

The Singapore Strain

The sci-fi thriller enthralls and provokes



THE SINGAPORE STRAIN

Publisher: Penguin
Random House SEA

Paperback

Pages: 280

‘Wake up, Carmine Chan,’ Larry urged Cory. ‘From this horrible nightmare?’

‘The nightmare began in 1986 when Chernobyl blew up. That represented everything that could go wrong if left to humans. Something had to be done. A new breed of human had to emerge. A genetically mutated human. Like you.’

‘What? I’m genetically mutated? I had Covid-19; I was in hospital. Did that mutate me?’

‘Maybe. Maybe not. Think of it as a positive side effect.’

‘Of what? The Delta Strain? The Omicron Strain?’

‘The Singapore Strain.’

‘There’s no Singapore Strain. Don’t bullshit me.’

‘There’re no alpha, beta, delta, gamma, omicron, or omega strains. They just pick letters from the Greek alphabet to name a new virus. Just assume you have the Singapore Strain.’

Cory pinched herself. ‘Hell, am I having a nightmare?’ she blinked. ‘Because you’re the first in the third-gen line of Dynaborgs, my dear.’ ‘Don’t call me “dear”!’ she thumped the nightstand in fury. ‘Get out. Dynaborg? Yeah, right.’ ‘Dynaborgs are humans with an altered DNA. We’re different from cyborgs, which are just cybernetic organisms.’

In a gripping narrative in his seminal book, *The Singapore Strain*, Raju Chellam cites the emergence of a strain of humans that is genetically

designed to redeem Nature, as governments across the world collide with citizens in savaging the environment in their single-minded pursuit of industrialisation and urbanisation. *The Singapore Strain* professes that new intelligence is required to combat such depredations as it gets increasingly clear that Man is in an inexorable battle against Nature to suit his purposes.

Following his medical thriller ‘Organ Gold’ where he explored the global racket in organ transplants facilitated by the illegal sale of human organs on the Dark Web, ‘The Singapore Strain’ positions Chellam as an author of distinction who informs and educates even as he provides an impetus for a global debate on grim issues. He has moreover authored ‘The Love Lockers’, a dystopian coming-of-age story.

Written in the alternate history genre, *The Singapore Strain* is a riveting narrative about an undiscovered strain of the Covid-19 virus that modifies a person’s DNA to create an extraordinary human. Drawing from his professional acumen for technology and medical science, Chellam imbues his work with authenticity as he reimagines a future of humanity that is not entirely implausible while disallowing the notion that a new distinct strain of humans emerging as a result of Covid-19 is improbable from a biological or scientific standpoint. Covid-19 after all is a viral disease that can and does mutate into different viral variants like Delta, Omicron, Alpha, Beta, Kappa, all of which affect severity, transmission, and immune evasion.

Chellam is the Editor-in-Chief of the AI Ethics and Governance Body of Knowledge, an initiative by the Singapore Computer Society and Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore, Honorary Chair of Cloud and



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He has been in the IT industry for the past 45 years, serving inter alia as Head of Big Data & Cloud Practice – as well as of Healthcare & Government Solutions – at Dell South Asia, Vice President of New Technologies at Fusionex Group, Managing Director of TechTrenders Asia, and APJ (Asia-Pacific Japan) Director of Communications at Hewlett-Packard. He writes a column on tech in *The Edge* (Malaysia), *Dataquest* (India) and

occasionally in *The Straits Times* (Singapore), apart from having been BizIT Editor of *The Business Times*, Singapore, for a decade.

The Singapore Strain enthralls and provokes as it captures the quintessential fears of the times we live in, whether artificial intelligence will redeem us or doom us and whether we as a human race will ever learn to live in harmony with our environment. ♦

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