



# GIRLFRIENDS CLUB

S A I G O N



**A SCRIPTED ANTHOLOGY SERIES**

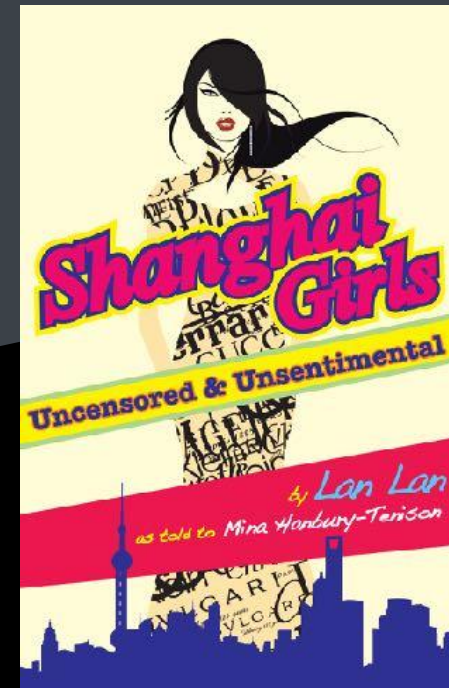
# A NEW NARRATIVE ANTHOLOGY SERIES

based on Mina Hanbury-Tenison's  
self-help book

## ***SHANGHAI GIRLS*** ***Uncensored & Unsentimental***

Logline:

CC, a young Asian-American adoptee, goes to Vietnam in search of her birth mother, but quickly gets swept into the Girlfriend's Club – a jet-setting clique of ladies with a take-no-prisoners approach to living the good life.



# THE WORLD

The series provides a glimpse into this outrageous, yet fascinating matriarchal society—Vietnamese & international alike— at play, love, and work against the dynamic metropolis of Saigon -- a vibrant city filled with glitzy skyscrapers, private clubs, and quaint back alleys. With its French colonial historic buildings juxtaposed against gleaming, modern towers, Vietnam's richest city is the ultimate playground for ambitious women.

In this highly competitive, materialistic world, money & power are the ultimate goals—while beauty, marriage and so-called love are merely expedient tools to achieve them.



# TONE/MOOD

The show is a mixologist cocktail of the frenetic, monied Asian world of *Crazy Rich Asians* with a twist of biting cultural commentary like *White Lotus*. Our show will unveil a glamorous but ruthless society where two very different value systems clash, as CC struggles to reconcile her desires to make it as a fashion PR maven and find her birth mother against the unsentimental rules of the Girlfriends Club. The series revels in the audacious antics of these women but always comes back to the heart of the show—the camaraderie that develops between CC and her Girlfriends, creating a “family” unlike any she’s ever experienced.



# THE INGENUE

CHLOE CHAO "CC" (20s)

A mixed-race, 20-something, with a sharp wit and ambitious demeanor, Chloe (CC) grew up in Savannah, GA as the only child of a white couple who adopted her from a Vietnam. Growing up among the South's cotillions and debutante balls, CC always felt that she was being groomed for a life that didn't quite suit her.

CC's family has always promised a big reunion in Saigon to learn more about where she came from, but this keeps getting conveniently postponed. CC decides to blow up her sheltered, structured, overachiever life when she hastily books a ticket to Saigon to take a coveted internship at an int'l PR agency and finally find her birth mother.





# THE O.G. GIRLFRIEND

LAN LAN (55)

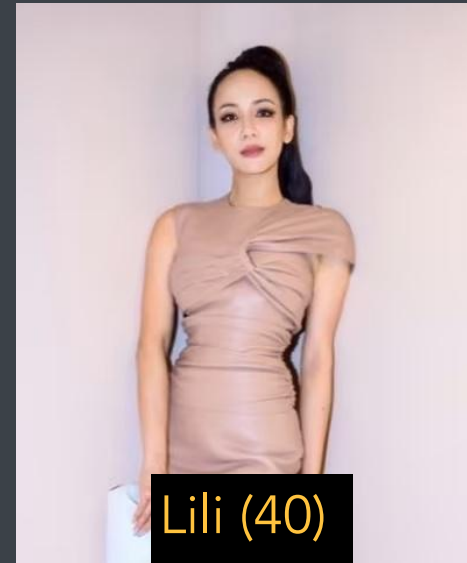
Lan Lan is the fabulously rich grande dame who takes our ingenue CC under her wing. CC reminds Lan Lan of her younger self, before she learned the ways of the world. Always immaculately decked out in expensive couture and accessorized with a Birkin bag from her vast collection (one in every color to match her outfit), Lan Lan can scan a room of a hundred people and see who is worth paying attention to. She is, after all, the queen of relationships and well-respected in Vietnamese society. Lan Lan looms large as a role model for the Girlfriends, who frequent her exclusive private club scouring for connections and opportunities. Famous for doling out choice advice to the Girlfriends, many of which get repeated as a legendary "rule", Lan Lan can be a tough and demanding mentor. Lan Lan is surprised to find that she develops a soft spot for CC, despite the girl's frustrating naivety and cluelessness. Their relationship becomes complicated when Lan Lan pieces together the identity of CC's birth mother.

# A FEW OF THE GIRLFRIENDS

Ting Ting is the plain Jane, who becomes CC's go-to BESTIE and big sister she never had. Stuck in a dead-end receptionist job at a small media company in the far-flung suburbs of Saigon, the ambitious Ting Ting is a Saigon Girl in training, desperate for an opportunity to break-out. Ting Ting advises CC on the day-to-day survival tactics of living in Vietnam and is thrilled to be CC's "plus one" at high-profile PR events. When CC cannot get through the bureaucratic red tape of her adoption, Ting Ting finds information via sneaky methods through her uncle's contacts.



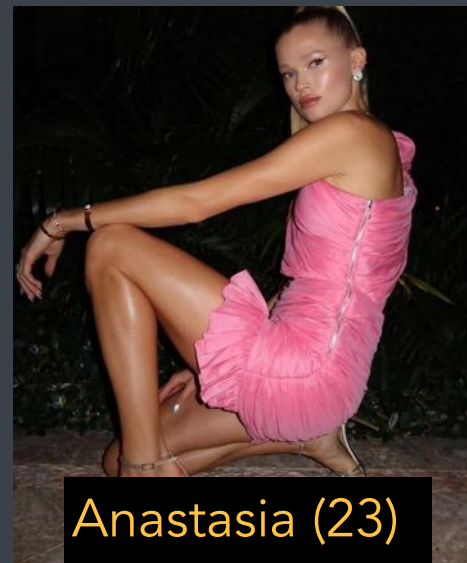
Ting Ting (28)



Lili (40)

Lili is a talented "sexpert," who doles out bedroom tips to the Girlfriends. Although Lili often seems hard and calculating, Lili is intensely loyal, lending money and even providing shelter to girlfriends in need. CC is drawn to Lili in a girl-crush kind of way and finds herself receiving unwanted sexual lessons from Lili, many of which makes her blush. Unbeknownst to CC, one of Lili's many sugar daddies is Ben's father.

Anastasia is CC's accidental flatmate at the AirBNB. She is a fast learner of the rules because she's a mail-order bride on the run after ditching her Singaporean husband. Even though they are very much the "odd couple" with CC's OCD neatness and Anastasia the walking tornado, they bond because they are both outsiders. Anastasia is also generous—often sharing her high-wattage designer outfits with CC and the Girlfriends, even giving CC a fierce makeover.



Anastasia (23)



Maribel (22)

Maribel, a struggling singer, supporting her clingy single mom by crooning jazz & blues oldies at Lan Lan's Club. Maribel is a talented singer/songwriter, just one hit single away from fame. CC is an instant fan of Maribel's amazing talent and introduces her to a young hard-up entrepreneur who is launching a digital music platform. But Maribel makes some very practical decisions about her career, which challenges her friendship with CC.

# THE LOVE INTEREST

BEN CHAU (28)

BEN is CC's hard-to-read, but dashing handsome co-worker. Initially, CC has a love-hate relationship with Ben when he is assigned to babysit her account after CC has disastrous misadventures at the film festival.

A workaholic, the soft-spoken Ben becomes CC's ally as he helps her navigate the ruthless culture at the agency. Born in Singapore, Ben comes from a very strict and uptight family and disapproves of the way CC has taken up with the fast circle of Girlfriends.

Ben keeps his feelings close to the vest while CC, as his polar opposite, wears her heart on her sleeve and takes huge risks as she goes through life with no filters. CC develops a serious crush on Ben, but the Girlfriends advise her against it: Ben is a dud: no money and no assets. Of course, the Girlfriends have no idea about Ben's very private but extremely wealthy family back in Singapore and the fact that the PR firm is owned by Ben's family.





# THE PILOT STORY

CC arrives in Saigon – a hot mess and thrown into work at the premiere of a Korean historical drama film at an international festival. When she misses the shuttle, she gets lucky and manages to hitch a ride in a Lamborghini driven by a 58-year-old princeling WU, who drives like a lunatic to the film festival. Before he leaves, he insists on connecting with CC online on Zalo. Inside, CC is mobbed by the Girlfriends who saw her step out from the Lamborghini, asking how she managed to meet the most flamboyant billionaire in town. When CC receives Wu's dinner invitation over Zalo, they convince her to accept, promising they will all come over and join her after the first course.

But when the MBA (Married But Available) princeling has to leave dinner early to appease his wife, CC is left holding the exorbitant \$8K bill. The other ladies size up the situation quickly and make an excuse to leave one by one. A sophisticated older woman, Lan Lan, shows up to rescue CC from the maitre'd and so begins CC's introduction to the Girlfriends Club.





# THE SEASON ARCS

In Season 1, CC falls into many misadventures as she is swept up in the wild Saigon scene. She is embraced by Lan Lan and the Girlfriends, who become CC's confidantes and advisors as she tries to survive her fiercely dog-eat-dog work environment and the impossible assignments. CC and the Girlfriends connect often at Lan Lan's club and at exclusive black-tie events but also on Sunday afternoons at Lan Lan's tea gatherings where quieter moments create more intimate connections between CC and the Girlfriends.

As CC learns from her girlfriends, she also develops a growing attachment to Ben, which creates friction between CC and the girls. CC eagerly begins the search for her birth mother but comes to a dead end when she finds that the adoption agency closed almost a decade ago and she can't manage to extract any information behind the red tape and secrecy. Just when it seems impossible to continue, Ting Ting comes to her aid and manages to wring some information through underhanded means.

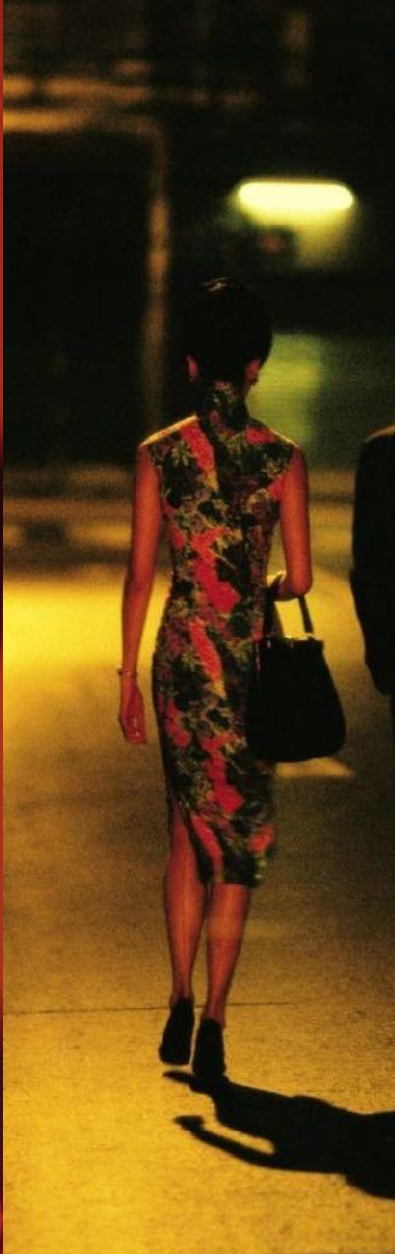
Each episode is framed thematically by rules taken from the book such as Rule #1 'Be Unsentimental' when CC learns what it means to become a Saigon girl and Rule #5 'Think Hard Assets' where CC's roommate Anastasia trades up out of their shared Airbnb to a luxury condo, leaving CC in a lurch.

# THE SEASON ARCS

In “Find a Starter Boyfriend,” Lan Lan gives CC and Ting Ting plum advice at the Vietnam Fashion Week opening night party. CC is unable to follow the rule—choosing not to string along married billionaire Wu for more connections and money— as she begins to fall for her colleague Ben. Meanwhile, Ting Ting follows Lan Lan’s rule to a tee and hooks up with a wealthy, nearly geriatric Singaporean developer.

The sexpot Lili shows CC how to “Fake a Career,” when she demonstrates that a fake business card with a snazzy website AND adrenaline-level confidence is all one needs to convince investors to pour money into her new livestream shopping business. Taking this lesson to heart, CC takes on Lili as her first side-hustle PR client and creates a new name card and website for her private PR agency—and finds several clients instantly.





## THE SEASON ARCS

CC witnesses Maribel's own difficult choice with her pregnancy in "Jumping Ship" and realizes she's been too distracted by the Girlfriends' world and returns to her pursuit of finding her birth mother, and that puts her on a collision course with Lan Lan.

By the finale, Lan Lan pieces together whom CC's mother might be and consents to arrange for CC to see the birth mother at the Grand Prix in Singapore. It turns out that CC's birthmother is not Vietnamese at all, but a fellow Chinese girlfriend of Lan Lan's who decided to have the child in Vietnam while visiting her primary school friend to escape notice in China.

After decades of no contact, Lan Lan's meeting with her old classmate goes poorly and Lan Lan signals that CC should leave, but CC decides to: "Break All the Rules." CC is shocked when the mother lists the conditions of their possible future relationship—that CC will never be acknowledged but they might meet once or twice a year—all on the birth mother's terms and with no room for CC's needs. Lan Lan comes to CC's rescue and together they walk out without paying the bill. Lan Lan repeats the first rule of Saigon Girls: "Be Unsentimental," but CC hesitates. As CC looks around the glamour and glitz, she wonders: what should I do? Do I stay or do I go? Ben catches sight of her and offers her a ride. The romance might be back on again but now Ben's mother Fanny realizes her son is in love...

# ABOUT LAN LAN & THE CHINESE DIASPORA



The story will not mention overtly but will hint at the fact that Lan Lan is a Vietque, an overseas Vietnamese. Although she seems completely Vietnamese to those who do not know her well she still speaks basic Chinese and looks after a huge extensive network of friends and family from both Guangxi and Yunnan province who often need her help with immigration, money movement & investments in wider Asia, especially Southeast Asia.

In *Girlfriends*, we will get a glimpse of this life of Lan Lan and the Chinese elite/wealth/power diaspora and how they move money through all of Asia through nominees. This also explains why Lan Lan had been deeply involved with CC's birthmother and was the friend who came to her rescue when she had to give birth secretly. The birthmother now lives in Beijing behind elite government compounds and hides her billions of assets generated from the 'guanxi' of her top politician husband who is a member of the standing committee.



# THE OPPORTUNITY

Girlfriends Club is a global franchise that explores not a place, but a mindset. We begin the story in Saigon, but expand it to cities like Singapore and Tokyo or Taipei—wherever ambitious women congregate. The show celebrates a unique form of female empowerment and solidarity. It also gives the viewers a chance to enjoy a fantastic piece of scripted entertainment and get to know intimately places they have never experienced.

We see Girlfriends Club as a launching pad for multiple TV anthologies as well as a lifestyle brand offering limitless potential.

Are you ready to join the club?

# THE CREATORS



ANNA LIZA BELLA is an accomplished branded content pioneer and writer/producer based in Los Angeles with a breadth of experience across the entertainment/media industry, from television to film and digital platforms.

- Yale University and Baruch College MBA Alum
- Extensive experience with: Microsoft, MTV Networks, NBCUniversal, Sony Pictures TV, Opera, BMG Music, RCA Records, Tristar Pictures, Renaissance Pictures.
- Current projects with: Microsoft, HBO Max, Fuse, LFD Productions



MINA CHOI (a.k.a. Hanbury-Tenison) is a playwright, author and producer based in Ireland. Born in Seoul, she graduated from Yale University and spent over a decade in Shanghai, China.

- Worked with: Taurus GmbH (part of KirchGruppe) in independent film acquisition
- Top Columnist for Wall Street Journal China, Oriental Outlook; Author of Shanghai Girls: Uncensored
- Current projects: House Plays, Ireland



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# THE PRODUCERS

## IRENE TRINH

Irene Trinh is one of Vietnam's most prolific independent producers, having produced every major Asian-American director in Vietnam, producing 15 local feature films in the past 18 years she has lived in Vietnam. Notable films include: Timothy Linh Bui's DAYDREAMERS, Leon Le's SONG LANG, and Luu Huynh's THE LEGEND IS ALIVE. Originally from Toronto, Canada, where Irene earned her stripes serving as a program coordinator at The Toronto International Film Festival to becoming a Board Member of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, and Reel Diversity where Irene met, worked with and learned from some of the best Producers and Directors from all over the world.

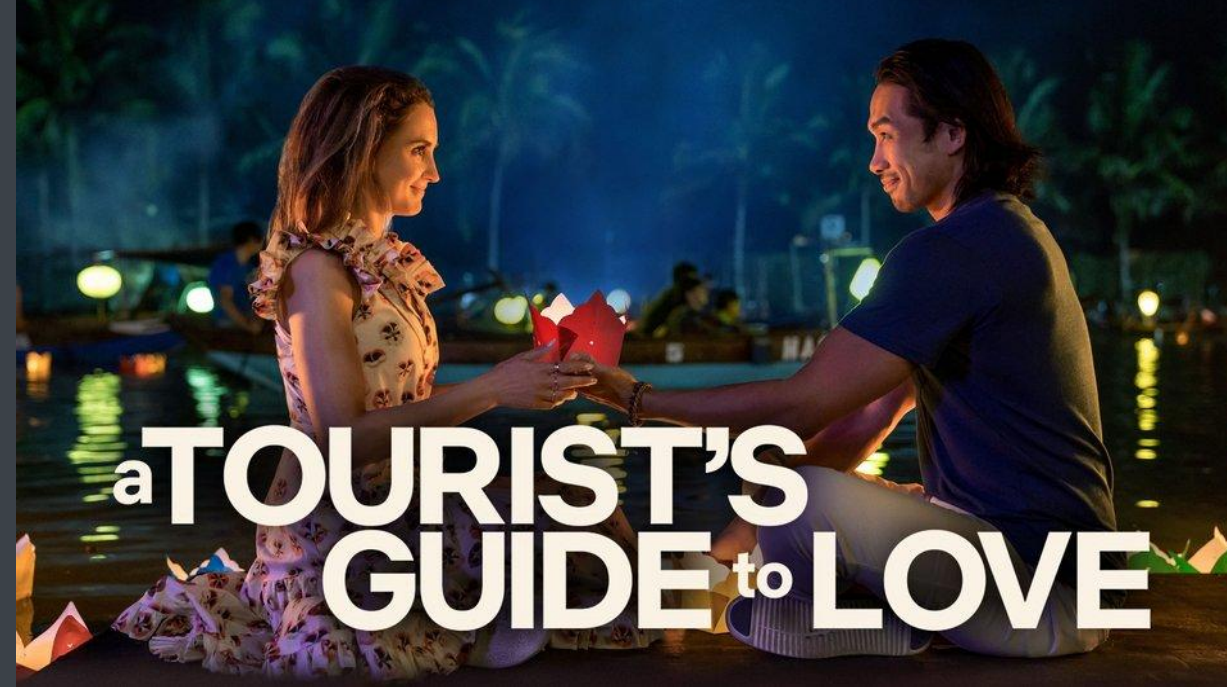
Irene has also line produced and/or was supervising producer on films such as: Netflix' A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO LOVE, Disney's ARTEMIS FOWL, Legendary Picture's KONG: SKULL ISLAND, as well as, TV episodics such as RAI Uno's mini series "Oriana" and 2 episodes of NBC's hit drama "This is Us."

## DUSTIN NGUYEN

Dustin Tri Nguyen is one of Hollywood's premiere Asian-American actors, having starred on hit TV shows "21 Jump Street," "Sequest DSV," and "VIP." He went on to star in films THE REBEL and THE MAN WITH THE IRON FISTS 2. In 2005, Dustin won the much sought after role in the critically acclaimed film LITTLE FISH starring opposite Academy-Award-winner Kate Blanchett. In 2008, Dustin starred in Justin Lin's FINISHING THE GAME which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

In more recent years, Dustin has transitioned to directing and producing films, with his directorial debut: ONCE UPON A TIME IN VIETNAM. These days, Dustin can be seen starring in and directing Justin Lin's series "Warrior" on Cinemax. Most recently, Dustin served as Consulting Producer for Netflix' A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO LOVE, currently #1 on Netflix worldwide.

A Bella Choi Made & Good Sunday Films & Refinery Media Production





# COMPOSER



## TIMO CHEN

Timo Chen is an Emmy-award winning Asian-American composer and multi-instrumentalist working often in the intersections of traditional, experimental, and world music. He has worked with many Hollywood film and television composers in a wide range of roles and projects from conductor, arranger, and additional music for shows such as the Netflix animated series *Samurai Rabbit: The Usagi Chronicles*, the Paramount+ anthology series *Why Women Kill*, the NBC comedy *Superstore*, and the Freeform romantic comedy *The Thing About Harry*. His music is also featured in Universal's *Unfriended: Dark Web*, Fox's Series *Lucifer*, and PBS's *62 Days*.

Timo's musical journey began at the USC Community School of Performing Arts (now the Colburn School) and continued at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He lived in Asia for several years studying Balinese Gamelan and Peking Opera while working as a session and touring guitarist and music director for Chinese recording artists Sandee Chan, Alex To, and Coco Lee. Timo further continued his conducting studies in 2018 when he was chosen as a fellow for the BMI Conducting Workshop in 2018. His working time is spent in his home studio in Los Angeles which also functions as a lab with hand-wired microphones, oscillators, and various altered instruments to create music with a unique sound in solid service of picture.

# THANK YOU!

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