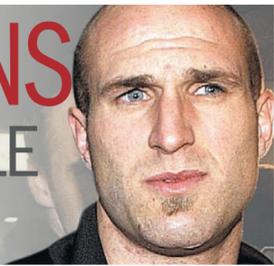


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Murder hunt after grim find

Missing for nine days, the body of Qian Xun's mother is found in the boot of her husband's car

By DAN OAKES

AN INTERNATIONAL murder hunt is under way after the mother of the little girl abandoned in Melbourne was found dead in the boot of a car outside her Auckland home.

The body of Anan Liu, 27, was in the boot for at least a week, including two days during which police and journalists went to and from the home she shared with three-year-old Qian Xun and husband Nai Yin Xue, 54.

A friend of Mr Xue told *The Age* last night that he had spoken in the past about killing his wife, but that friends had tried to talk him out of it.

New Zealand police, who defended the delay in opening the boot, say they are working with Interpol to find the publisher and martial arts expert. He flew to Los Angeles on Saturday after abandoning his daughter at Southern Cross Station. But US police said yesterday that no warrant had been issued for his arrest.

LA Police said said without formal notification, no action could be taken.

Mr Xue's friend said he mentioned killing his wife "a little bit", "but we never knew whether he would do it or not."

"Nobody could know for sure that he would do it. As a friend, you could only try to give him some help, to make him not think of the bad things. He said he felt no hope and that he felt he was being played by his wife, that she didn't really like him or love him."

The friend said Mr Xue, who was suffering financial difficulties, believed his wife had married him for money. Ms Liu described herself on her blog as separated and childless.

The friend said that until Ms Liu's body was found, friends had not wanted to speculate on whether Mr Xue killed his wife,

INSIDE

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theage.com.au

■ Hear New Zealand police announce the gruesome discovery and watch a video report on the investigation

but that they had been "99 per cent sure".

A neighbour of Ms Liu and Mr Xue told yesterday of a loud fight between the couple the day before Ms Liu disappeared. "I thought, 'That's violence, that's a violent relationship,'" neighbour Stephanie Pederson told New Zealand's Prime News.

Mr Xue had a conviction for assaulting his wife last year. *The Age* revealed on Tuesday that he held a large kitchen knife to her stomach and "threatened to kill her for not returning his love". He then bashed her, leaving her right eye swollen and bruised and her nose bloody.

Mr Xue, accompanied by Qian Xun, reportedly visited a police station in Auckland last Thursday to pick up his passport and a sword that had been confiscated after he was convicted of domestic violence offences.

Police said yesterday the whereabouts of the ceremonial sword was not known.

Ms Liu spent some time living in a women's shelter in Auckland last year and at one stage fled to China, where her parents live, to escape her husband, before returning.

After being told of her daughter's death, Ms Liu's mother, Liu Xiaoping, told New Zealand television: "No matter what has happened to Anan, we must take Qian Xun back. I, my husband and my family, we want her to grow healthy. That is our biggest

► Continued **PAGE 4**



Childhood innocence: Qian Xun Xue, nicknamed Pumpkin, at play in New Zealand.



SEPTEMBER 10
Anan Liu last seen alive



SEPTEMBER 15
Dumped at Southern Cross



SEPTEMBER 17
International manhunt



SEPTEMBER 19
Body found in the boot

Liu and Xue 'not happy in life'

By DANIELLA MILETIC
AUCKLAND

CARS were a theme in the break-up of Anan Liu's marriage. They would also become a theme in her death.

Upon returning with her daughter from Wellington last month, Ms Liu had two demands for her husband before she gave her marriage, and her life in Auckland, a second chance.

The first was that he rent office space so that he was not at their Mount Roskill home all the time.

The second demand was a car. Friends say Ms Liu believed having her own car would give her independence and freedom.

Her requests were met. Her husband, Nai Yin Xue, moved his business base to a new office and bought her a small white hatchback.

But the marriage still suffered, friends of Mr Xue said. "Mr Xue was still not happy in life, she also not happy in life," one said.

From Monday, outside the battered white weatherboard house in which she once lived, police, neighbours and journalists circled the other family car — a silver Honda with *Chinese Times* written on the side. It was the work car of Mr Xue, a magazine publisher.

All the while, her body was in the boot.

Even on Tuesday, when police tape was used to cordon off the house, the car was left out of the crime scene, still parked on the kerb.

From the time New Zealand detectives first learned of her
► Continued **PAGE 4**

In Ruddy health, despite dodgy ticker

By MICHELLE GRATAN, CAROL NADER and BRENDAN NICHOLSON

KIM Beazley was accused of having no ticker, and now Kevin Rudd had to answer questions about the state of his ticker.

The man who would be PM revealed last night that, about 15 years ago, he had an operation to replace his aortic valve with one from another person.

He said the faulty valve was caused by childhood rheumatic fever, that the operation was "a standard procedure" and he'd been "fit as a fiddle ever since".

According to heart specialists, Mr Rudd would eventually need another valve, possibly within 10 years. But Mr Rudd says he has received no such indication from his doctors.

He went public about his operation yesterday after details were leaked to Channel Nine.

Labor suspects the story was leaked by pro-Coalition sources, and that it is part of a wider push to smear Mr Rudd. It came in the same week that Nationals senator Barnaby Joyce tried unsuccessfully to table documents about an alleged cover-up in Queensland when Mr Rudd

worked for the Goss government.

And it surfaced on the same day Mr Rudd was caught out not knowing details of the income tax scales, prompting a withering attack on his economic credentials by Treasurer Peter Costello.

A spokesman for Mr Rudd said Labor did not know the source of the leak on his health.

Commenting on the leak, Mr Rudd told *The Age*: "Politics seems to be getting rougher and rougher and more personal. It's a very tough business... but I'm a very tough person."

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said he had never heard

of Mr Rudd's health problem. "I see him day in and day out and he looks perfectly healthy to me," he told the ABC's *Lateline*.

Mr Rudd told Channel Nine that many people had a similar operation. "It was out of an abundance of caution that I think they recommend this happen 14, 15 years ago," he said.

Chris Merry, a cardiac surgery fellow at the Royal Children's Hospital, said it seemed Mr Rudd had had a procedure called a homograft. He said about 50 per cent of people would need it replaced after 15 years. "Maybe

► Continued **PAGE 11**

Detective quits in corruption leak row

By NICK MCKENZIE and PAUL AUSTIN

A SENIOR detective from one of Victoria Police's most sensitive units has resigned following allegations he leaked details of a corruption inquiry.

The sergeant worked in the police human source management unit, which safeguards against the mismanagement or corrupt use of informers. He is believed to have tipped off an associate about the probe by the Office of Police Integrity.

The revelation comes after *The Age* reported last week that



two taskforces are investigating evidence allegedly linking corrupt police to underworld killings, and as political pressure mounts on Premier John Brumby to join NSW, Queensland and Western Australia by setting up an independent anti-corruption watchdog in Victoria.

It is believed the former detective learnt of the OPI's interest in the force's handling of

informers after it requested information from a colleague.

He is then alleged to have warned an associate of the OPI's activities, a move a source close to the detective said was driven by poor judgement and "blind loyalty", not corrupt intent.

His resignation is likely to embarrass Victoria Police, which implemented major reforms in 2001 aimed at integrity-proofing officers' use of informers.

A senior police source also criticised the OPI for the way it approached the human source unit for information, saying the watchdog had clumsily

flagged its interest in the area. A Victoria Police spokesman yesterday confirmed the detective had resigned, but would not comment further. The OPI declined to comment.

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu told Parliament yesterday that earlier revelations in *The Age* showed that Victoria needed an independent, broad-based commission to "tackle the blight of corruption". Unlike interstate bodies, the OPI cannot investigate organised crime or corruption in the public sector unless it involves police.

► Continued **PAGE 8**

WEATHER

MELBOURNE Mostly cloudy with a few showers clearing during the early afternoon. Moderate to fresh west to south-west winds easing during the morning.

Min 10 Max 16

TOMORROW Few showers
SATURDAY Fine
SUNDAY Fine
MONDAY Mainly fine

Min 9 Max 20
Min 7 Max 19
Min 7 Max 21
Min 10 Max 18
► Details **PAGE 26**

WATER

MELBOURNE'S DAMS CAPACITY
39.3%

ODD SPOT

A great-grandmother, 70, from Utah pleaded not guilty to charges of failing to water her lawn and resisting arrest. *The Salt Lake Tribune* reports that Betty Perry fell and hurt her nose when confronted by an officer from the Orem police's Neighbourhood Preservation Unit in July.

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