

SHERLOCK SAM

and the CLOAKED
CLASSMATE in
MACRITCHIE

THE
FIENDISH
MASTERMIND
TRILOGY
BOOK 1



By
A.J.
LOW

SHERLOCK SAM and the CLOAKED CLASSMATE in MACRITCHIE



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LOCK

and the CLOAKED CLASSMATE
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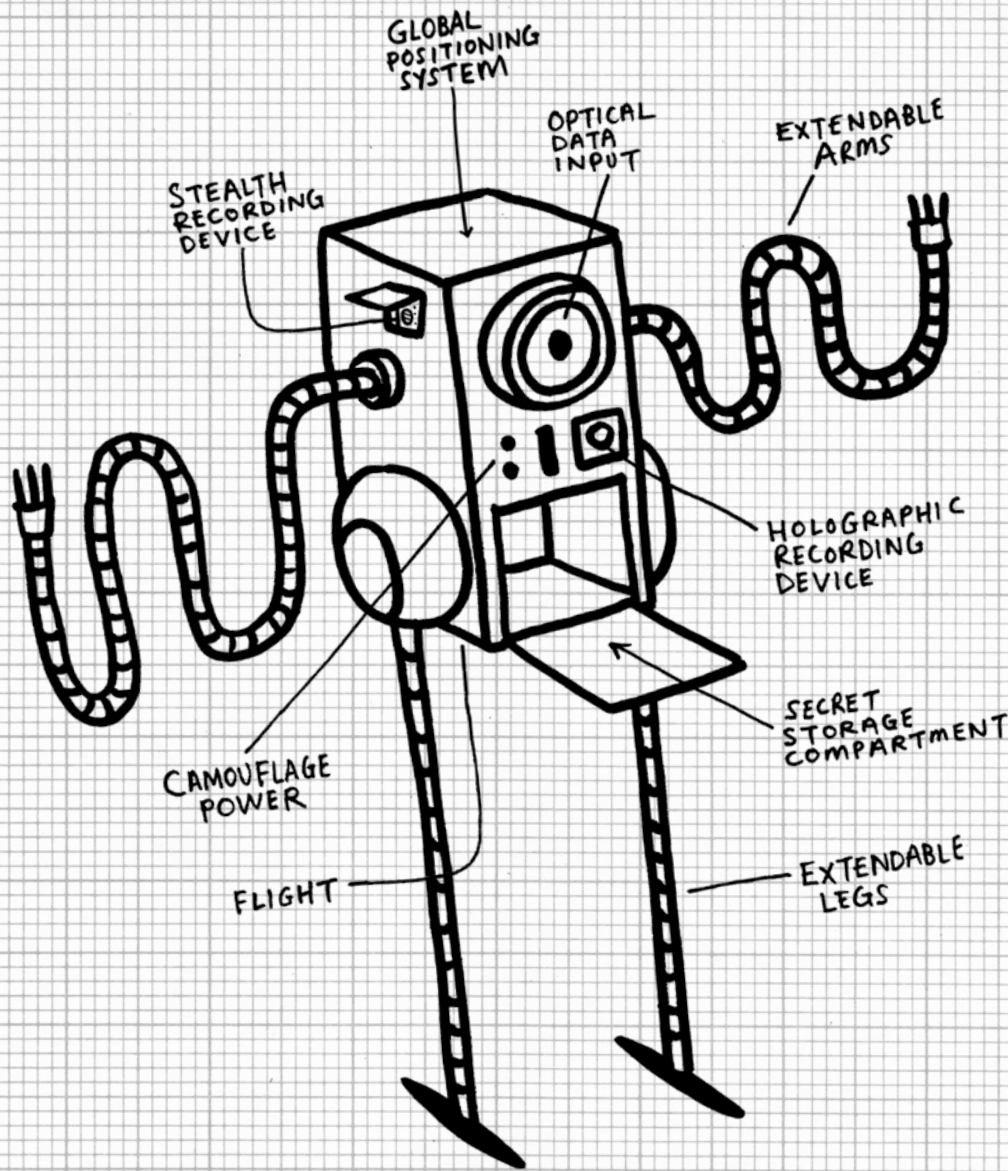
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**For the superheroes
who inspire us everyday.**





CHAPTER ONE

"Take-a-right-turn-at-the-next-traffic-light," Watson said.

"Er, thanks, Watson," Dad replied, half turning to look at Watson in the back seat, "but I've sent you guys to school before. I know my way."

"You-have-missed-the-right-turn," Watson said in his usual monotone as we zoomed past the traffic light—and beyond the entrance to our primary school.

"DAD!" Wendy and I burst out. Watson sat between us. I had never been late for school before, thanks to Mom's F1 racer-level driving skills. I really did not want to start today.

"Oops," Dad said, grinning at Mom, who sat in the passenger seat. She sighed and shook her head.

"Luckily, I made sure we left fifteen minutes earlier," she muttered under her breath. "Also, why did you ask Sam to install a directional program in Watson if you were just going to ignore it?"

"Watson, recalculate our new route, taking into account Dad's slower reaction time," I said. I could hear a soft whirring sound coming from Watson. He seemed to be doing as I had instructed, but with Watson being who he is, you could never be certain. He might have been using his internal fan to cool his circuit board for all I knew.

Mom patted Dad on the shoulder when he

turned to squint at me disgruntledly. "Keep your eyes on the road, dear. If not, you'll miss the next turn."

Dad gave a long-suffering sigh and made a U-turn at the next turning.

I was very proud of the new GPS program I had installed in Watson the night before. Not only was it voice-activated, it also had a voice-recognition function that, well, recognised voices. For example, if Mom was the one who activated the GPS program, Watson would immediately select the routes with the fewest traffic lights even if they were longer because that was her preference. However, one user feedback I received was a complaint about Watson's monotonous voice. Mom said he droned on and on and made the journey seem unbearably long. Plus, she said that he added unnecessary commentary too: "Please-do-not-press-the-brake-like-you-have-the-foot-of-an-elephant." Also, I was beginning to suspect

he purposely mispronounced the names of locations for comedic effect. I wasn't laughing.

Dad was driving today because he had been invited to give a presentation to kick off our annual Science Week. Officially, it started next Monday, but because Dad could only get Friday morning off from work, our principal made an exception. I think it's because he's a genius engineer and also very funny (not always on purpose though).

We pulled up at the school car park and the security guard waved us in. Just in front of us was an enormous, expensive-looking black car. It was the biggest car I had ever seen.

"Wow," Wendy said. "It's so black it looks like onyx." My sister was an aspiring artist who was extremely precise about colours.

"That's a Rolls Royce, Wendy," Dad said, also staring in admiration. "I think this is only the second time I've seen it in real life! Maybe I should trade in our Space Wagon for one –"

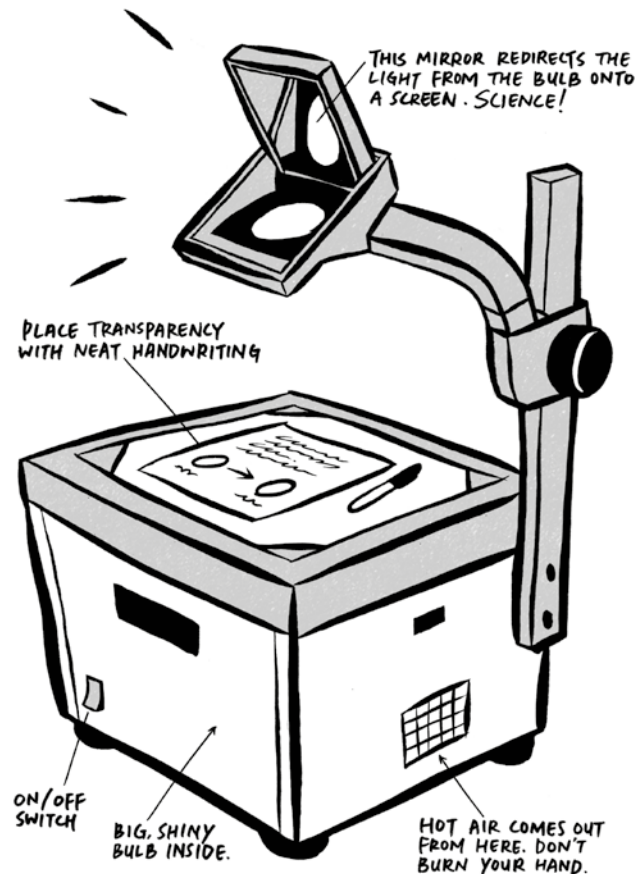
"We'd better hurry," Mom interrupted. "Kids, you'd better get to assembly. Dad and I will head to the office to meet up with Mr Lim." Mom was usually the one to drop us off at school in the morning, so she knew our schedules well.

"Sherlock! Watson! Wendy!" It was Jimmy standing at the school canteen, jumping up and down and waving to us as we got out of the car. Jimmy was my classmate in Primary Four.

"I-think-Jimmy-ate-a-sugar-donut-for-breakfast-again," Watson said.

Watson and I went over to Jimmy while Wendy joined her Primary Five class to line up. Soon we were led into the assembly hall and sat down to read before the assembly started. I enjoyed the time set aside every morning for quiet reading. After the flag-raising ceremony, Mr Lim Cheng Tju, who was my form teacher, announced that we would have a very special guest speaker today: Dad!

Everyone was a little confused by the weirdly shaped machine that Dad rolled out. He called it an OHP, short for overhead projector. He was also holding transparent sheets of paper with writing on it. He said they were named transparencies because they were transparent. My dad is a genius engineer and scientist. He really is.



"Sorry, everyone," Dad said. "I don't know how to use PowerPoint. Plus it helps me think better when I write in my own handwriting. Not that I could write in someone else's handwriting." Dad paused and grinned widely. "The OHP was what we used when I was in school. When Singapore was still called Temasek." He paused again and continued to grin expectantly.

The assembly hall remained eerily silent. Someone coughed. I turned back to look at Wendy who sat a few rows away on my right. She looked worried. She mimed something at me and on cue, Wendy and I burst out laughing, but when no one joined in, we immediately stopped. I saw that Wendy's face was as red as the delicious buttered lobster we had for dinner last night.

"Hurm...anyway," Dad continued, clearing his throat. "I'm here to tell you a little more about what it means to be an engineer!"

Jimmy and I cheered. I turned again to see Wendy and Nazhar clapping hard. Soon the whole hall was clapping and cheering and Dad seemed to relax a little more.

I had helped Dad prepare his presentation so I knew what he was going to talk about. However, I didn't expect this revelation at the end:

"...it helps that I work in a place with the latest technology because it helps me with my research into making teleportation a reality. I'm very close to making a breakthrough! In fact, just last week—" Dad suddenly clamped both his hands over his mouth. His eyes were wide behind his glasses.

"Like in *Star Trek*?" someone shouted from the Primary Six classes.

"Can you teleport durians?" someone else called out from the Primary Five classes.

"Is it like the portkey in *Harry Potter*?" a girl called from the front row.

Then everyone started talking and shouting out questions at the same time. The teachers had to try and calm the extremely curious students.

Dad shuffled his feet and wiped his sweaty brow. "Oh dear, oh dear. I didn't mean to say that out loud. Pretend I didn't say anything! The end! Thank you for listening, everyone! Study hard and read a lot of books!"

And with that, Dad grabbed his transparencies and dashed off the stage. Then he dashed back, struck the SCIENCE! pose, shouted "SCIENCE!" and dashed away again.

There was a moment of stunned silence before the entire assembly hall erupted into applause and cheers. Dad was



an accidental hit with my schoolmates!

After assembly was officially over, Jimmy, Watson and I started to make our way to our classroom when we bumped into Dad and Mom just outside the hall. Mom was comforting Dad about his slip. Mr Lim gave Jimmy and me permission to talk to them for a short while. Wendy asked her form teacher for permission as well and dragged Nazhar along. I saw Eliza stare at us from afar, but she made no move to join us and was quickly lost in the crush of students heading to class.

"Sometimes I think I'm thinking something, but I'm actually saying it out loud!" Dad said, pulling at the lanyard around his neck. It held his office key card as he was going to work later.

"I read on the Internet it's called foot-in-mouth-itis, dear," Mom replied, smiling slightly as she pried his hands away from his lanyard before he strangled himself. "But the kids will

just think you're a very cool genius scientist."

I wanted to ask Dad if what he said was true, when another student suddenly appeared in front of my parents. I noticed that the student's shoes did not look like the usual white Bata canvas shoes that we all wore. Instead, they seemed to be made of shiny leather and had the letters J and M sewn onto them. They looked very expensive.

"Hello, Sir, my name is James. James Mok. I recently moved here from London," James said in a crisp British accent. "I am in Primary Four. I believe your son, Samuel Tan Cher Lock, is in the same level. And his curious robot too. I utterly enjoyed your talk just now."

"Oh! Hello, James," Dad said, beaming. "We hope you like Singapore so far. Have you tried our delicious chicken rice?"

"Dad, James has been here for two months already," I said. "Of course he has tried chicken rice." I couldn't imagine anyone not



eating chicken rice at least three times a week. Especially the roasted chicken drumstick with chili and black sauce dripping all over the warm, fragrant rice. So warm...so fragrant....

"Sherlock-is-imagining-himself-eating-chicken-rice," Watson said.

"I don't actually fancy chicken rice," James said. "My cook prepares fish and chips or bangers and mash for me. Just like when we were in London. My dad is Singaporean, but I was born and have lived in London my entire life."

I knew what fish and chips were, but I had never heard of bangers and mash. I made a note to investigate as soon as I could. I also made a note to visit the place with the most delicious fish and chips I had ever tasted in Singapore—Wok Inn Fish & Chips in Toa Payoh. The uncle there was very friendly and always gave me extra tartar sauce. He also taught me how to eat my fish and chips with

malt vinegar to bring out the flavour.

"My-GPS-cannot-be-used-to-locate-a-restaurant-that-sells-bangers-and-mash, Sherlock," Watson said. I glared at my robot.

"I am curious, why do you call him Sherlock?" James asked. "Might it have anything to do with his Chinese name, Cher Lock? They are phonetically similar."

Everyone stared in silence at James. That usually only happened with me.

"That's...that's very perceptive of you, James," Dad said, looking at me. "Since you're new, did you have enough time to prepare something for the Science Fair for the upper primary students?"

"I am entering the Science Fair!" Jimmy burst out.

Everyone stared in silence at Jimmy. There was a lot of silent staring this morning.

"YOU?" Wendy said before she could stop herself. Mom nudged her and glared.

"I'm entering my—" Jimmy paused dramatically. His hands were clenched in front of him, and his cheeks were puffed out. He looked like he was holding his breath.

"Breathe, Jimmy," Nazhar reminded him.

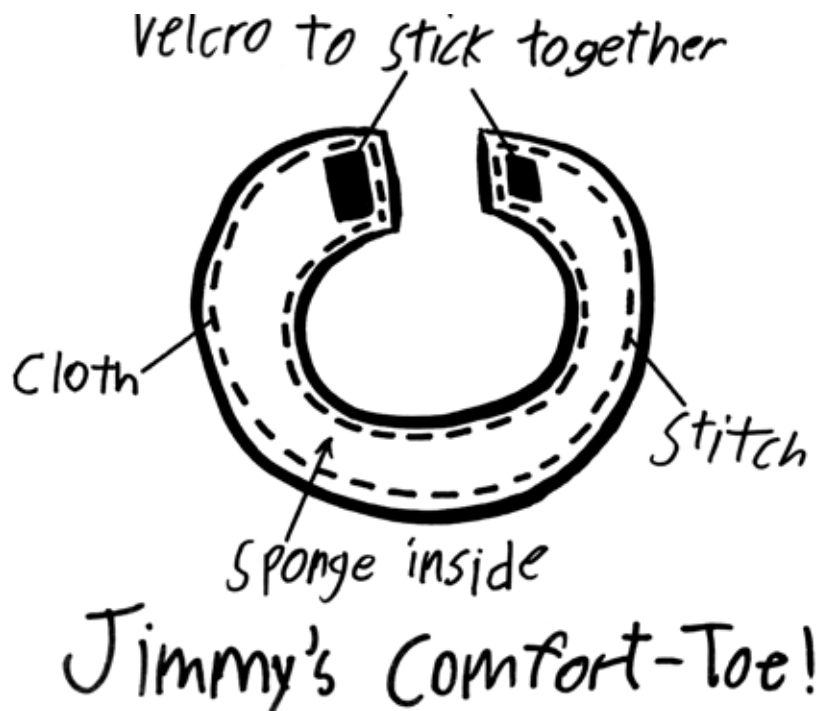
"Poooooof!" Jimmy finally exhaled. "My COMFORT-TOE!"

"Your what?" I asked. Even James was staring at Jimmy now.

"It's a little comforter for your toes! For when you wear slippers, so your big toe and second toe don't get blisters from that painful plastic piece!" Jimmy said. "It's my COMFORT-TOE!"

Jimmy beamed and pulled something out of his pocket. It was a little piece of rectangular sponge covered in cloth that had been stitched closed. Jimmy demonstrated that the two ends of the sponge could adhere to each other because he had stuck Velcro strips on them. When they closed, they formed a ring.

Everyone stared in silence at Jimmy again.



"That's actually a brilliant idea," Mom said after a while. "I hate getting blisters between my toes."

"Me too! You should get your mom to patent it, Jimmy," Dad said, patting Jimmy on his shoulder. "Sherlock, you have very strong competition this year."

I wondered if the Comfort-Toe would actually be allowed as an entry. It wasn't exactly scientific, but Jimmy usually magically

got his way one way or another.

"Dad and I have to go now, kids," Mom said. "And I'm pretty sure all of you are late for your first class. Better hurry."

"We need to pick up a bag of Red Vines on the way home," Dad said to Mom. "I'm all out after yesterday's all-nighter and I can't think without my chewy red sticks of deliciousness."

"Can you pick up more chocolate Khong Guan biscuits too?" I asked. "We mysteriously seem to have run out." Mom gave me a look. I knew that look well.

"It was very nice to meet you, Mr and Mrs Tan," James said. He gave the rest of us a slight nod before walking up the stairs to his classroom.

"What a polite young man," Mom said, still looking at me. "Wait, Sam? Is he the boy who's been scoring higher than you on tests?"

"That's him alright," Wendy said. She stared at James as he made his way up the staircase.

"It was just two tests," I said distractedly. I wondered if I would get a scolding if I asked Mom for something other than tuna sandwiches for lunch today. I decided it wasn't the right moment.

We waved goodbye to Dad and Mom and started to head to our respective classrooms. As we walked to the staircase, Wendy abruptly stopped and said, "Hey, Sam, did you know that James Mok is taking part in the Science Fair too?" She pointed at the sign-up sheet pinned on the board in the hallway. Sure enough, there was "James Mok" written in precise, neat handwriting, right beneath my messy scrawl.

I clearly need to pay closer attention to my new schoolmate.

ooo

CHAPTER TWO



"Children, I need your attention, please," Mrs Ong said.

It was Monday, the start of our Science Week. The entire school hall went quiet. Mrs Ong was our principal and while she was a soft-spoken person, all she needed to do was touch the shoulder of a noisy student and he or she would immediately fall silent. I think she has super powers.

"I'm afraid I have some bad news," Mrs Ong

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS



SAMUEL TAN CHER LOCK a.k.a. SHERLOCK SAM

A 10-year-old detective who tends to bite off more than he can chew, Sherlock Sam loves superheroes and comics. His heroes are Sherlock Holmes, Batman, Agent Coulson and his dad. Exceptionally curious and intelligent, Sherlock cannot resist a perplexing mystery, not even when it can get him in trouble.



WATSON

Less than two years old, Watson behaves more like a grumpy old man though he has remarkable similarities to a sulky toddler. He is often reluctantly drawn into Sherlock's misadventures. Watson secretly wants to join S.H.I.E.L.D's Science division and create an army of like-minded robots.



WENDY

Wendy, Sherlock's 11-year-old-sister, can be a tomboy. Her arch-nemeses are mosquitoes and snooty, spoilt classmates. She is a talented artist and her favourite colour is green. Her Chinese is terrible.



JIMMY

Sherlock's classmate, Jimmy, seems to have the super power to fall down without injuring himself. His enthusiasm for everything is infectious and no one can stay mad at him for long (that might be his other super power).

**NAZHAR**

Nazhar is a bookish boy who loves reading about history and is the big brother of the group. He is trying to learn more about the outdoors from Eliza but, unfortunately, Nazhar has a horrible sense of direction.

**ELIZA**

Eliza is an only child. Her parents are often away on business, leaving her to her own devices. Though sometimes sarcastic and mean, Eliza secretly enjoys going on adventures with Sherlock Sam and his friends. She really loves *My Little Pony* and neat hair.

**DAD**

A brilliant engineer, Sherlock's dad is constantly working on top-secret experiments. He cannot concentrate unless he is chewing on Red Vines, a twisty licorice candy. He has never stopped reading superhero comics because he thinks that everyone needs heroes, no matter how old they are.

**MOM**

Sherlock's mom is half-Peranakan and a genius in the kitchen. She loves reading books by Jane Austen and enjoys watching superhero movies more than she lets on—especially those featuring Black Widow.

**OFFICER SIVA**

Officer Siva is an experienced and insightful police officer with the Singapore Police Force, but he cannot work without his morning *kopi*. A trusted ally of Sherlock Sam, Officer Siva is studying Spanish because he's addicted to *telenovelas*. He hopes they'll be the new Korean dramas in Singapore.

**JAMES MOK**

Born and raised in London, James has only recently moved to Singapore with his parents. James' intellect rivals Sherlock Sam's genius, but he cannot be distracted by delicious food. He enjoys cream with his scones and Earl Grey tea, hot.

**MORAN**

Not much is known about Moran other than the fact that he is very polite and obeys orders without question. Unlike Watson's robotic voice, Moran sounds almost human. He also has an amazing moustache.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The writers behind the pseudonym A. J. Low are the husband-and-wife team, Adan Jimenez and Felicia Low-Jimenez.

Born in California to Mexican immigrant parents, Adan became an immigrant himself when he moved to Singapore after graduating from New York University with a Literature degree. He previously co-wrote a children's book, *Twisted Journeys #22: Hero City*. He loves comics, games (analog and video), LEGO®, books, movies, *Doctor Who* and sandwiches and one day hopes to own a store that sells all these things.

Felicia was born and raised in Singapore. She spent most of her childhood with her head in the clouds and her nose buried in a book, and now daydreams of owning her own bookstore. She has a graduate degree in Literary Theory, and the *Sherlock Sam* series is Felicia's debut writing effort, after accumulating years of experience buying, selling and marketing books.

Sherlock Sam and the Missing Heirloom in Katong won the International School Libraries Network's Red Dot Award 2013-2014 in the Younger Readers' Category. *Sherlock Sam and the Ghostly Moans in Fort Canning* took third place in the Popular Readers' Choice Awards 2013 in the English Children's Books category.

You can contact the authors at sherlock.sam.sg@gmail.com or by visiting sherlocksam.wordpress.com and facebook.com/SherlockSamSeries.

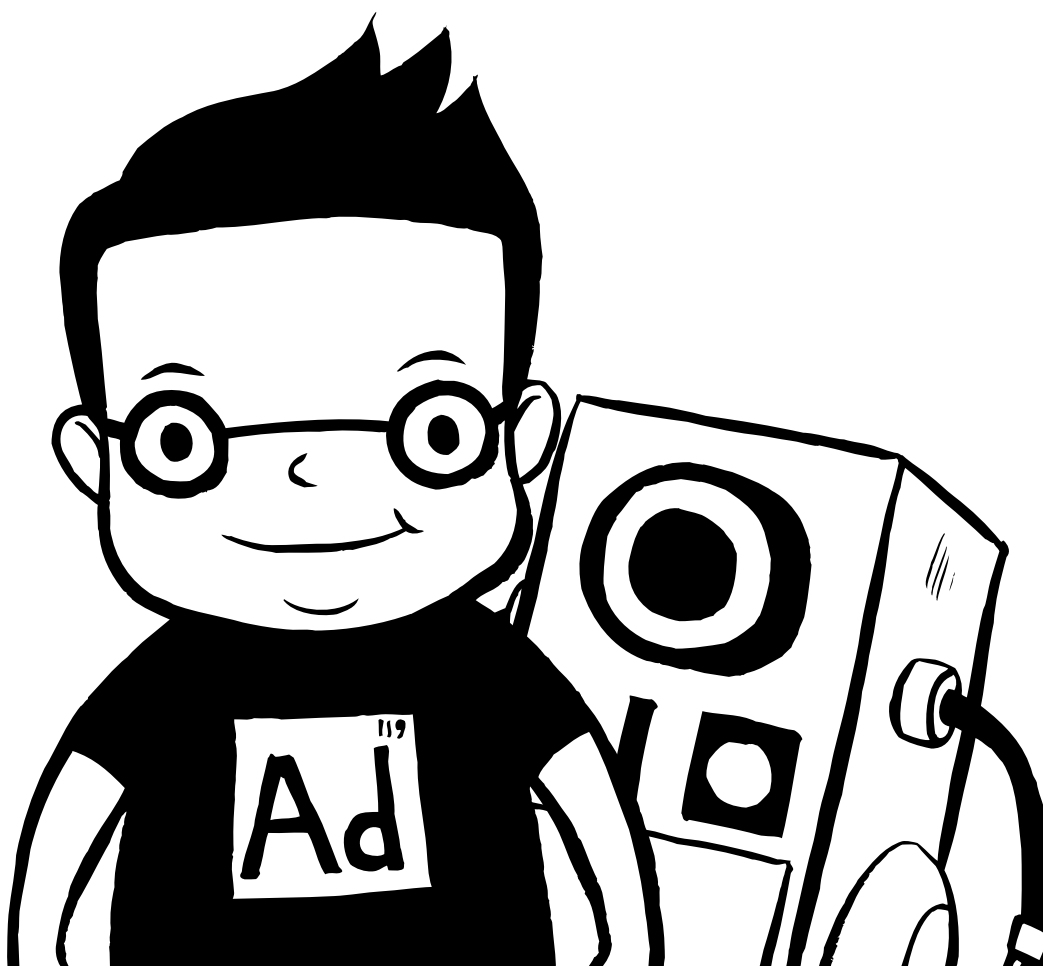
ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Andrew Tan (also known as Drewscape) is a full-time freelance illustrator and an Eisner-nominated comic artist. He illustrates for print ads, magazines and also enjoys storyboarding and illustrating for picture book projects. During his free time, he's always creating his own comics for the fun of it. In his home studio you'll find an overflow of art tools of all kinds as he loves experimenting with them. He already has too many fountain pens and tells himself that he will stop buying more. Andrew published his first graphic novel, *Monsters, Miracles & Mayonnaise*, in 2012.

BAMBOOZLED IN BALESTIER!

Look out for *Sherlock Sam and the Stolen Script in Balestier* as the adventures of Sherlock Sam continue!

After getting in trouble with his parents over the mayhem in MacRitchie, Sherlock Sam was forced to disband the Supper Club. However, his arch-nemesis continues to taunt him at every turn. This time, the top-secret final script of Singapore's most popular television series is stolen! Can Sherlock Sam, Watson and their friends resolve the dastardly plot twists in their way? Or will Singapore's Greatest Kid Detective have his season prematurely cancelled? Stay tuned to find out!



Sherlock Sam encounters his most important mystery yet! His classmate has gone missing at MacRitchie Reservoir and no one can find him. Fearing the worst, Officer Siva refuses to let the Supper Club help, but there's never been a mystery Sherlock, Watson and their friends could ignore!



"If I were a kid again, I would absolutely join Sherlock Sam in his great adult-dodging adventures! I would hide inside his robot Watson and talk-like-this-and-eat-his-stash-of-Khong-Guan-biscuits-when-he-wasn't-watching. Come-on-Sherlock-make-me-your-best-friend-already!"

— GWEI LI SUI, author of *Myth of the Stone*

WINNER OF THE RED DOT AWARD 2013-2014



READ ALL ABOUT SHERLOCK SAM!

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