

# The visitors

**I**t never ceased to amaze him just how much blood the human body held. He was mesmerised every time he saw it spurting out from the severed throat of a hanging body. The sight caused him to watch in wonder until the twitching stopped, the body was still and the last drops of crimson liquid had dripped into the vat below.

That, of course, didn't mean that the body was totally drained of blood. Zhou Yong Liang knew that when he began to dismember the corpses there would still be blood in the body cavities. That was where the blackest blood of all lingered and congealed into jelly. He would carefully add this to the blood that he had already collected.

However, Yong Liang was always careful to ensure that before he killed his victims he kept them alive long enough to administer the potions that would clear out their systems. He had to maintain his standards and only the purest, untainted blood would do.

This particular victim was especially bountiful. It seemed that his body held enough blood for a corpse twice his size. After all, he had been just a young boy.

But after years of experience Yong Liang had learned never to judge the amount of blood by the size of the original container.

The body had been still for several minutes. Droplets of blood had stopped trickling down the shaven head into the vat below. Yong Liang was always careful to remove all the hair from the body and wash it carefully before he hung it and slit the throat. The blood he harvested was always the purest possible. That was something he prided himself on. He would never let a single hair nor a drop of urine, faeces or vomit ever contaminate it.

Now it was time to take the corpse down and dissect it. Yong Liang carefully closed the lid of the vat. Then, putting one hand on the buttocks of the suspended body, he pushed the pulley mechanism that held it along the railed track that was fixed to the ceiling. For fifteen years this had been a slaughterhouse for pigs until one day the authorities had refused to renew his licence. They had said that it was unhygienic and he had had to shut down his business. He'd been forced to look for another source of income.

The transition from pigs to humans had happened almost by accident. Yong Liang had continued to farm pigs, but without the income from the abattoir he had struggled to provide feed for his own animals. There was a shortage and feed was expensive. His wife was dead and his only son had despised the role of pig farmer and moved to Malaysia. Yong Liang had been left alone on his

small farm, struggling to survive.

One day his prayers were answered. A stranger arrived looking for work. His shabby clothes and the small bundle he carried were obvious signs that he was an itinerant. Yong Liang gave the man lime juice and snacks and discovered that yes, the man had travelled to Singapore to find work. He told Yong Liang he came from a fishing village in Thailand and, no, he hadn't spoken to his family for some time.

The pigs began squealing with hunger the moment the stranger told Yong Liang he hadn't spoken to his family. That was when the idea had struck. The visitor was alone in this sparsely populated corner of the island. He had no family. He had no work. No one even knew he was in Singapore—and no one would miss him.

Yong Liang excused himself and left his unexpected guest sitting alone under the rain tree in the yard. He went to the front gate and locked it, careful not to let his visitor hear him. Then he went into his house. The cleaver was on the kitchen table. Yong Liang picked it up and walked back out into the sunshine.

The unsuspecting visitor, still seated at the table, was finishing the last of the snacks. Yong Liang crept up behind the man and waited a few seconds for his victim to swallow his last mouthful of juice. Only when the cup had been placed safely back on the table did Yong Liang raise the heavy cleaver and drive it down directly into the top of the visitor's head.

Death had been instantaneous.

Yong Liang quickly ran to get a wheelbarrow, loaded the body into it and wheeled it to the disused slaughterhouse. Using his skills as an expert butcher, and given that the basic anatomy of a human is not that different to a pig, it didn't take long for him to cut the body into pieces. He loaded the pieces into the wheelbarrow and wheeled his gruesome cargo to the animal pens where his hungry pigs waited.

As he stood watching the animals fight over the pieces of flesh, Yong Liang suddenly had an epiphany: if his pigs ate the remains of one man, they would eat more. All he had to do was find more people to feed to them, preferably people that no one would miss.

There was little evidence that the itinerant man had ever visited the pig farm. Yong Liang made sure of that. He cleaned up the blood from under the rain tree and gathered up the man's personal belongings. Later that day he retrieved the bones from the pig pens. He broke the larger bones, including the skull, with a hammer until they were unrecognisable as being human. Then he put the bones and the dead man's meagre bundle of possessions into the furnace that had once supplied the hot water for his abattoir. Yong Liang hadn't used the furnace for a long time and it took some coaxing before the fire burst into life. He stoked it with wood and after an hour there was nothing left of the traveller.

Yong Liang now had his plan, which was simple yet perfect. He had some small posters printed then drove around the island

distributing them. The message was simple: WORKERS WANTED. There were precise instructions on how to get to Yong Liang's pig farm.

From then on it became very easy. Whenever a Singaporean or someone living in Singapore turned up to work, Yong Liang would tell them that all the positions were filled. When the applicant was a foreigner, he would talk to them over lime juice and snacks. Once satisfied that the itinerant had no family or friends who knew his whereabouts, he would kill them and turn their bodies into pig feed.

Things would have gone on in this simple and uncomplicated manner had fate not intervened. Because Yong Liang's pigs still had to be slaughtered, every few weeks he would load a chosen few into his truck and drive them to the certified abattoir on the other side of the island.

'Your pigs are the best,' Chen Hong Wen, the owner of the abattoir, had exclaimed the first time Yong Liang had arrived with six pigs. 'They are perfect, so good,' Hong Wen enthused. 'What are you feeding them on, Yong Liang?'

'My secret,' Yong Liang replied.

'Ah well, it is magic, my friend. I want that magic food for my animals. Do you sell it?'

'Not yet.' Suddenly Hong Wen's words triggered something in Yong Liang's mind and he began to formulate a plan. 'But if

and when I do, you will be the first to know,' he added.

'Very good,' Hong Wen replied. 'Then I'm sure that we can come to an arrangement over the fee for the slaughtering.'

'I'm sure we can.' Yong Liang paid Hong Wen what he owed him. His pigs would be slaughtered along with Hong Wen's that day. When Hong Wen had sold them he would go to the farm and give Yong Liang his profit.

Back at his pig farm, Yong Liang worked on his plan. Now that he had money coming in he could afford to buy feed for his pigs, but they seemed to prefer his special menu and it was obviously doing them good. He pondered what to do.

When Hong Wen arrived at the farm a week later with Yong Liang's money from the sale of the pigs, everything changed again. Immediately Yong Liang knew exactly what he would do. Hong Wen smiled broadly as he got out of his truck with Yong Liang's money in his hand.

'They want more of your pigs. The customers tell me that the flavour of your pigs is the best. Some say it is the best pork in Asia. Top restaurants are asking me where it comes from. My friend, we can get top dollar for your pigs. Let us both work together and we can make ourselves some real money.'

'Let me think about it,' Yong Liang said, taking his money from Hong Wen. 'I need to think.'

'Okay, but let us not let this opportunity pass by. They are raving. They want Yong Liang's pork.'

After Hong Wen had left, Yong Liang made a decision. If he could get more human meat, he could combine it with the feed he would buy. He could then resell it.

The only problem was that the human meat could not be sold in pieces. It would have to be ground up so it was unrecognisable.

He hadn't used the meat grinder in the abattoir since the authorities had closed down his business. The powerful grinder had once been used to turn pig bones and other waste into a fine pulp that was then used as fertiliser. Yong Liang spent a few days tinkering with the machine until he had it working again.

He tried it out on his next visitor. After killing the poor victim, Yong Liang cut the corpse into large chunks and fed it through the grinder. As he had anticipated, the grinder's heavy blades made short work of the remains and the large tub underneath the grinder was soon filled with pulp. Yong Liang smashed and burnt the skull separately.

Yong Liang took the pulp and mixed it with the pig feed he had bought. Then he fed the combination to his pigs. They squealed and fought to get to the troughs. In a matter of minutes, every scrap of the mixture was gone. Yong Liang smiled. His plan would work. He set about distributing more posters. The more visitors he had, the more pig feed he was able to produce. Soon he was supplying Hong Wen with the special mixture, and in a very short time the pair grew rich from their venture. Restaurateurs

throughout Singapore and further afield began to ask for Zhou-Chen pork by name.

But Yong Liang had a problem. He was receiving too many itinerants. Sometimes he had barely dispatched of one and wheeled him into the abattoir when another would appear. So Yong Liang added another aspect to his plan: he would put a powerful sedative into the visitor's lime juice. Yong Liang's late wife had been a herbalist and the recipes in her books showed him how to concoct such a sedative. One good mouthful of the virtually tasteless liquid and the victim simply passed out.

Yong Liang also amended his posters. Eleven in the morning was the time for would-be workers to come to the farm, and come they did. As before, locals were turned away along with anyone Yong Liang thought might not be totally independent of family or friends. When he was satisfied he had two, sometimes three, genuine itinerant labourers seated at his table under the rain tree, Yong Liang would serve his lime juice. He would slip out, lock the front gate and return to find his victims unconscious. Then he would shift the sleeping visitors into the abattoir. At first he would simply use his cleaver to kill them and process them as usual, but it was a chance remark from Hong Wen that changed all that.

'Blood, they want more pigs' blood,' Hong Wen said one day when Yong Liang made his delivery of pig food.

'More blood?' Yong Liang knew that pigs' blood was an

essential ingredient in many styles of cooking, particularly in the making of sausages and puddings.

‘Yes, there is a new factory making food for export and the Europeans want more blood sausage, more blood this, more blood that.’

‘Hm,’ Yong Liang thought as he drove back to his pig farm. He knew that pigs were often experimented on in medical laboratories so perhaps pigs’ blood was not that different to blood from a human. Would anyone know the difference, especially if the two were mixed?

So Yong Liang began to bleed his victims. Still alive but unconscious, he would push a hook through their heels and hang them over the vat. Then he would slit their throats and collect their blood. This time, however, he stored the blood rather than disposed of it.

When he next went to see Hong Wen, he told his friend that he had killed several pigs for his own use and suggested that he add his blood to Hong Wen’s barrels. Hong Wen agreed, and so began another chapter in Yong Liang’s sordid business.

After a while Yong Liang began to notice that sometimes the blood he collected had things in it. A doped visitor might sometimes vomit or urinate, and hair, human hair, which was very different to that of a pig, often fell into the vat of blood. When he saw these hairs, he had to fish them out. If they identified the hairs as human

at the factory, he would be finished.

That was when Yong Liang started to shave and wash his victims. It took more time but the blood that he sent to Hong Wen was clean, and he told his friend that he too must keep his blood clean. Hong Wen agreed. He still had no idea where his partner's pig feed or blood originated, and he didn't ask. He was too busy making money. The growing demand for Zhou-Chen pork and the increasing amount of blood they supplied the factory made both men extremely wealthy.

Since the death of his wife Yong Liang had not enjoyed the company of women. He stayed on his farm, rarely venturing far. Only occasionally, when Hong Wen insisted, did he venture into town. At fifty-two Yong Liang was not a bad-looking man, but it was his wallet that girls found most attractive. Soon he was going into town more and more often and usually by himself. It was on one of these trips that he ended up in Geylang with a young mainland Chinese girl. The girl wanted to go with him for the night and, after setting the price, he agreed. He left the bar and met her in a side street, well away from prying eyes. They drove to his farm.

The next morning Yong Liang contemplated what to do with his companion. He knew he should drop her off at the nearest bus stop, but he'd not had many visitors that week. In fact, there had only been four people knock on his door and he needed at

least seven a week to keep things going. So he made up his mind. While he regretted giving the girl his special juice, he reasoned that he'd had no choice. No one knew she was there. No one had seen her get into his truck. She was just another visitor, alone in the world.

Looking at the slight, naked figure hanging from the rail in the slaughterhouse, Yong Liang had another pang of regret. He could still take her down, but the hooks driven through her heels and the fact that he had shaved her head and body could not be ignored. With a sigh he took the unconscious girl's chin in his left hand and extended her slender neck before using the razor-sharp knife to cut her throat.

After that Yong Liang began to bring home more girls of the night. He didn't kill them all. Some he dropped off at the bus stop with money in their pockets. This would form part of his alibi if he ever needed one. He could say that, 'Yes, I do visit Geylang sometimes, but I always drop the girls off at the bus stop the next morning.' But deep down he didn't really think he would need an alibi.

To this very day Yong Liang continues to harvest visitors and provide Singapore chefs and their restaurants with the finest pork on the island. The general public can't buy it because it is far too expensive, but it does taste good. When you next eat at a restaurant and you see on the menu 'Speciality: Zhou-Chen pork', enjoy!

Oh, and if you like blood sausage then perhaps you're eating some of Yong Liang's special blood. They say sausage made with it is especially tasty.