

TRIPLE 9 SLEUTHS

DANGEROUS DISAPPEARANCE



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 DESPAIR
DANGEROUS ISLAND
DANGEROUS SCHEMES
DANGEROUS MESSAGE
DANGEROUS CONSPIRACY

TRIPLE 9 SLEUTHS

DANGEROUS DISAPPEARANCE



MARANNA CHAN



EPIGRAM BOOKS / SINGAPORE

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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 1

To my friends who are my fans:

Longly

Alice Tiam

Meliza Sompolpong

Joella Alejandro

Arati Dubey

SherMay Loh

Millie Lam

Winnie Koh

Naodia Sze

Helen Luah

Waili

Kelly Law

Bernard Mok

Michael Suwandi

Ruth and Aser Medina

REBECCA SIM

ENNEA: THE RESIGNED DOORMAT

*She was so eager to maintain peace that she
refused to see her problems and downplayed issues.*

She could not cope with anything that upset her.

She was stubborn and resisted any solutions.

*Depressed and confused, she was reliant
on her husband and allowed him to abuse her.*

She paid for her sins.

CHAPTER 1

“WHAT DO YOU think of this?” Stacy Rodriguez asked, showing her best friend, Corey Lam, a picture on her new iPad. Corey was a shy and mousy girl with thick glasses who loved reading. Stacy was a more outdoorsy kind of girl and had no time for books. The 14-year-olds were at Corey’s place, waiting for Corey’s brother, Colton, to return home.

“What about it? It’s a hobbit’s house,” Corey said.

“I’m thinking of decorating my room to look like this,” Stacy said.

“Why? Are you a hobbit?” Corey asked. “The round doors are impractical.”

“But they’re so cute!” Stacy said.

“Wait. Your room? What room? You live in the hall, Stacy,” Corey said. She had been to Stacy’s rented one-room flat before. There were no bedrooms.

“Nana bought a two-room flat in Ang Mo Kio so I’m finally getting a bedroom! Nana said she’s used to sleeping in the hall, in front of the TV, so the room

is mine! All mine!” Stacy said with glee.

“You’re moving?” Corey asked.

“I took your advice to invest my money and not spend it all away,” Stacy replied.

A few months earlier, Stacy had found a bankbook with \$100,000 in her name. Born out of wedlock, Stacy’s parents had gone missing when Stacy was three, and Stacy was raised by her grandmother. Stacy had been searching for her parents for as long as she could remember. Stacy suspected that the \$100,000 had been left by her father, Stanley Oei, who had run away with a large sum of money.

After Stacy had discovered her inheritance, Corey encouraged her to use the money to buy a flat for Nana and herself. With government subsidies, Nana could afford a two-room flat in Ang Mo Kio.

“But why Ang Mo Kio? Couldn’t you buy a flat here in Serangoon?” Corey asked. “And does this mean you’ll have to change schools?” Stacy was Corey’s only friend. Corey was worried that if Stacy moved away, she would lose their friendship. Stress made Corey’s airways tighten, and she took out her asthma inhaler.

“There weren’t any units in Serangoon for us to choose

from. Nana said Ang Mo Kio was the next best choice. It’s not that far from Serangoon,” Stacy explained. She knew this would cause Corey some anxiety. “I’ll just have to wake up earlier to get to school.”

“Is that...possible?” Corey asked. School was only a 10-minute walk from Stacy’s home and she was already habitually late. Corey couldn’t imagine what it would be like if Stacy had to take public transport to school.

Stacy and Corey heard Colton at the door. Snowy jumped up at the sound and wagged his tail, impatient for Colton to open the door. “Hey Stacy,” Colton said as he picked up his dog. Colton was 11 months older than his sister, but they were both in Secondary Two as they had been born in the same year—Colton in January and Corey in December. In the last few months, Colton’s facial features had become more chiselled and his voice had grown deeper. “Any news about Paula?”

“I’ve been trying to get in touch with her but she hasn’t replied,” Stacy replied, crestfallen. Paula De Souza was the best friend of Stacy’s mother, Cybil. The previous year, Stacy had met up with Paula to find out who her father was. Paula had denied knowing him,

but a wedding certificate Stacy had recently found showed that Paula was a witness at their wedding. Why had she lied? Stacy wondered.

“All I get is her voice mail which spouts a different inspirational quote each week. Today’s quote is: ‘It matters not what you are thought to be, but what you are.’ Last week’s was: ‘The most difficult thing in life is to know yourself,’” Stacy said.

“I can’t believe you’re getting wiser just by your persistent calls to Paula,” Corey said.

“I’m always expecting that one day her voice mail will say: ‘If you’re Stacy, stop calling me,’” Stacy said.

“So she’s deliberately avoiding you,” Colton said.

“I suggest we look for her at her home,” Corey said. “She lives somewhere in Choa Chu Kang.” Using her iPad, Stacy showed Colton the pictures Paula had posted on Instagram. She scrolled to one of Paula’s Zumba instructor. The caption said, “Zumba instructor Hayley at CCK community centre. She could really shake it.”

“That’s Choa Chu Kang Community Centre,” Corey said, pointing at the picture. “So she probably lives in the neighbourhood. Stacy and I called up the community centre to find out when their Zumba lessons

are conducted. But the class has been discontinued. It only ran for one-and-a-half months from September to October last year.”

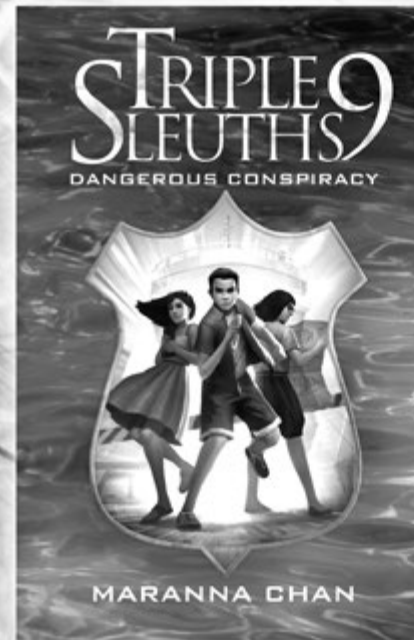
“Look at Paula’s selfie,” Colton said. “It was taken in her bedroom. There’re some HDB flats outside the windows. Maybe if we find those flats, we can find out where she lives!” The Housing Development Board blocks had arched roofs and were painted brown, beige and orange.

“Look at her window,” Corey pointed out. Paula’s white windows were cottage-style, with stained glass. “These look specially designed.”

“So if we figure out which part of the estate this is and look for her window, we can track her down!” Stacy exclaimed.

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