

For Review Only

BASED ON A TOP-GROSSING JACK NEO FILM

Long Long Time Ago

There was a time when tomorrow was uncertain



Long Long Time Ago is a heart-warming story of a family living in a kampong in pre-independent Singapore, when living conditions were poor, gangsters were rife and racial tensions were high. It revolves around the life of widow Zhao Di who is chased out of her husband's home, nine months pregnant and with three young daughters in tow, in the wake of Singapore's imminent separation from Malaysia.

As Zhao Di ekes out a living as an illegal hawker, she has to evade health inspectors and face harassment from gangsters. In spite of the numerous trials she is put through, including dealing with her father's superstitions and the greed of her good-for-nothing brother, she perseveres and gets the opportunity to open a canteen stall in a factory, even as Singapore's economy develops and the quality of life improves across the country.

Experience for yourself the joys and tumultuous moments in Singapore's history through this beautifully illustrated book.

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Long Long Time Ago

我们的故事 1

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jteam³ productions

Illustrated by James Teo

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Introduction

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I was born in a Chinese village in Kampong Chai Chee in 1960. In 1976, the government expropriated the land and we were relocated to HDB flats. At that time, my siblings and I were very excited about the move as we would no longer have to venture out into the dark to use the kampong toilet at night or take a shower with icy cold water drawn from the well.

There were so many new things for us to discover when we moved to our new flat that we hardly thought about the old kampong. Yet, my father would still return to our old house every now and then, something which my siblings and I could not understand then. We even made fun of him, saying that he was ungrateful and would rather yearn for the broken old house than appreciate the comfort of modern living.

Over the years, however, my siblings and I began to miss our old kampong and attempted to make a visit. But by then, we discovered that we could no longer find the road that led to the kampong...

As I age, I find that my yearning for those old kampong days of my childhood has grown stronger, but I am only able to relive those moments through old photographs and in dreams. The kampong lifestyle and daily routines we were once so familiar with are but a thing of the past. Whenever I get the chance to talk to my children about kampong life, they are always excited to listen to my stories, but they will never be able to experience for themselves what life was truly like then.

Hence, *Long Long Time Ago* is my attempt at recording events of the past and of life in the kampong, but not just through what I remember, but through stories collected from others as well, so that generations after us can have a glimpse of what kampong life was like.

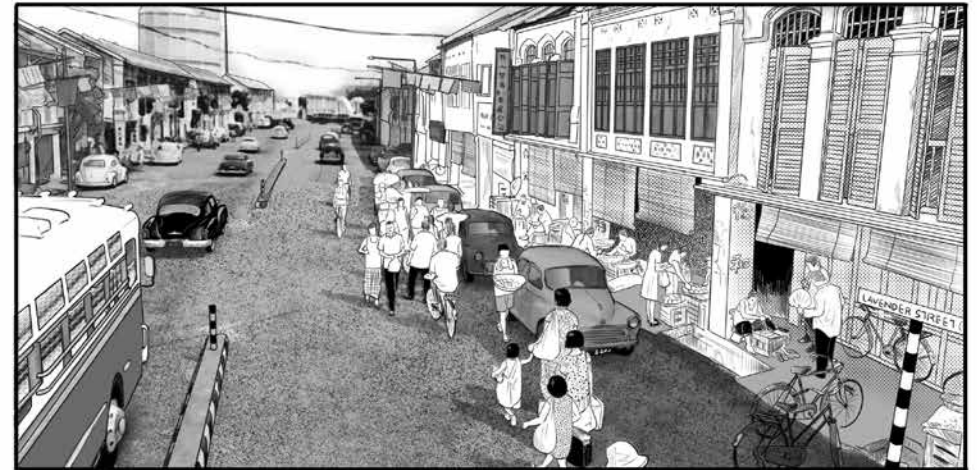
To all who have contributed to this production of *Long Long Time Ago*, be it the movie or book, in one way or another, thank you! May we always celebrate the Singapore spirit with an appreciation and understanding of our past and work towards a brighter future together.



My name is Chen Su Ting, I was born in 1958. My mother was the second wife. As the first wife was unable to conceive, she allowed father to marry mother. However, after marriage, mother gave birth to three girls consecutively.

At that time, women who gave birth only to girls were considered similar to being barren.

Not long after father passed away, we were chased out of the house.



Left with no choice, we made our way back to grandfather's house in the countryside.





After being married for so long, and now that your husband has passed on, how dare you come back empty-handed, pregnant, and with three kids in tow?

You were chased out just like that? What do you take me for?!

During that time, society was patriarchy and highly superstitious. According to the fortune teller, mother's fortune clashed with grandfather's. Hence, he did not allow her to call him dad. She had to address him as fourth uncle.

Instead of helping with our living expenses, you bring your kids back and expect me to feed them?

Sis! I'm in charge of the household now. You expect me to raise your family as well?

Fourth Uncle



Ah Kun

I have three sons, a wife, and father and mother to take care of. How are we to survive if you stay with us? Eat shit with rice or rice with shit?



I...

Rest assured, I will not be a free loader. I am pregnant now and the kids are still young. I just need a place to stay temporarily.

Take a look around. Where are you going to sleep if you stay?

The bathhouse or pit latrine? How about the kitchen?



Zhao Di, are you really moving back?

Yes, I'm giving birth soon. I need a place to stay.

Fourth Aunt



Fourth Uncle, Ah Kun, the kids are still young. We need a place to stay. We don't mind sleeping in the kitchen.



Please let me stay. I'll get a job as soon as I've given birth to help with the expenses.



Sis! You're back!

Ah Xi!

Hee!





That was how my little brother and sister came into this world. It was 9th August. The day Singapore's troubles began.





Homewrecker mole? How about the boy?



Lucky one turned out fine. Thank god!



I have something to add. In the olden days...



Your grandson's mole is a "prosperous" mole. He will be rich and successful in future.



...we would have strangled her to death.

Choke!



Excuse me. My fortune doesn't bode well today. There may be a clash of fortunes. I'm leaving.

I'm going too.



Are you going to strangle her to death?



I'll think about it.



Is it that serious?

Yes.



What's there to think about?



I'm considering how to handle it.

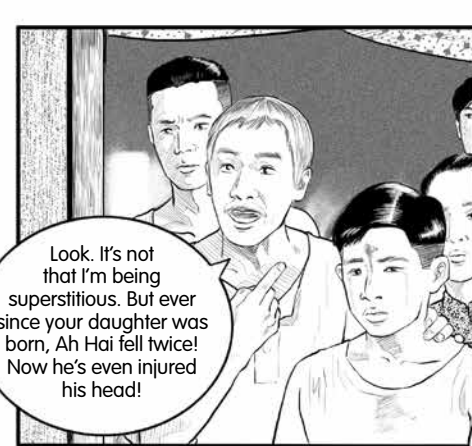


What happened? You tripped again?

He fell again?



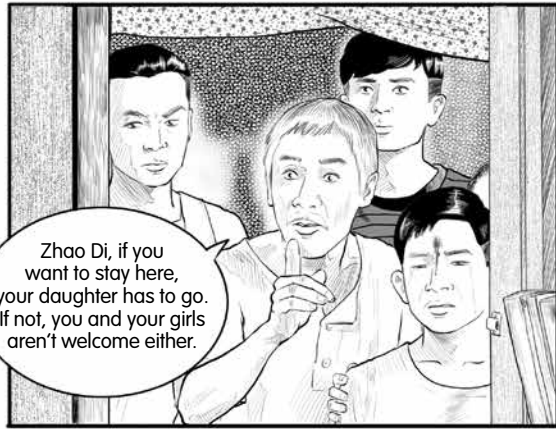
Zhao Di.



Look. It's not that I'm being superstitious. But ever since your daughter was born, Ah Hai fell twice! Now he's even injured his head!

Are you mad? This is also our grandchild.

No. Ah Hai is a "Lin". He is our grandchild. Her daughter is not a "Lin". She is an outsider.



Zhao Di, if you want to stay here, your daughter has to go. If not, you and your girls aren't welcome either.



But dad, she's just a baby!



You think I can't see that? Don't interfere!



Sis, she is your daughter. I don't want to tell you what to do. But I don't want misfortune to befall our family.



Stop crying and put some incense ash on it.



Mum, must we send sis away?



Ha! Ha!

Hurry!



Ha! Ha!



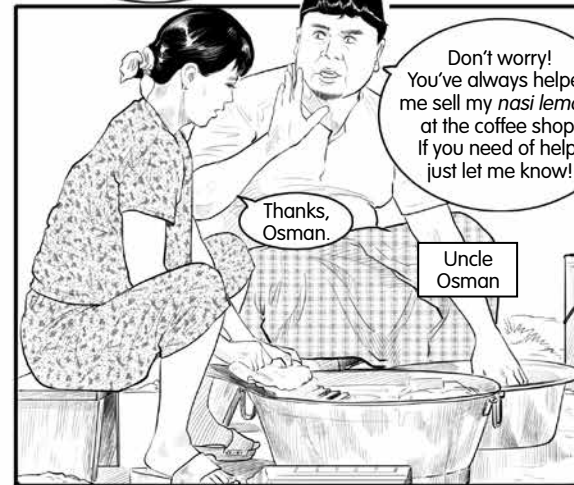
Lady Boss! What are you doing here?



Don't call me that. I'm no longer the Lady Boss.

They chased you out?

How unreasonable!



Thanks, Osman.

Don't worry! You've always helped me sell my nasi lemak* at the coffee shop. If you need of help, just let me know!

Uncle Osman



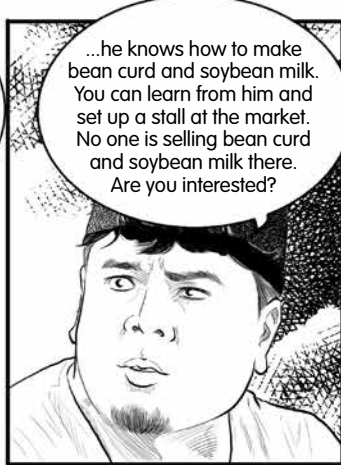
You're working as a washerwoman?

I just gave birth to twins. My financial burden is heavier now.

* A Malay dish of rice flavoured with coconut milk



Zhao Di, you were a Lady Boss. This job as a washerwoman isn't suitable for you. Let me introduce you to a friend...



...he knows how to make bean curd and soybean milk. You can learn from him and set up a stall at the market. No one is selling bean curd and soybean milk there. Are you interested?



Yes. Of course! Thank you.



No need... I'm good at doing laundry. Let me help.



Er... I can't wash this.

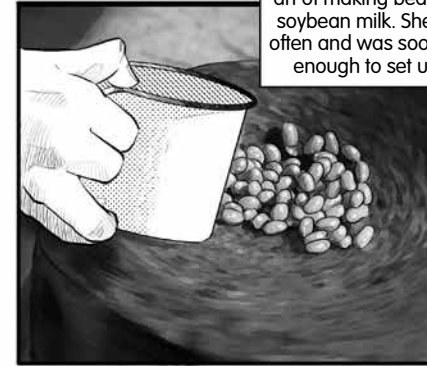


....



I've already washed it.

Already washed?



With help from Uncle Osman, Mum quickly mastered the art of making bean curd and soybean milk. She practised often and was soon confident enough to set up a stall.



Nice? You like it?



On her first day, Mum got Uncle Xi to help her push the soybean cart to the market.

Ah Xi, why did you quit school after Secondary 2?

I'm no good at studying. I'm always failing.



Why don't you help me at the stall? I'll pay you.

Really?



Live chickens for sale!

