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Singapore
Siu Dai 2

The
SG Conversation

UPSIZE!

By Felix Cheong
Illustrations by PMan



By The Same Author

Poetry

Temptation and Other Poems (1998)

I Watch the Stars Go Out (1999)

Broken by the Rain (2003)

Sudden in Youth: New and Selected Poems (2009)

Young adult fiction

The Call from Crying House (2006)

The Woman in the Last Carriage (2007)

Fiction

Vanishing Point (2012)

Singapore Siu Dai: The SG Conversation in a Cup
(2014)

Non-fiction

Different (2005)

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“Worth a Punt” was first published in *My Paper*.

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It is a curious thought,
but it is only when you see people looking ridiculous
that you realise just how much you love them.

— Agatha Christie

Going, Going, Flood

“Wait, wait!”

Mohan looked out of the lift. He really needed to go, but 20 metres away, an aunty staggered towards him, dragging what looked like two children. He could not be sure. They were so covered in dirt and grass that he could not tell if they were animal, vegetable or mineral. Probably a combination of all three.

Mohan waved to the aunty and waited. All he could think of was how his bladder was not behaving itself. No matter how tightly he pressed one thigh against the other, he could feel – no, hear – one droplet trickling at a time, filling up all the God-given spaces. So this was what Bedok Reservoir must experience during the monsoon season.

“Thank you ah!”⁷ said the aunty. She looked to be 60, depending on your camera angle. Quickly, she shoved the two nymphs – for want of a better word – into the lift. He could not tell their age or gender but he could certainly smell them.

“Which floor?” Mohan asked.

“Wait ah. More coming.”

More? His Bedok Reservoir bladder was about to hit crisis level and she wanted him to wait?

20 metres away, another aunty, definitely 60 no matter how you Photoshopped her, staggered towards him. She was dragging two more nymphs, covered head to toe in grass and dirt (in that order), who were resisting her with some Newtonian force.

Aunty number two came in, breathless from the humidity and its smell. “Thank you ah!” she said.

“Which floor?” Mohan asked again, this time impatiently. He really had to go! Only the fact that he had been trained well by his parents to always hold the lift door open for others had kept him there that long.

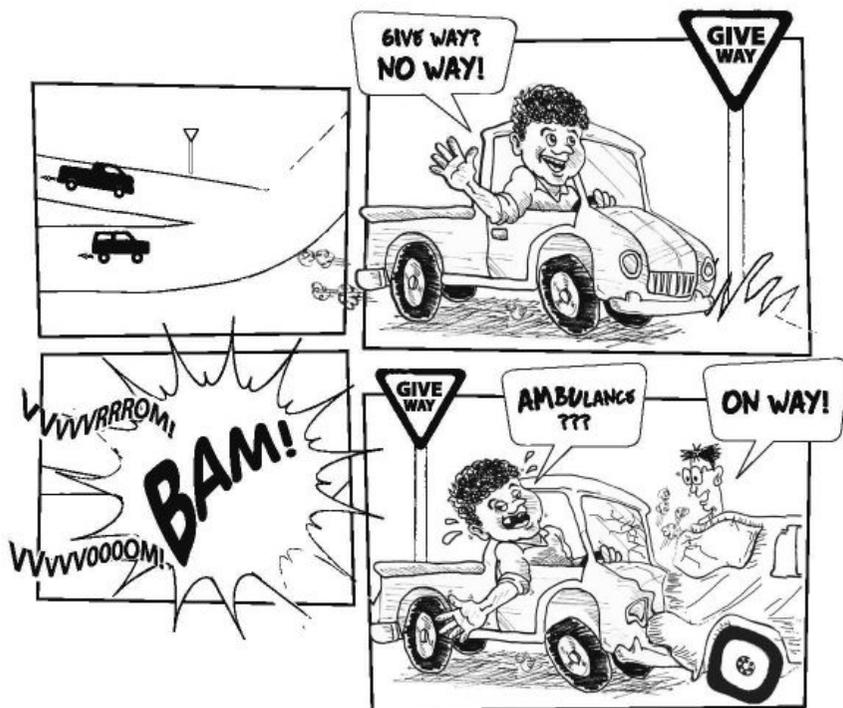
“Wait ah. More coming.”

“Arrgh!”

With his thighs squeezed together, Mohan sprinted out of the lift and up the stairs. In 30 seconds flat, he was safe and soundly relieved in the toilet at home – on the second floor.

Some days, it just did not pay to use the lift.

TRAFFIC UPDATES *by Pman*



Something Useful This Way Comes

There she was again, dressed in what looked like her pyjamas, spreading herself thin in her wheelchair. She must be at the far end of her sixties – so far you could no longer see her youth no matter how high you craned your neck - and she was frail. You would be, if the only exercise you had all day was handing out tissue paper packs, at one dollar for three.

Mrs. KS Tan must have passed her by at the street corner so often, during office or happy hours, that the woman seemed almost like a signage in the busy landscape.

“Why don’t these people get a proper job and make themselves useful?” she had once wondered aloud, shaking her head. Her husband turned to her, aghast.

“Why don’t you make yourself useful and make us dinner?” he said.

A sudden clatter of plates followed, none of it resulting in anything useful or palatable.

As Mrs. KS Tan waited for the traffic light now, she could not help but stare at the woman in the wheelchair.

“Aunty, tissue paper? One dollar for three.”

“Who’s your Aunty?” Mrs. KS Tan snapped, though,

if truth be told, she had been called 'Aunty' by strangers since she was 14.

The woman smiled. "Sorry, Miss Aunty."

"Why don't you get a proper job and make yourself useful?" Mrs. KS Tan blurted out, still annoyed. Now was as good a time as any to find out the truth, once and for all.

The woman smiled again, as if the question no longer mattered to her. "This is my job."

"Selling tissue paper packs I can get cheaper at supermarkets?"

The woman remained unfazed. "I'm doing something useful."

Mrs. KS Tan must have snorted loud enough to attract attention. She felt a light tapping on her right shoulder. No, it was not someone tapping.

It was a sudden splatter of bird droppings. "Shit!"

For a moment, Mrs. KS Tan fumbled in her bag. She must have left it at home.

"Here," the woman said, and handed Mrs. KS Tan a shiny, useful tissue paper pack.

Two Mothers in a Condo Playground I

How your new maid ah?

Don't say lah. Later, heart pain.

Aiyoh. What happened?

Last month, I teach her: wash white separate from colour. I even show her. I ask her: you not colour blind, right? She say: no, ma'am. You know what she do? She go and do seven loads, one for each colour! Every day, seven loads. Blue, green, red, yellow, every colour of the rainbow! I never know until PUB bill come in. 400 dollars, you believe or not! I deduct her pay.

My last maid also like that. I also teach her separate white from colour. Next thing I know, I come home, Ah Boy's school uniform all turn blue. I also turn blue. I ask her: you separate white from colour? She say: yes, ma'am. After machine finish washing, I separate. Aiyoh. I also deduct her pay.

That's why so many natural disasters happen in their country! So when your new maid coming in?

Aiyoh. Coming since last Tuesday. People there work so slow, even their aeroplane fly slower than other people's.

Then how you cope?

Luckily my mother and mother-in-law still alive. They take shifts lor. ▽ One cover odd days, the other one do even. Sunday, they both get day off.

Why you so clever! Then you got time to enjoy spa.

Yah lor! If not, live so long for what?

Two Mothers in a Condo Playground II

How your Ah Girl do for PSLE? ▽

Like that lor. 200 plus. Never study, but still get 200 plus. If study harder, sure can get 300 plus!

300 plus cannot lah! Only Prime Minister can score like that!

Really ah? Luckily we have a Prime Minister with good PSLE result! If not, cannot hold head high. Your Ah Boy how?

Also 200 plus. That one, quite playful. Whole day long want to play drum in school band. At home, also play. Chopsticks, pens, anything also can. Bang, bang, bang! So noisy. I tell him: You play drum, cannot make money. Maybe during Chinese New Year when you play for lion dance.

He can also play in funeral band mah. No need skill. Just dong dong chiang, ▽ half hour, then you get big angpao. ▽

Maybe hor! ▽ Last month, my block already got six funerals. If one *dong dong chiang* can earn 100 dollars, then 600 dollars a month. Good money hor!

But 600 dollars not enough to live lah! Must get degree first. No degree, better go sweep floor or clean table at food court.

I hear on news cleaners now also can earn 1,000 dollars.

1,000 dollars, you go spa once a week, gone by end of month. That's why I tell Ah Girl: I want you go to RGS, then to uni. She say she want to go SOTA to learn dance. I say: SOTA, your head! I want to throw sofa at you. She say she want to, what, 'pursue passion'. I don't know why now a day, "passion" so important to young people.

Yah lor! When we younger, we got 'passion' or not to be housewife? No, right?

That's why I tell Ah Girl: 'passion' make no money. Tomorrow, I go market buy you a big basket of passion fruit, throw it downstairs. You go and 'pursue' all the passion you want!

Just tell her lor, our Prime Minister never 'pursue' passion. That's why can become Prime Minister.

HDB: BRINGS PEOPLE CLOSER *by Aman*

