



### B81 A Mango Bait: A Missing Girl, and a Murder

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the value of characterizing fruit residues in stomach contents, and combining trace evidence and other forensic findings to link a suspect to a murder and reconstruct the events that occurred.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating to the audience by means of a case study that fruit residues in the stomach contents of a murdered girl can be characterized in the forensic laboratory and used alongside other physical evidence to conclusively link a suspect and a location to the crime, and reveal how the victim was lured to her death.

On October 10, 2004, 8-year-old Huang Na was reported missing. She was last seen playing with Took Leng How at the food wholesale center that day. Took, a packer at the wholesale center and a former flatmate of Huang Na, was one of the persons interviewed by the police after her disappearance. He consistently denied involvement but gave contradictory accounts during police questioning. While appearing to cooperate, Took managed to quietly slip out of Singapore, escaping to Malaysia on October 21.

There were very few investigative leads except for Huang Na's estimated time of disappearance, the denim jacket she wore on the fateful day and the fact that Took had bought some mangoes close to the time of her disappearance. One of the immediate concerns was to locate the primary scene. The storeroom in the wholesale center where Took worked was considered a possibility. Forensic scientists searched the storeroom for trace evidence and biological material and found an abundance of denim fibers on the office table, on a roll of adhesive tape, on a pair of scissors, and a box-cutter in the storeroom. This was in agreement with the jacket Huang Na wore. A faint smear on the wall and a strand of hair were also found to contain Huang Na's DNA profile. The carpet had small bloodstains belonging to Huang Na and urine stains. The office table was examined for stains and several fluorescing prints resembling a child's fingerprints were found on the underside of the tabletop.

Meanwhile, three weeks after Huang Na's disappearance, Took was arrested and was brought back to Singapore. Took eventually led Singapore investigators to Telok Blangah Hill Park, where the girl's naked body was found wrapped in nine layers of plastic bags and stuffed into a carton sealed with strips of adhesive tape. The pathologist recovered some yellowish-brown residue in Huang Na's stomach and submitted it for examination.

Despite being recovered after 3 weeks, the stomach contents were examined and found to be mango residues. The seven strips of clear adhesive tape pasted on the carton were linked by physical fitting of cut ends to a roll of tape found in the storeroom; the free end of this roll had a fingerprint of Took. The carton in which Huang Na's body was stuffed was similar in class characteristics to known cartons found in Took's workplace. The nine plastic bags used to wrap Huang Na's body were similar in class characteristics, polarized light patterns and heat-seal marks to an unused plastic bag found in his workplace. The construction of the knots on these bags was also found to be similar to the known knots tied by Took. The sequential sealing by adhesive tape of the questioned carton, tying of knots, and the manner in which one bag was placed into another were carried out in a very systematic manner, drawing attention to the fact that Took was a packer. During the trial, Took elected not to testify on the grounds of diminished responsibility. The total weight of all the physical evidence strongly implicated Took in the murder, and indicated the storeroom as the primary scene of the crime.

Piecing the findings together, the prosecution submitted that Took coaxed Huang Na into the storeroom with mangoes. He could have sexually assaulted and then smothered Huang Na to death. He cut up her denim clothes, and wrapped her in the nine layers of plastic bags, before stuffing and sealing her in a carton and transporting the body to the deserted park. On August 26, 2005, Took was found guilty of the murder of Huang Na. The Judge was not convinced that Took was suffering from schizophrenia. Took appealed unsuccessfully; the Court of Appeal upheld his sentence on January 25, 2006.

#### **Fruit Residues, Stomach Contents, Huang Na**