colton asked.

“There is nothing written about that yet,” Pa replied. “Oh, but some heads are going to roll. Someone’s got to take responsibility for what has happened. It’s such a national embarrassment to have someone escape from prison.”

“It’ll be a bigger embarrassment if he slips out of Singapore,” Ma said.

“But he has 10 million dollars! With that kind of money, he can go anywhere and live out his life as a fugitive,” Colton said.

“What kind of life is that? Running from the law? I’d rather return 10 million and have a normal life,” Corey remarked.

“He might not need to run. He could, with all that money, get plastic surgery, fake IDs, a house by the beach, and live out his life with a martini a day, shaken, not stirred,” Colton said with a grin.

Ma smacked his head. “Don’t envy him! He’s not James Bond. He’s a villain! Do you know how many people’s life savings he has stolen?” She tried to smack his head again but Colton dodged in time.

“I’m just having a conversation here. I’m not envying

him,” Colton defended himself.

“Don’t be out gallivanting too long today. You kids need to be back by four,” Ma said, wagging her finger at him.

“Four?” Corey and Colton said in unison.

“We can’t finish by four,” Colton argued.

“What about six? We are only meeting Stacy after lunch to go to Sentosa. She can’t wake up early,” Corey bargained.

Ma sighed. “Just be back before us. I don’t want you kids getting involved in any more trouble. When you were at St John’s Island during the last school holidays in June, we were so worried when we heard there was a murder there.”

“Don’t worry about us, Ma. We’ll only be in Sentosa for half a day. What could happen? We’ll be back by six,” Corey assured her.

Ma finished up her tea and left for work with Pa. They owned an education centre which guaranteed improved results for any student.

Colton and Corey finished up their homework and had their lunch with Grandma before they left to meet Stacy.

• • •

Its white metallic façade gave it a futuristic look. It had curved lines that culminated in a dome at the side of the building where the planetarium was. The Children’s Museum sparkled in the sunlight. Sentosa’s sea breeze blew the museum’s colourful banners wildly. The trio peeked inside the museum through the glass door but there seemed to be no one around.

“So, what do we do? Wait?” Corey asked.

“I suppose so,” Stacy replied.

“Let’s hope you didn’t inherit your tardiness from Mr Oei,” Colton remarked, “or we’ll melt out here very soon. It’s so hot today.”

“It’s hot every day. We’re at the equator,” Corey said.

The children saw a black Mercedes turn into the open-air car park just in front of the museum.

“Is that him?” Corey asked.

“Okay, everybody remember the plan?” Stacy asked.

“Yes: act surprised,” Colton said.

“We don’t want him to think you are stalking him or anything,” Corey said.

“I’m not stalking him!” Stacy stressed again.

“I’ll ask him about Tintin,” Colton said, referring

to Mr Oei's dog.

"The dog's name is Poochi," Corey corrected Colton.

"And then after a bit of chitchat, I'll ask if he knew my mom," Stacy said.

Stacy looked at her could-be father walking towards the museum. He looked more distinguished than she had remembered. There was an energetic aura about him, a commanding presence that easily arrested attention. He was also good-looking. However, Stacy noticed she had none of his features.

Mr Oei frowned when he saw the children but once he recognised them, the frown was replaced by a smile. Stacy, Corey and Colton smiled back at him.

"Hello! This is a coincidence," Mr Oei said to the children.

The trio put on surprised looks. "Hello!" Colton returned the greeting. "You are Poochi's owner, Mr Oei."

"And you are Colton, Stacy and..." he paused as he tried to remember Corey's name.

Corey blushed and said her proper name softly.

"Yes, Cordelia," Mr Oei looked like he remembered.

"Mr Oei, how's Poochi?" Colton asked.

"He's grown. No more a puppy now," Mr Oei said.

"What are you kids doing here? The museum isn't open till the week after."

"Oh! We thought there could be a chance it might be open. We are so disappointed that it isn't. Are you here to see the museum too?" Stacy asked.

"I loaned them a collection of figurines I've kept since my childhood. I'm here before the premiere to make sure they're being displayed properly," Mr Oei explained.

Corey nudged Stacy to get on with it. They were all melting in the sweltering heat.

Stacy cleared her throat and stuttered, "Mr Oei, I...I...or we...were wondering...if..."

Mr Oei's phone rang. "Please excuse me," he said as he answered it. "Hello...hello?" Mr Oei looked at his phone. It said "CALL DROPPED". He walked away from the museum towards an open space and made a phone call.

Stacy sighed. This was more difficult than she had imagined.

The children could vaguely hear Mr Oei say, "Yes, I'm at the entrance...thank you." He walked back to the museum and smiled widely at them. "The security guard is coming to open the door for me. Hey, I hate

seeing you kids so disappointed about the museum being closed. Maybe I could let you in with me to have a look around? But you must promise to behave or, you know, out you go,” Mr Oei said in a manner that was half teasing, half serious.

“Really? You could let us in?” Colton asked.

“You rescued Poochi and returned him. It made my kids happy again. This would be like repaying a favour,” Mr Oei winked.

“Thank you!” Colton, Corey and Stacy exclaimed together.

A security guard unlocked the entrance. He was a burly Indian man in his forties whose uniform had a tag with the name ‘Ganesh’ on it. “Mr Samuel Oei?” he asked.

“Yes, and these kids are with me,” he said simply.

The museum was so quiet that they could hear the whirring of the air-conditioner as they entered. The high ceiling was painted blue and so were the air vents and pipes that ran throughout. The lights were bright and the cool air soothing. The reception area, next to the front desk, was a large empty space designed to hold organised tour groups. It was decorated with lots of indoor plants and looked welcoming. Corey noticed

a display of the museum layout at the front desk. There was a planetarium! She made a mental note of the other exhibits that interested her, like ‘Go Green’ and ‘Science Works’.

From the front desk, Corey, Colton and Stacy could see some of the exhibits from afar. The skull of a tyrannosaurus was peeking through the tall plants, which divided the dinosaur exhibit from the reception area. They noticed a sky train and tracks running deep into the museum. A huge blown up colourful castle stood just behind the front desk. It was for young children, not teenagers like them.

The security guard walked with them through the exhibits.

“There’s no one else here today? I thought there would be others scrambling to finish any last minute details before the premiere tomorrow,” Mr Oei asked the security guard.

“The museum premiere has been cancelled. Everyone else has gone home. It’s Saturday,” Ganesh said.

“Cancelled? Why wasn’t I informed?” Mr Oei took out his phone to check his email. “Oh no, there’s no reception in here.”

“Or it could be postponed. I wouldn’t know. I only know it’s not going to be happening tomorrow. We had some problems with the safety checks. The emergency exits are not functioning correctly. There is something wrong with the push bars. They won’t open because of some sort of locking system. The director was here this morning and he was furious with the contractors. He left in a huff.” The security guard was in a chatty mood.

“It’s disappointing,” Mr Oei said.

“But everything else is working great! The contractors were supposed to be in today to paint the kitchen walls at The Rainforest Restaurant but they postponed it to Monday. In any case, the restaurant is only scheduled to be ready when the museum opens to the public. I guess it’s just me and you, Mr Oei,” Ganesh said, looked at the kids and added, “and some kids as well.”

“That’s nice,” Colton grinned at Ganesh.

“Wow!” Stacy said as they passed a gigantic pirate ship on the right. Its masts flapped as the powerful air conditioning blew at them. Colton pointed to a display of cars on the left with interest.

Ganesh noticed Colton’s interest in the cars and said, “The exhibits are all ready for the grand opening. Inside

the ‘Turbo Charge’ exhibit, there’s a huge track for radio control cars to run on. Museum guests are allowed to play with the cars, which were donated by members of the public.”

“Cool!” Colton said. He had a remote control car too but did not have a proper race track for it to run on.

“Even the *Star Wars* exhibit is amazing. I’m sure you will take one look at it and be completely satisfied. Maybe then I can close up and call it a day,” Ganesh said as he patted his round belly and added, “I haven’t had my lunch yet.”

Mr Oei gave a sideways glance at the security guard and smiled politely. He knew the *Star Wars* exhibit wasn’t going to be up to his expectations. He had agreed to loan his figurines to the museum on the condition that he would have a say in how they would be displayed. He had given specific instructions but he knew they would not be followed exactly.

The children were so awed by all the exhibits that they had trouble keeping up with Mr Oei’s long strides. They finally reached the *Star Wars* exhibit. Life-sized cardboard figures of familiar characters from the movies were lined up at the entrance. Mr Oei grunted when

he saw them. As they entered a corridor of black velvet walls, music from the movie series started to blare. The corridor was dark and had little blinking lights that mimicked stars on the black velvet ceiling and walls. Mr Oei rolled his eyes and muttered “tacky” under his breath with obvious disapproval.

Finally they came to the exhibits. The figurines were arranged in rows and Mr Oei frowned more deeply. “They’ve done it all wrong,” he said, heaving a massive sigh. “They should be placed according to where they are from.”

“I thought they were all from you,” Ganesh said.

“Princess Leia and these figurines are from Alderaan and should be put with these. The rebels should be together in Hoth. But I want to put Luke Skywalker with Yoda in Dagobah. The Hutts are from Tatooine and should be together. Ewoks should all be put together in Endor. Where are my Ewoks? You can’t have them all over the place. There’s no system here!”

“Why not just put the good guys here and the bad guys there?” Ganesh asked. Mr Oei snorted.

“The Ewoks are here!” Colton called out. There was a landscape in the next section of the exhibit and there

were nearly a hundred Ewoks there, recreating a scene from the movie.

Mr Oei shook his head and said, “When you want something done right, you’ve got to do it yourself.”

The security guard’s stomach churned loudly. “Excuse me,” he mumbled.

Mr Oei turned to him. “Why don’t you go and have your lunch? It will take me some time to rearrange all these.”

“Thank you. I might take more than an hour because the food centre is quite far away,” Ganesh said and practically ran off.

“We can help too,” Stacy volunteered.

“I think it might be faster if I did it myself. Maybe you kids would like to walk through the museum?” Mr Oei suggested as he put on a pair of gloves. “It’s quite a big place. Hopefully I will be done by then. Or you could play with the remote control cars at ‘Turbo Charge?’”

“Okay, we’ll do that. But Mr Oei, Stacy has something she wants to ask you first,” Colton said and pushed her towards him.

“Yes?” Mr Oei asked, but his eyes never left the display.

“Er...er...” Stacy didn’t know how to phrase her question. “Where’s...the ladies’ room?”

“Oh, it’s just opposite this exhibit, at the sky train station,” Mr Oei said, adjusting an Ewok.

“Thanks,” Stacy muttered and turned to her friends. “Let’s go.” They left Mr Oei to fiddle with his collection.

“‘Where’s the ladies’ room?’ That’s why we came all the way here? To ask the whereabouts of a toilet?” Colton asked.

“Should I have asked about the men’s room for you too?” Stacy asked.

“Why didn’t you ask him if he was your father?” Corey asked.

“I don’t know. Don’t you think it’s weird if I just ask him all of a sudden? He might get a shock and die of a heart attack,” Stacy said.

“Anyway, he’s a bit wound up about the figurines,” Colton said. “It might not be the best time to ask. Maybe it would be better to wait till he’s finished with them. Let’s go look at the cars first.”

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Maranna Chan is a full-time writer with a background in education, having taught children of various ages, ranging from preschoolers to secondary school students. Maranna enjoys studying human behaviour and figuring out the personality types of those around her. A wife, and a mother to a young child and two hamsters, Maranna loves staying up late to watch back-to-back episodes of her favourite criminal investigation television series. That, she justifies, is for research.



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