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NEWS REPORT

Headline	Police baffled by prostitute murder mystery
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Within minutes of arriving at Sydney airport on September 6 last year, Chinese tourists Jenny and Susan had vanished. The two friends had flown in from Auckland, cleared Customs with the rest of their tour group, grabbed their bags and just disappeared. After two days sightseeing in Sydney, their tour group, led by China Merchants International Travel (Shenzhen), returned to China without them, their tour guide officially reporting them missing to the Department of Immigration on September 8.

It is now known the women, in their 30s, had stayed to work as freelance prostitutes in a number of brothels, adopting the Western names Jenny and Susan and applying for refugee status. They had sub-let a tiny partitioned room in an already overcrowded apartment in the downmarket Auburn Central apartments in Sydney's inner west. But two months later, on November 13, inside apartment 4606, the decomposing bodies of the women were found in their bed. The door to their tiny bedroom was locked and their throats had been cut.

Police said the attack was so vicious and inflicted such horrific injuries to the faces of the women that they could not use photographs to help them with identification. Yet no one in the apartment, where another 11 people lived, or in the surrounding units saw or heard anything.

In a chilling twist, the day their bodies were discovered, a Sydney pimp who places foreign prostitutes in local brothels was heard boasting about the deaths and using them as leverage. "Bad things happen to people who upset our people," he boasted.

The horrific murders have baffled NSW police. Detective Sergeant Jim Stewart is appealing for anyone with any information to come forward. Sergeant Stewart said there was no sign the women had been trafficked for sex slavery using the usual methods previously seen in Australia. And they fit the profile of a recent study of Chinese sex workers that revealed most of the women were over 30, likely to be married or have children, had never worked as prostitutes in China, and made their own arrangements to travel to Australia to work. However, elements of Jenny and Susan's story have raised questions about who might have paid for their vacation and why, and who met them at Sydney airport.

Sex industry sources say professional traffickers have changed their modus operandi to avoid Australia's anti-trafficking laws. They pay the woman's airfare and expenses, but she is free to do as she likes as long she repays the agreed amount. If not, pressure is exerted on the woman's family in her home country.

The issue of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of women was highlighted by a series of exposes in *The Weekend Australian* in 2003. The award-winning series resulted in the first charges being laid under the federal anti-trafficking laws that had been on the books since 1995.

The Weekend Australian has been told that Jenny was married and Susan was a widow with an eight-year-old daughter who she left behind with relatives. They lived in the remote rural areas of Yunnan province in China and worked as manual labourers in a factory earning about 500 yuan (\$100) a month. They travelled to Shenzhen looking for work and soon after joined the 10-day tour out of Hong Kong headed for Australia and New Zealand, which would have cost the women the equivalent of four years' wages. They flew to Brisbane then visited Melbourne, travelled to Auckland and then back to Sydney, where they disappeared. They found work in several illegal brothels in Sydney's southwest, and colleagues described them as happy, but naive and unworldly. Police say the women had several boyfriends each and it was one of them who discovered their bodies when he went to check on them.

Last week, in an effort to jog the memory of their neighbours, police distributed leaflets with Jenny's and Susan's photographs around the apartment complex where they lived and died. No one has come forward with any information. Even the staff in a Chinese supermarket just steps away from their apartment, and the place where the women were most likely to have shopped for food, denied ever seeing the pair.

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