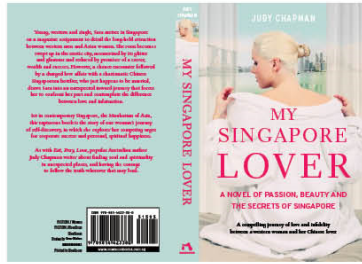


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JUDY CHAPMAN – AN INTERVIEW WITH AN AUTHOR

Judy Chapman might be better known as the woman who bought us the Karma Spa Huts, but with the release of her very first fiction she is stepping into a very different spotlight. Words by Katie Allen

Actually she says no at first, she feels a little nervous, she has written books before but not this kind.. My Singapore Lover is a very different line of work for someone better known for their inspirational creations as a spa curator, as a magazine editor and as an established personality in the world of international well being and spa therapies. Words like “multi modal” and “traditional integrity in healing” are words she is known for. Her followers read up on her reviews, published in glorious magazines, of spas across the world, vicariously imagining the glamour of this beautiful looking woman’s life.. And now it seems she has spilled the beans..or has she?

Judy Chapman has self possessed beauty, a calmness and stillness that alludes to deep thought but also closely kept secrets so we need stealth in order to get the answer to the question it seems all readers of the book are wanting to ask.

Invited to dinner with other friends from Bryon days the conversation starts with the input of others, the telling of tales no less revealing yet Judy remains discreet. The subject veers into the familiar subject of white girls living in Asia, one friend professed not to have ever taken “A Singapore Lover” while another, long term resident of a much larger city talks about the “Friday night mind fuck.”

This phenomenon occurs when women meet men with whom they enjoy a deeply stimulating intellectual debate, firing on all cylinders brilliant brain exchange only to discover, and just when the stars are seeming to align that, oh hey, they are married to a very much younger woman, who are, more often than not, from the region.. This warms the young authoress, this subject of married men. All at the table know what it is like to find out the man promising us the moon has already given it to someone else. “What I wanted to do” she explained “Is follow that journey in a fiction, to explore it from the perspective of some like myself, though not obviously myself, and apply the thought processes and motivations of dealing with a loving, yet clandestine and morally questionable relationship, and create characters who go on a journey together, that I suppose due to my attitude, ultimately redeem themselves through their learning. This idea had to work in contrast with the other aspect of the book where the career path is the correct, expected one, but in a way all wrong, and the one that is wrong, the affair is actually the one that sets the character on the right path to the final resolution. I wanted to have this tension, which is quite common, that exists in the need for recognizable success through avenues that are in some way in conflict with a desired way to be.. The competitiveness of any industry provokes a negative as well as positive response and the accumulation of wealth for it’s own sake can be empty, just like a luxury hotel room it is something you can’t really own, and you end up looking out over beautiful cities, but alone.”

So you aren’t the main character after all..?

“No, but in away, yes, I am all of them, but not in a specific way, I wanted characters in the book that I could relate to, aspects of me, of people who had inspired me, even negative

traits that had pushed me to go further, and also in recognition that the complexity of one human being, and being aware of interconnectedness, is reflected in the actions and reaction of others. The “Lover” is a very kind man, he is supportive but he also honors, and this has the effect of creating confidence. The friends in the novel encourage Sarah, that can be empowering, and they are also accepting and cautionary, this is something friends do, they want the best for you, and if they see danger signs they will tell you, but they won’t stop you at the lights.”

Well no because in Singapore it’s illegal to cross at red lights....

“Singapore gets such a bad rap sometimes, obviously it has it’s detractors, but any place there is beauty and culture it has to break through, it is in the people, and the weather and the combination of what is not just shopping malls, it is how people live in this multicultural world of Singapore that has such a wealth of different experiences. The Asian culture, the importance of family and history is there, it may be seen from the outside as over urbanized but it has a very tender and beautiful heart.”

The novel’s setting is a mostly hotel suites..

“Yes, we should write what we know..and I know hotel suites. I have worked in the spa and hotel industry for a long time now and am happily familiar with the insides of some of the most beautiful hotels in the world, and I thought it might be fun to create a character who’s sense of displacement is such that even her inability to live in an apartment play a part in her journey. The idea was that the hotel suite represented her unfamiliarity with, or her reluctance to create, ‘home’. It links to her sense of childhood abandonment, another issue I think is common, that something comes along and before you know it, as a child you are being drawn along into an experience you are not that comfortable with. For my character it was her father leaving, and also having an alternative upbringing.”

Now that is interesting, because you were brought up in contrasting worlds. Melbourne and Byron..

“True, Melbourne, school, proper clothes, Byron, hippy kids, so many of us at that time were caught in this world of our parents ‘discovering’ themselves and seeking alternatives to the conformity and unlike a younger generation who grew up once the transition had taken place we grew up very much aware of both worlds, which, when I think of where we have all ended up, where we have travelled to and how we have, the majority of us, challenged both realities it makes me grateful to have had those experiences.

And I think this is what writing brought to me, a sense of gratitude that I have been able to realize this dream I had as a young girl to write a story that reflects but not details all the amazing experiences I have had ..and its my hope that maybe just one person by reading it feels that same sense of gratitude for their own experiences and at the same time motivated to do as my character, Sarah, did, follow their heart.