

Singapore Siu Dai

The SG
Conversation
Series

By Felix Cheong
With Illustrations by PMan



Upsize!

Dabao!

In a cup

Singapore Siu Dai

The SG Conversation in a Cup

By Felix Cheong
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“Funny and identifiable...A man after my own mischievous heart.”

— Neil Humphreys

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Taxi Woes I

“How dare these people!” Mrs. KS Tan muttered to herself.

With five grocery bags, tipping over with the week’s groceries, and a Saturday sun microwaving her from the inside out, she was not prepared to be magnanimous. She had just crossed the bridge to beat the taxi queue snaking 20 people long at Parkway Parade.

Fifteen minutes later, a young couple, freshly arrived and freshly in love, strolled ahead of her, waiting by the curb. They seemed to emote some kind of force field against her dagger stares.

“I was here first!” Mrs. KS Tan said crossly, transferring her bags from her left hand to her right. Still no sign of a taxi.

Quickly, Mrs. KS Tan trotted 15 metres and set herself up ahead of the couple. They didn’t seem to mind, at least that was what she thought. In fact, they were walking away.

Wait a minute. They were now 15 metres ahead, laughing gaily. Oblivious and unashamed – the worst possible combination in young people.

“Okay,” Mrs. KS Tan thought. “Two can play at this game!”

Ten one-upmanship moves later, Mrs. KS Tan was home.

Taxi Woes II

Half an hour inching one ruler-length at a time up the queue, Mrs. KS Tan finally eased herself into a taxi. Though laden with shopping bags, she had chosen to forgo two other taxis because the flag-down fare was three dollars and sixty cents.

“Uncle, Parc Seabreeze. Near Katong,” she said as she quickly closed the door to escape the heat.

The driver didn’t react. He looked like he had already written his will and made his peace with God and the PAP.°

“Which way you want to go? Shorter way or longer way?” he asked, catching her eyes in the rearview mirror.

“Huh?”

“Shorter way takes more time, longer way takes less.”

Mrs. KS Tan thought it must be the heat but his logic made sense. “Longer way,” she said.

When she woke up from forty winks, the taxi had reached its destination. But not hers.

“Uncle, where is this?” Mrs. KS Tan asked, looking out the window in a daze. It looked like...

“You said, ‘Park, see breeze.’ East Coast Park *lor*.° A lot of breeze to see.”

A Day at Toast Box°

Uncle, *yuan yang*° *kopi*.°

Yuan yang already got *kopi*.

I want more *kopi*.

Then say so lah. 70 percent kopi, 30 percent teh?°

Can. But *teh* must be *gao*.°

60 percent kopi, 40 percent teh?

But *teh* must be more *gao* than *kopi*.

50 percent kopi, 50 percent teh, ok?

Can. But *kopi* must be *siu dai*.°

So you want yuan yang siu dai?

Only the *kopi siu dai*, not the *teh*.

I mix kopi with teh, then teh is also siu dai.

Like that ha? Then make the *teh kosong*° *lor*.

You understand what is yuan yang or not!

Uncle, why you so fierce? Never mind lah. Give me Horlicks-Milo-C° *peng*,° *upsized*. Horlicks more *gao*, *siu dai*, no *peng*. Milo *kosong*, more *peng*.

Singapore Siu Dai 2

The
SG Conversation

UPSIZING!

By Felix Cheong
Illustrations by PMan



“This volume may be titled *Siu Dai 2*, but boy, it’s sibeh Gao Gao.”

— Mr Miyagi

Singapore Siu Dai 2

The
SG Conversation

UPSIZE!

By Felix Cheong
Illustrations by PMan

Fair Exchange

The moment Ah Seng saw the man at the coffee shop, he knew it would be an easy sell. There was something earnest about his face, like one of those grassroots leaders he often saw following ministers around like umbrellas.

Ah Seng had pulled this off often enough to know when to wing it. And he had no doubts he would score with this man. He rolled up his sleeves to reveal his calling card: A gallery of tattoos up his arms, as gaily painted as NDP fireworks. Not a single part of his skin was left to chance.

“Uncle, help me buy a keychain, can?” Ah Seng said, showing off his wares. They came in body bags, key chains with the likeness of Minions and Angry Birds. Only in Changi prison would you be able to see so many characters swinging by their necks.

“I last time *pai kia*,” Ah Seng continued, keeping up his sales pitch. He must not give the man time to think it might all be a scam. “Now I trying to reform. Help me, uncle, please. One key, 10 dollars.”

The man, at the starting gun of his fifties, looked up from his book and smiled. He had such a kind face that Ah Seng could imagine God shining through it.

The man closed his black book and lowered his glasses. In one cultured move, he opened up his briefcase on the floor and brought out another black book, placing it on the table.

“If I buy your keychain for 10 dollars, you buy my Bible for 20 dollars. Okay?” he said, meeting Ah Seng’s eyes more than halfway.

One fair exchange later, Ah Seng walked away with his first Bible, happy in the knowledge that not only had he sold a key chain, he had also helped a kind stranger.

At the Beauty Pageant I

Contestant number 67, tell us something about yourself.

My name is Liane Lian and I come from Tiong Bahru.

That is great! For the first time, we have beauties representing all postal codes this year! As you can see, meritocracy is not only for the rich! What do you do, Liane?

My name is Liane Lian and I come from Tiong Bahru.

What a great answer! We certainly respect your need for privacy! God knows there are already enough stalkers on social media! What are your hobbies, Liane?

My name is Liane Lian and I come from Tiong Bahru!

Tiong Bahru has indeed become a hobby for many people these days, what with all the cafes and cars! As the tourism brochures say, if there ain't no traffic jam, it ain't happening! What are your plans for the future, Liane?

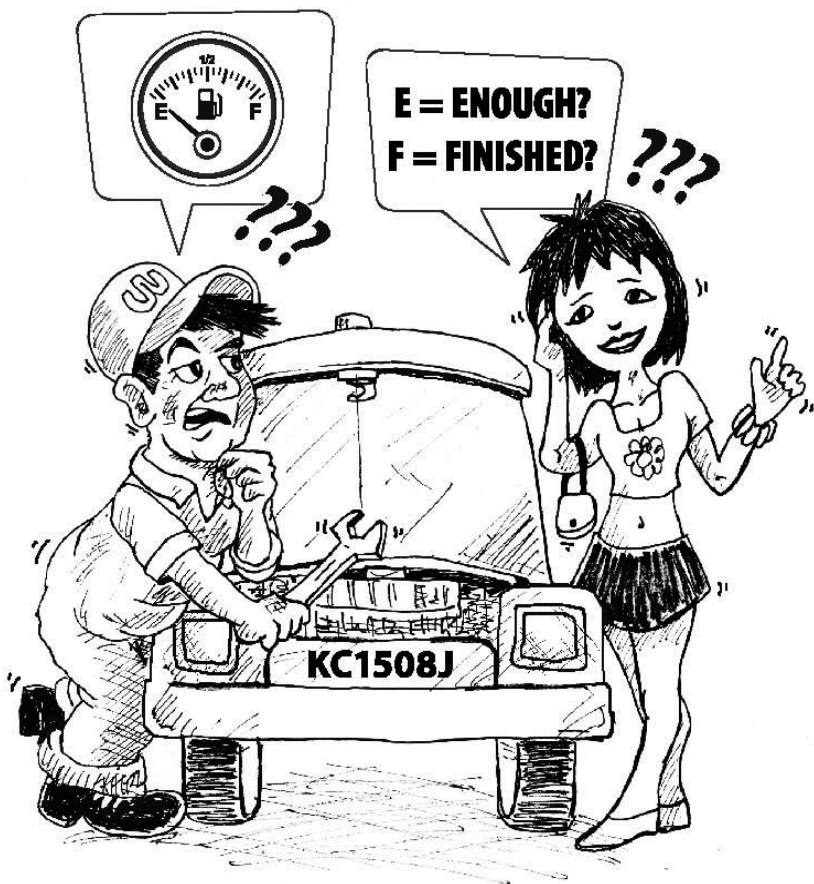
My. Name. Is. Liane. Lian. And. I. Come. From. Tiong. Bahru!

Such patriotism! Clearly, you want to remain Singaporean in the near future! In fact, I understand for the national costume segment, you will wear a sari-

inspired *qi pao*,[▼] paired with a sarong skirt, topped by a Merlion's[▼] head painted with red and white orchids. Is that right?

My name is Liane Lian...

Thank you, Liane! That will be a first on national television, folks! Ladies and gentlemen, a round of applause please, contestant number 67 for Miss Singapore Core 2014!



At the Beauty Pageant II

Contestant number 68, tell us something about yourself.

*My name is Cheena Dina Gina Lena Nina Meena
Rena Wena de Cotta.*

Wow, what a mouthful!

My father has a poor memory for names.

Can I call you Cheena?

You can call me Al.

Al?

Al of the above.

I see! You have an impressive portfolio, Al!

It surprises me too! I was a top student in a top girls' school. I topped the 'O' levels two years in a row because I could not believe I had topped it the first time. I also topped the 'A' levels a year later. And I was also a top national athlete.

In what sport?

Spinning tops.

Oh my goodness! I feel really small beside you, Al!

I am used to being the tallest girl in class. Whether I fly economy or business.

I will keep a lookout for you next time! Al, what are you most passionate about?

I am passionate about what the WWF[™] is passionate about. I believe in their cause. I am all for wrestling if it makes the world a better place.

No question about it! This is one young lady with her heart in the right cause! In fact, I understand for the talent segment, you will have a special treat for us?

I will demonstrate how to pass exams with a cheat sheet. And if you don't have a cheat sheet, how to copy-and-paste.

That will certainly be what Singapore needs more of, creative cheating! Ladies and gentlemen, a round of applause please, contestant number 68 for Miss Singapore Core 2014!

At the Beauty Pageant III

Contestant number 69, tell us something about yourself!

My name is Mixxy Mah. I am a multiracial Singaporean and a global citizen.

Multiracial? You look very Chinese to me, Mixxy!

My father is Hakka and my mother is Cantonese. So I am a Hakkanese.

How interesting, Mixxy! I have never met a Hakkanese!

My boyfriend is currently a Hokkien. He has not made up his mind yet if he will remain one. He says he will decide when he turns 21. But we already plan to have five children and if he remains Hokkien, they will all be Hokkanese.

That is what we need in Singapore, more Hokkanese children! You also say you are a global citizen, Mixxy. You travel a lot?

I was born in Manila Street and grew up in Penang Lane. I studied at Canberra Primary and Secondary School and now I work at Hong Kong Street.

That explains why you sound like a Filipino raised in Malaysia but studied in Australia and now speak

English with a Hong Kong twang! So you speak many languages, Mixxy?

I only learned two languages in school, Chinese and Singlish.

That is more than enough for national television! I understand for the talent showcase, you will treat us to a special demonstration?

I will recite the pledge alternately in Singlish and English, with a simultaneous translation in sign language.

Thank you, Mixxy! That will be a first on national television, folks! Ladies and gentlemen, a round of applause please, contestant number 69 for Miss Singapore Core 2014!

The Audition Round

The Prim and Prime Minister was at the end of his tether. No matter how much he was willing to pay beyond - or as the hipsters liked to call it, beyonce – peanuts, he still had to contend with monkeys.

Where were the few good men willing to have their wits tested? Where was the next generation of capable men for public service coming from?

Could one of them be Ivy Lee, this 26-year-old sitting before him like a rolling stone gathering moss? All the right boxes had been ticked in her resume – Ivy League school, exam-smart, no sheen in the eyes but a dull, focused gaze, dandruff-free. The least objectionable of the lot he had auditioned that morning.

And she looked kind of photogenic too, like a rain tree after a heavy storm. If only she did not treat curlers like a fashion statement...

“So, you think you can be the Minister for Acronyms,” he said, coming straight to the point. No point beating about the rain tree.

“Y.I.C.I.S.T.I.S.,” she said, her tone even, her manner assured.

The Prim and Prime Minister looked up suddenly. He liked cockiness in his ministers. It helped to push policies through without the Cabinet having to explain

anything. If you sounded assured, the populace would swallow hook, line and sinker. He decided to put her to the test.

“I’ll toss you a made-up policy and you have to come up with a good acronym in five seconds.”

She nodded, her curlers shaking like wet leaves. How did she hold her head up, he wondered.

“A scheme to ease traffic jams,” the Prim and Prime Minister began.

“Cars & Lorries Use Extra Lanes coz ERP Sucks Still. C.L.U.E.L.E.S.S.”

“A law to curb trolls.”

“Speech in Internet Lets Every Nefarious Cuckoo Enter. S.I.L.E.N.C.E.”

“A grant to help the poor.”

“Dough Enter, No Income, Exit Dough. D.E.N.I.E.D.”

The Prim and Prime Minister smiled. There was no denying her obvious talent. The education system had trained her well. In civil service parlance, she was R.A.R.E. - Raw And Ready Energy.

“H.S.C.Y.S.W?” he asked.

Ivy blinked. Her curlers began trembling. An acronym was about to take shape on her lips. It looked promising...

“Sorry, I don’t understand what you just said, sir.”

Singapore Siu Dai 3

The SG Conversation

DABAO!

By Felix Cheong
Illustrations by PMan



“It’s like reading five years’ worth of social media’s greatest posts about Singaporeans: addictive, and without ads!”

—Otto Fong, author of *Sir Fong’s Adventures In Science*

Singapore Siu Dai 3

The SG Conversation

DABAO!

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Twilight Years I

Mr Pioneer Goh didn't mind his wife being a backseat driver – as long as she did it in someone else's car. And not when he had already installed a GPS and gotten used to its crisp American voice that reminded him sometimes of Marilyn Monroe.

“I tell you how many times already. Left, left, left. You suddenly deaf ah?” Mrs Goh said.

“But GPS said go straight,” he said.

“You married me or GPS?” Mrs Goh retorted.

Mr Goh sighed as he gripped the steering wheel and picked up speed. Luckily, traffic at this hour wasn't too bad.

“Turn right, turn right here!” Mrs Goh suddenly shrieked, pointing at the turning he had just missed. Right at the same moment, Marilyn, calm as the clear blue sky, said, “Go straight fifty metres.”

In that confusion, something had to give. And it turned out to be the car, which Mr Goh drove into a drain by the side of the road.

“You have arrived at your destination,” Marilyn said.

Mr Goh quickly turned it off. “Are you ok?” he said, turning to his wife.

Mrs Goh, rubbing a bump on her forehead, screamed, “Told you not to listen to that angmoh ♣ woman!”

Twilight Years II

For the life of him, Mr Pioneer Goh couldn't understand what all the fuss over tai-chi was about. He had, of course, seen the senior citizens downstairs at his block, lined up like a parade of greying soldiers in the basketball court, bright and early like the sun.

The intermittent repetition of "Who, see" often made him laugh out loud. "You move so slow. You call that exercise?" he said to his wife when she returned home, drenched from her hour-long tai-chi.

Mrs Goh, exasperated with his excuses not to join him, retorted, "You want to move fast, you chut your own pattern lah!"

The next day, Mr Goh rose early and rose to the challenge. He would show his wife he was still young at heart.

Taking a spot in the field, a stone's throw from the "Who, see" crowd so they could see him, he chut his own pattern. In big waves and small, with arms and legs in all directions, playing out the whole history of martial arts films from Bruce Lee to Jet Li.

It would take Mr Pioneer Goh three days in hospital to recover from sore limbs and a sprained back. But there was no medicine for his bruised ego.



Twilight Years III

It was all Mr Pioneer Goh could do to keep up with his wife as she left the cinema in a huff. His legs were still badly shaken, and shaking, from his ill-fated attempt at teaching himself tai-chi. So much for the government's call to be innovative, he thought.

"Why you walk out?" he called after his wife. They had barely watched an hour of a Hollywood haunted house flick, pumped up with so much creaking noises that Mr Goh thought it was the sound of his joints.

Mrs Goh stopped and spun around, her eyes flashing in anger. She had spent forty-five minutes under a shawl, for protection from the cold and the "boo!" scares.

"You said the movie is PG?" she snapped, thrusting her hands on her hips.

"Yah what. It says PG," Mr Goh said, pointing to the poster in the lobby. Mrs Goh flinched at the image of the ghostly long-haired woman staring at her intently with her evil eyes.

"That's not PG!" she said.

Taking care not to dislodge any body parts, Mr Goh inched his wife closer to the poster. He pointed at the

rating, enclosed in a green circle. “See? PG. Parental Guidance. Suitable for persons aged 13 and above,” he said.

“But not suitable for PG, Pioneer Generation, 65 and above!”

Twilight Years IV

It wasn't long before Mr Pioneer Goh ran out of chess mates. The ones who could match him, move for move, square by square, were taking a long hiatus from the game, inside their columbarium niches.

This past year alone, even as everyone in Singapore cheered the SG50[✓] celebrations, he had to attend the wake of five childhood friends. The more he thought about it, the more he awoke to why it was called "a wake".

Still, day after day, Mr Goh continued going downstairs to the void deck, purposefully lining up the pieces on the board. He resorted to playing chess against himself.

Mrs Goh, who had no interest in the game, asked, "How you win like that?"

Mr Goh, still pondering his next move against himself, didn't look up. He simply said, "Ownself check ownself."

At MP Candidates Interview I



At MP Candidates Interview II



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