

UNDER THEIR NOSES



PICTURE TAKEN AT 9AM SEPTEMBER 18.

PICTURES PETER WARD, HERALD SUN AND DEAN PURCELL

- The boot of the abandoned car outside a house in Keystone Ave, Mt Roskill, was the most obvious of places.
- And yet it took 45 hours from the time police first went to the street before those searching for An An Xue (above) looked inside.
- When they finally got around to it, they found the body of a woman that must have been there for at least six days.
- Why it took them so long is just one of many questions arising from a sensational case that in some ways resembles the Keystone Kops.

by Elizabeth Binning
police reporter

Police said last night they were making no apologies for the time it took to find the body of an Asian woman in the boot of a car they had seized 16 hours earlier.

A warrant to seize the Honda Rafaga was granted at 9pm on Tuesday night but police did not find the body, believed to be that of missing woman An An Liu, until 1pm yesterday during a forensic examination.

The car, registered to Ms Liu's fugitive husband Nai Yin Xue, had been parked outside their Mt Roskill home since at least Monday.

Detective Senior Sergeant Simon Scott said the delay was a result of police conducting a "thorough inquiry here and doing thorough investigations".

Mr Scott said police spent Tuesday trying to obtain a search warrant for the car but it was not granted until 9pm.

It then took a further two hours before the car was towed to a secure location.

Yesterday morning the forensic examination was delayed "a little bit longer than it usually would" be, while police underwent a briefing on the case, which included bringing staff new to the inquiry up to speed.

Mr Scott said once under way the forensic examination had to be carried out according to procedure.

"We haven't had the keys for that vehicle. It's just not a matter of breaking the windows and getting in."

He said the examinations were not as easy as shown in television programmes such as CSI.

"These things don't take minutes, they could take days or weeks. We are wanting to do a thorough investigation into that



FOUND: Detective Senior Sergeant Simon Scott reveals the body find.

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

- The police first visited the Keystone Ave house at 4pm on Monday but did not obtain a warrant to search the car until 9pm the next day.
- Even then they did not search the boot for a further 16 hours.
- Police still will not confirm whether they have sought an arrest warrant so that Nai Yin Xue can be actively tracked down.
- The Chinese Embassy and police say they are ready and willing to help but have had no contact from the New Zealand police. Why not?
- NZ police did not identify the family when the story first broke on Monday because the inquiry was being run from Australia. Yet it was obvious that An An Xue was in harm's way.

PICTURE / RICHARD ROBINSON

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vehicle and we are not going to be rushed," he said. "We are working for An An and her family and we want to gather the evidence and prosecute the offender and that's what we are going to do."

Police Deputy Commissioner Operations Rob Pope said he also had every confidence in the investigation team.

"There are many forensic and legal requirements to be taken into account when dealing with an item of potential evidential value. Following proper process in these matters can be critical to the conclusion of any trial process."

Auckland City Police spokeswoman Noreen Hegarty said "we don't just go busting into things".

"We have to make sure we are in a very

secure area where any evidence is not going to be contaminated, where there's not going to be any people who are offended or distressed by what we might uncover. We needed to make absolutely sure that the processes that we used are correct.

"Our staff, including myself, have been working exceedingly long hours to make sure this investigation is carried out appropriately. We are not going to fall into the trap of fitting into the general population's agenda. What we need to do is do things properly. Like I said, there is no apologies for doing the job right."

When asked if there was a chance the woman might have been alive but died in the time it took for police to open the boot, Ms Hegarty said: "I'm not going to specu-

late on that but we haven't had any reported sightings of An An since 4.35 last Tuesday."

Auckland defence lawyer Barry Hart last night criticised the time police took to obtain the search warrant and find the body, saying it appeared "slack".

Mr Hart said warrants could be granted by a Justice of the Peace if police had "reasonable grounds" to conduct a search.

"In my experience police get search warrants often when they've got very little evidence to justify it, so it seems absolutely ridiculous if they're suggesting that it took a lot of time and it's a great formal process when in reality it's not... it sounds to me that they've just been a bit slack."

— additional reporting Stuart Dye

Wife An An's blog reveals sorrow and longing for love

On what may have been the last night of her life, An An Liu wrote about how her life was full of disappointments and how it was too hard to find someone who loved her.

The 27-year-old mother sat at her computer in the middle of the night writing on her blog in a tone that suggested she was upset by her fate and unhappy with her life.

Two weeks earlier she had sat at the same computer terminal, confessing that she'd had a relationship with a married man who had a 2-year-old child.

The blog gives an insight into Annie Liu's life, which appears to have ended as early as Tuesday last week.

In her last entry, made the day before, she wrote: "In this world, most of us have a lot of hard times; we struggle for living with exceeding loneliness."

She also wrote: "If a happy start have to end with pains, I rather I never had those happiness. Therefore, I wont need to remember those happy moments and those painful experiences."

The first of three blog entries is dated July 12. The second is dated August 29 and details how she had spent two months with a married man in Wellington, but left him a week before his wife returned.

An An wrote: "He is married and has a two-year-old daughter, which determines our relationship is merely temporary. We lived together like a happy family for almost two months. I found out that I fell in love with this guy."

She came back to Auckland and is believed to have moved back in with her

husband Nai Yin Xue, a man with whom she has a history of domestic violence.

The most recent blog was written at around midnight on September 10.

An An's blogs were accompanied by photos of various events including the Boobs on Bike parade, festivals, art shows and the Auckland marathon. The pictures also showed her at the Viaduct, with her daughter and other relatives.

Translator Berry Zheng told the Herald her overall impression of the blogs was that of a sad, lonely woman.

"It's really sad. Her feeling is really sad. She is upset and quite disappointed with everything."

The body of an Asian woman — presumed to be An An Liu — was found yesterday in the boot of 54-year-old Mr Xue's car.

But police are refusing yet to call Mr Xue a suspect, instead making a plea for him to get in touch with them.

"There's a New Zealand police website. You can find our telephone number."

The inquiry head, Detective Senior Sergeant Simon Scott, yesterday said Mr Xue — understood to have fled to the United States — could find a contact number on the New Zealand Police website.

"Please telephone us because we just want to get to the bottom of this," he said.

Mr Scott said police were working with Interpol to find Mr Xue in the United States.

But a Los Angeles police spokesman told TV3 that Interpol had not issued a warrant

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