



Deaths of mother and daughter remain a mystery

By David Melsome

The deaths of a mother and daughter in a flat in East Finchley remain a mystery after a coroner said he was “at a loss” to explain how they died.

Zarin Adatia, 84, and her daughter Tasneem, 48, were found in their home in Prospect Ring, N2, last November by gas inspectors, six months after they were last seen. An inquest at North London Coroner’s Court last month heard there was no suicide note or any signs of forced entry and the rent on the flat had paid regularly each month.

Tasneem, who suffered from diabetes, cared for her mother, who was immobile. However, post-mortem examinations could find no cause of death, while a toxicology report could not be carried out due to the passage of time.

Concerns over months

The BBC reported that neighbours became concerned for the welfare of the Kenyan-born pair in April last year, but it was initially assumed they had gone on holiday. Gas inspectors sent six letters, made three phone calls and knocked on the door three times between last September and the day they were found on 24 November.

Met PC Asad Iqbal said the gas engineers had obtained a

court warrant to force entry into the property and, on arrival, found the lifeless remains of the mother and daughter. Tasneem’s mobile phone, which was on charge, was found on a table next to her and fans in the room were switched on.

Coroner’s comments

Assistant coroner Peter Straker told family members at the inquest: “It is an incredibly difficult case to get any handle on, to get any understanding on. I am left purely with speculation and I am not entitled to speculate as to what may have happened.

“When I read of your mother and how they were found I was left thinking about carbon monoxide, gas safety but there was no evidence of that being a contributory factor.

“I had a glancing thought towards suicide but found nothing to suggest that was a reasonable explanation. It is very difficult to think of anything that is not speculation and even natural causes might be speculation. I am at a loss. I don’t know what to say.”

The coroner recorded an open verdict.



Cat friends: Author Vicky Martin, second from right, and staff at Oak Lodge School celebrate the launch of their collaborative book project, below. Photo Oak Lodge School

What’s it like to be an autistic girl?

By Ruth Anders

What does it mean to be an autistic girl? Read *Everything Starts with a Dot*, and you’ll get a vivid idea. This delightful novel is the result of an ambitious two-year collaboration between a mixed age autistic girls’ group at East Finchley’s Oak Lodge School, the charity Community Focus, author Vicky Martin and illustrator Georgia Cowley. Vicky and the girls wrote the novel in year one, and over the past year they’ve adapted it into a play.

The idea was to create a female character who represented the groups’ own feelings and experiences, using improvisation, drawing and writing workshops. Other key themes include family relationships, bereavement, radio station Magic FM and cats, so there’s



who is not autistic but has anger management issues, is very difficult for me as I’m much more chilled by nature than she is. But the project has given me heaps more confidence.”

Raising awareness of autism

Assistant headteacher Rebecca O’Connell said: “We’re all so proud of this project. It raises awareness about autism without in any way being sensational.”

Funded by John Lyon’s charity, the play will be performed by members of the Oak Lodge girls’ group and others at North Finchley’s Arts Depot on Monday 17 July for an invited audience. To buy the book, visit The Lodge school shop, 132 East End Road, N2, in person, or go online to [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) and search ‘Everything Starts with a Dot’.



In demand: Fantasy author Alice Chao has published her debut novel set in Shanghai

Bidding war for author’s debut novel

By Justin Csaky

East Finchley author Alice Chao’s debut novel was published by Hodder and Stoughton on 1 June after a five-way auction for the work. Brimming with passion, fury and unforgettable characters, *Shanghai Immortal* is a richly imaginative adult fantasy teeming with Chinese deities and demons cavorting in Jazz Age Shanghai.

Alice is a Chinese-Canadian author of fantasy. She’s fascinated by the interplay between self-perceived versus imposed identity and how this intersects with belonging and enjoys exploring these spaces in her stories.

A recovering lawyer and Chi-

nese steamed bun enthusiast, she knits to soothe anxiety and has a deep abiding love for Japanese Hobonichi planner books and kawaii planner stickers. Alice lives in the county roads in East Finchley and says the warmth and sense of community was so welcoming when she first

arrived that it made her feel at home straightaway. She also credits the coffee at Campbell and Syme’s on Fortis Green, N2, for getting her through some writing deadlines.

You can find out more about Alice at www.aychao.com and on Twitter and Instagram @ay_chao

plenty in the mix.

Lili Barcroft, project manager at Community Focus, told *The Archer*: “Live performance makes autism accessible for everyone, and some of the dialogue is taken verbatim from the students’ improvisations. This story smashes stereotypes. The creative process has been meaningful for everyone involved, teaching them all sorts of new skills. The project should have a future.”

Student actor Carol, who plays one of the leading characters, told us: “Playing Violet,

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