



THE PERANAKAN PRINCESS

For Review

DON BOSCO

SHERLOCK HONG ADVENTURES

Young detective **SHERLOCK HONG** stumbles upon a plot to kidnap a young girl of Peranakan descent with a very special talent. Bound by his loyalty to the International Order of Young Seekers, Sherlock leaves home and travels into the enchanted forests of Malacca to discover the truth about an astonishing Peranakan legend involving Princess Hang Li Poh and her coveted magical *Book of Secrets*!

Will Sherlock be able to save the girl and prevent the magical manual from falling into the wrong hands?

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First published 2012 by Super Cool Books

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Cover Illustration by Ann Gee

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National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Bosco, Don, 1971- author.

The Peranakan princess / Don Bosco. – Singapore : Marshall Cavendish Children, 2015.

pages cm. – (Sherlock Hong adventures)

ISBN : 978-981-4721-20-2 (paperback)

1. Magic – Fiction. 2. Princesses – Fiction. 3. Investigation – Fiction.
4. Teenagers – Fiction. 5. Malacca (Malacca, Malaysia) – History – 19th century – Fiction. 6. Singapore – History – 1867-1942 – Fiction. I. Title.
II. Series: Sherlock Hong adventures.

PR9570.S53

S823 -- dc23

OCN920497000

Printed in Singapore by Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd

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Children

CHAPTER 1

The year is 1891.

I have something great to share with you.

My name is Sherlock Hong, fifteen years old, proud member of a society that we call The International Order of Young Seekers.

I live in Singapore, a city that hides many ancient secrets. Its legends are strange, its mysteries keep me awake every night thinking about them.

You might remember my last report. Not long ago, in my own neighbourhood, a man named William Fong appeared.

He pretended to be a necromancer and received a big sum of money to bring a dead nightingale back to life.

But he had no such ability. It was a scheme that he came up with to cheat a rich old man.

I exposed his true intention and helped to get him arrested. Still, the matter was not fully resolved.

I'll never forget William Fong's last words to me. He talked about dark forces coming to our colony. He also mentioned that a Grandmaster would punish me.

What did he mean? Was he delirious? Or was he threatening me?

Time will tell.

For now, there is another more urgent matter. I was recently involved in a dangerous

adventure. And it made me aware of the higher arts that exist in our world.

I will tell you everything in the pages that follow.

There were many moments of fear and doubt along the way. But I always stayed true to the oath we took when we joined the Order: “The future belongs to the young and brave!”

The knowledge in this book must be used wisely, so that we may rise up the ranks of our great Order, to earn for ourselves the respect of our fellow members and the privileges that have been promised to us.

I humbly dedicate this work to all of you, my dear friends.

The time has come to talk of magical things.

CHAPTER 2

The early morning sun made me hot and sweaty. My feet hurt but still I dragged myself along the path that led up Mount Faber.

It was the second Tuesday in March, the day I woke up early and went with Miss Priya on a field trip to visit the tomb of a legendary princess named Radin Mas Ayu.

Miss Priya is the highly intelligent daughter of a school principal in India. My father hired her to be my tutor at home.

She knows a lot about everything, whether it's Confucius or calculus or coconut jokes.

But that morning, she didn't even notice that I struggled to keep up with her.

She just skipped ahead, happily singing a Malay lullaby.

When we got close to the tomb, I was surprised to see four Chinese women coming down. They were dressed in blue and they smiled at us.

“Many people believe that Princess Radin Mas Ayu has the ability to grant wishes,” Miss Priya explained. “So they come here with their requests.”

The tomb looked normal. It was made of stone. But there was an aura of peace all around it. The trees in the area seemed to bow towards that direction, as if paying their respects.

I turned to Miss Priya. “Who was Princess Radin Mas Ayu? And what happened to her?”

Miss Priya cleared her throat. She loved to tell stories.

“A long time ago,” she said, “perhaps three hundred years back, Radin Mas Ayu lived here with her father. He was popular with the people, and this made the Sultan jealous of him. One day, a palace guard warned Radin Mas Ayu that the Sultan wanted to kill her father. She rushed to protect her father. She fought with the Sultan so that her father could escape. But she was stabbed and died! They buried her here.”

I must admit, the story moved me deeply. I was inspired by her courage.

But where were the other young and brave heroes? Why didn't they protect her?

I vowed, silently, that if a princess was ever in trouble, I would show courage and do my best to protect her.



Miss Priya had given me an assignment in the morning to make sketches of the flowers and leaves in the area.

When we were done, we walked home quickly so that I would not be late for lunch.

Soon, we reached River Valley Road, where I lived. Miss Priya left me at my front gate.

“Show your parents what you’ve done,” Miss Priya suggested. “I’ll see you on Friday. We’ll read a passage from the Indian book, *Ramayana*.”

I entered the house and looked for my father. I was eager to show him my drawings, to reassure him that I was serious about my studies.

My father, you might recall, is Master Hong, the much respected physician.

As I passed the front hall, I heard his voice. He sounded annoyed.

“Go ask one of the clan leaders in Chinatown,” Father said. “Or seek the Governor’s advice. I refuse to get involved.”

I looked inside. We had a visitor, a man wearing a long shirt and a plain white cap that covered his forehead.

He looked most unusual. He had thick, dark eyebrows and was so thin that his cheekbones stuck out in an odd and almost frightening way.

I also noticed that he kept his fingernails very long.

“Master Hong, I’m not asking for much,” he told my father. “I just want a short letter from you. It won’t cost you anything. And

no one will be inconvenienced. I'm in a hurry. Surely you'll help me?"

Father must have sensed my presence. He turned around abruptly and stared at me.

"Go to your room," he snapped.

I was surprised. My father usually speaks in a calm and patient manner.

Something was very wrong.

The man laughed. He took off his white cap. "Is this your son? A handsome young man indeed!"

He spoke in a soft voice, almost purring like a cat, as he walked towards me.

"What's your name, boy?" he said.

"Would you like to show us what you have in your hands?"

When he came closer, I noticed some strange marks on his forehead.

It was a tattoo of a goldfish!

I didn't know why, but I suddenly felt an unpleasant sensation run down my back.

My father rushed over. He grabbed my chin and turned my head away.

“Enough of your nonsense,” Father said to the man. “I have to pack for a trip. I must ask you to go now.”

The man put his cap back on again. He shook his head in disappointment.

“You leave me no choice, Master Hong.”

He didn't explain what he meant by that statement.

He just cracked his knuckles and left.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don Bosco describes himself as “geeky, cheeky and magicky”. His books include the *Sherlock Hong* series and the *Time Talisman* series. These stories are full of fun, adventure and mystery, all inspired by Asian history and culture. Don is also the author of the bestselling *Lion City Adventures*. He lives in Singapore. To find out more, visit his website: <http://www.SuperCoolBooks.com>