

Drunken Prawns by Desmond Sim

Annotations by Teacher Jo

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SCENE 1 At rise, Mr Tan, Mrs Tan, Angie and Connie are seated on a sofa in the sitting room of their four-room HDB flat, intently watching a comedy on TV (imaginary one in the direction of the audience). They have a Tupperware container of sweet and sour snacks that they pass to each other and munch on as they watch TV. It is a picture of domestic bliss. As they watch, they sporadically burst out laughing.

CONNIE Ha ha ha, he's so funny! (looks in the Tupperware container) Eh...no more sng buay¹ already? (to

ANGIE) Jie², you never leave any for the rest of us! Shh...I can't hear...

CONNIE Ma, Jie always finishes up the good stuff before any of us get to eat it!

MRS TAN Angie, you've got to learn to share. I also like to eat the sng buay I buy, you know...

ANGIE Shh...Okay, okay... (reacting to the TV) Ha ha ha ha...

MR TAN (looking dotingly at Angie) I'll go buy a big bag of sng buay for all of us tomorrow.

The family burst out laughing in unison at the final scene of the show. The closing theme song of the comedy plays (this can be the theme of any current MediaCorp³ comedy series).

ANGIE Ha ha ha... She kena⁴ tricked in the end... so stupid!

MR TAN (teasing) Ya lah, next to you, everyone else is stupid...

ANGIE No, I think Einstein is very smart. And Stephen

Hawking also.

MRS TAN Who?

ANGIE They are scientists who changed the way we see

She must have displayed such condescension before to get this response.

1 Sour plums

2 [Mandarin] Elder sister

3 Media Corporation of Singapore Pte Ltd

4 [Malay] Denotes that something has happened

[CHARACTERISATION]

Angie is quite self-absorbed; oblivious to others. Not very empathetic.

ANGIE

CONNIE

MRS TAN

ANGIE

MR TAN

[THEME]

PARENTAL LOVE : MR TAN clearly loves Angie & spoilt her. Does not "teach" her, even though the situation warrants it.

The family burst out laughing in unison at the final

scene of the show. The closing theme song of the

comedy plays (this can be the theme of any current

MediaCorp³ comedy series).

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MR TAN (teasing) Ya lah, next to you, everyone else is stupid...

ANGIE No, I think Einstein is very smart. And Stephen

Hawking also.

MRS TAN Who?

ANGIE They are scientists who changed the way we see

the universe.

MR TAN (proudly teasing) Right. And you are the third
smartest after those two...is it?

*Mrs Tan gets up. Mr Tan stretches. The two girls
keep watching.*

MRS TAN I'm getting us some coffee. Anyone wants some?

MR TAN I want...

CONNIE Me also!

ANGIE Coffee?

Mrs Tan rolls her eyes. She knows what's coming
next. *Angie in "lecture mode" is regular &
annoying. It is a phase they must bear because
(to Connie) Caffeine is really bad for you. It is part of
growing up.*

CONNIE No lah...who says?

ANGIE My health sciences teacher!

*[THEME] Their patience is
a sign of love.
parental*

CONNIE (doubtfully) Really? Why is it bad?

ANGIE It stains your teeth...and it makes you pee...and...
and...it stops you from sleeping.

MRS TAN (dryly) I'll remember to brush my teeth. *grasping at
straws.*

CONNIE So what if we got to pee? We all got to pee anyway
what...

ANGIE (smugly, using reverse psychology) Never mind, you
drink lah. Afterwards your hands cannot stop
shaking, then we see how you can become a
surgeon next time!

MR TAN What nonsense! I've been drinking coffee for 40
years...see! (holds out an extremely steady hand)
Steady as a rock!

ANGIE Drinking coffee for 40 years? But you're 40 years old
tomorrow, Pa. *she isn't stupid. But she's not
that knowledgeable either, hard as
she might try.*

MR TAN Ya...so?

*However, that she can retort like that is a
type of ROLE REVERSAL [THEME]. she is being
logical in contrast to her father.*

*The excessive use
of ellipses shows that
she doesn't really
know what she's
talking about.
Does not stop her from
trying.*

[THEME]

Result of the role reversal: Mr Tan is uncomfortable about losing this "power" whereby he can tell tall-tales to manipulate a situation with his children.

However, when she is being smart, spotting the fallacy in his argument, he gets upset.

ANGIE

MR TAN

ANGIE

MRS TAN

MR TAN

MRS TAN

CONNIE

MR TAN

MRS TAN

ANGIE

[CHARACTERISATION] Angie is intelligently manipulated. Uses pathos to tug at his heartstrings. Also, she knows Mrs Tan would never agree, so she whispers to her father.

CONNIE

MR TAN

ANGIE

MR TAN

All the previous, easy-but-lazy solutions to dealing with kids are becoming less effective.

You mean you've been drinking coffee since you were a baby?

Connie laughs.

(feeling caught) I knock you on the head, then you know. You don't be a smart aleck with me ah...

Hee hee! *Ironically, previously, when he was being smart about scientists, he is proud.*

(with amused irony) Ha. Like father, like daughter.

Okay, okay, last order...

(deliberately) Make mine a BIG mug...the thicker the coffee, the better!

Connie?

Angie's warning has had its effect on Connie, who looks unsure now.

Ummm... *→ CHILDISH (characterisation)*

Coward. It's just coffee lah!

(not wanting to wait any more) Okay. Horlicks for you then!

Mrs Tan exits.

(whispering) Hey, Pa...Felicia found a stray kitten, but her parents won't let her keep it. Can I adopt it? If we don't, it will starve to death...very poor thing, you know...

Yes, Pa...it's sooo cute. I saw it too!

Your ma is allergic to pets.

No, she's not...she doesn't get rashes or anything what... *He is called out once again.*

I mean she's allergic to the work she has to do when you girls lose interest in the pets, and then she has to do all the work!

But we do feed the fish...when we remember to

do it...

MR TAN

If we left it up to you two to take care of the aquarium, we'd have a tankful of dried-up ikan bilis⁵ by now!

If we empathise with Mr Tan, we realise that it is tougher managing children. It really is not easy.

Angie opens her mouth to speak, but Mr Tan pre-empts her smart aleck comment.

I know...I know...guppies and ikan bilis are two different species. But all the same, you two have shown us that you are not responsible enough for a bigger pet. Topic closed.

The girls make guilty faces. They know that it's true.

Angie, never one for defeat, decides to change the subject. [CHARACTERISATION] stubborn. Must get something new making her come across Oh...look, Pa...look! as being very annoying.

ANGIE

The girls are immediately distracted by an advertisement on TV.

CONNIE

So cool...

MR TAN

It's just a computer.

ANGIE

It's the latest one! It's got the Core 2 Duo processor... and a four-gigabyte RAM...

MR TAN

What's all this Duo Quad nonsense? We already have a computer! *Also, [THEME] of [DICTION - "old thing"]* *change & transition* *there's a lot of*

ANGIE

That old thing...it's a dinosaur, Pa.

ingratitude.

MR TAN

We only bought it three years ago!

Computers are

CONNIE

That's very old for a computer!

also high/age

Computers are like dogs. One year in its life is equal to seven normal years.

to Mr Tan how fast things are changing and how he has to catch up.

It's a machine, not a dog. Your grandmother had a

it is very difficult.

Singer sewing machine which she used for 40 years!

(exchanging incredulous looks with Connie) Forty

This becomes a source of [CONFLICT]. *the*

External conflict, with the fast-paced world.

Internal conflict with himself and his struggles to keep up.

years! You mean you expect us to use the same old computer for 40 years? *She is very spoilt & self-absorbed. For all that she is becoming smarter, she is only book smart. She does not know the value of money.*

MR TAN

ANGIE & CONNIE

MR TAN

Even though their views are contrasting, they are both correct. [THE ME] change & transition.

Why not? If it still works... *is becoming smarter,*

(exasperated) But, Pa... she is only book smart.

Hey, our PC was the best model in the shop. The *of salesman said so!*

Best means that it's the fastest...the most powerful.

It's not any of these now... *Not wrong to assume.*

The best model means it should last a long, long time.

Now, if my mother paid 80 dollars for her sewing machine and that lasted 40 years, and I paid 3,000 dollars for the PC, then the bloody computer should last 1,500 years!

(exasperated) Even if it lasts that long, it has only 40 gigabytes of memory. How are we supposed to do anything with that?

CONNIE Ya, that's not enough memory for the new programs now!

MR TAN Then use the old programs. There's nothing wrong with old programs, if they still work. You don't have to buy a new version every time it comes out, you know?

ANGIE But surfing the Net is soooo slow with this old thing! I can't download anything with the memory we have now.

CONNIE *(brightly pointing to the TV screen) The new ones they're advertising have 600 gigabytes!*

MR TAN *(firmly) Nope. You're both schoolgirls. Only need word processing and Powerpoint. You don't need 600 gig...giggle-bites!*

ANGIE Huh? What did you say, Pa?

MR TAN (repeating emphatically) I said you don't need 600 giggle-bites.

CONNIE Giggle bites?

The two girls burst out laughing. CRUEL. He is trying.

MR TAN What? What is so funny? You can say giggle-bytes, I cannot say, is it? Boh tua, boh soey⁶...so rude to your father!

The girls laugh even more. Mrs Tan comes in with some mugs on a tray.

MRS TAN What's the big joke?

MR TAN Ask your rude daughters...

MRS TAN (to Mr Tan) Ya, when they are well-behaved and win prizes in school, they become your daughters. Otherwise, they are mine...

CONNIE Pa called the computer memory GIG-GLE-bites...

MRS TAN (to Mr Tan) It's GIG-A-bytes lah. My bank's new computers all come with gigabyte memory...A gigabyte is 1,000 megabytes.

MR TAN (grumpily) Giggle-bites or GIGA-bytes, I'm not buying a new computer just because of some flashy new advertisement on TV!

ANGIE (turning to Mrs Tan for support) Ma...Pa wants us to use our old computer for 40 years before he will buy a new one...

MRS TAN (amused) Does he? (teasingly) My parents always told me to marry a thrifty man...

MR TAN (triumphantly) There...see? At least someone appreciates my good, solid values!

CONNIE (to Angie) It's no use. They are in the same gang...

6 [Hokkien] Literally "no big, no small". Used to admonish someone for not knowing his place.

All this back-and-forth
ding-donging is
conducted with ethos by

Mr & Mrs Tan, &
an attempt at
ethos by Angie.

She is very much like them/
growing to be like them.

ANGIE

(not giving up) A faster computer means I can do my
homework faster.

MRS TAN

(wryly) You only write one or two assignments a week
on the computer. I think, if you spent less time on
the phone chatting, you would actually finish your
essays a whole lot faster. Don't you think so?

CONNIE

I told you...they are in the same gang.

ANGIE

(under her breath) Ya...the dinosaur gang.

MRS TAN

It is evident, though,
that Mrs Tan is better at
managing her daughter
than Mr Tan is.

Eh! Your mother might be old, but she is not deaf,
okay. Don't forget, I haven't signed your donation
card for your school's conservation drive yet ah...
Dinosaurs are known to be VERY stingy!

ANGIE

Oops. (with fake sweetness) Sorry, Mummy d-e-a-r!

MRS TAN

(with mock irritation) Pretend only...hmpf!

MR TAN

Angie sticks out her tongue. Mr Tan turns off the TV.
Nothing but ads. Everything buy, buy, buy...Oh, wait,
before I forget, (to Mrs Tan) did you remember to
book the restaurant for tomorrow night's...

[CHARACTERISATION]
MRS TAN
Mr Tan is consistent &
likes consistency. This is
unsurprising, given all
the change & transitions
happening in his
life.
It is nice to hold
onto familiarity.

CONNIE

Yes. You've been celebrating your birthday there for so
many years, they probably reserved a table for us
even before I called.

MR TAN

Pa...why don't we try somewhere else for a change?

Always the same place! *Angie prefers excitement.*
[Generational Difference]

Why? The food there is no good?

CONNIE

No, it's quite yummy...

MR TAN

Good food and not expensive. So why change?

ANGIE

But if we don't try elsewhere, we won't know if there
are better places for the same price, right?

MR TAN

(with mock patience) But it's my birthday. So I get to
choose where I want to eat. And I say we eat at the

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are better places for the same price, right?

MR TAN

(with mock patience) But it's my birthday. So I get to
choose where I want to eat. And I say we eat at the

same old place. Is that okay with you two ladies?

The two girls look at each other with an expression that says that they give up because they know their father too well.

MR TAN

Anyway, although we may be eating at the same old place tomorrow night...there will be a surprise dish for dinner.

CONNIE

A surprise dish!

ANGIE

What is it? Is it scorpions? I heard that scorpions can be fried and eaten crispy...and they are high in protein too...is it scorpion? *[IRONIC] that she is ok with this but upset for prawns.*
I'll bet it's earthworms! They can make them into something like spaghetti...I saw that on TV.

Mr Tan shakes his head laughingly.

MR TAN

I'm trying to surprise you, not make us vomit lah...

ANGIE

Tell us!

MR TAN

If I tell you, it won't be a surprise any more!

ANGIE

(to Mrs Tan) You know what it is...tell us, Ma!

MRS TAN

(laughingly dragging out the suspense) It's...um...you know what? Patience is a great virtue to have. You'll just have to learn to wait!

ANGIE & CONNIE

Haiyaaaa...

The two girls are quite spoilt but Angie comes across as Mr Tan's antagonist because not only is she spoilt, she is going through a phase whereby she is being more opinionated, to craft the personality she hopes to have.

This makes her a source of constant conflict and tension, especially to Mr Tan. That they could so quickly shift from debating to teasing is indicative of how patient, forgiving & loving Mr & Mr Tan are. [THEME : PARENTAL LOVE].

SCENE 2 A shorter version of the play can begin at this point.
 The interior of a bustling Chinese restaurant.
 The Tan family is midway through Mr Tan's birthday dinner.

MRS TAN Wah...that hot plate liver was really good ah?

MR TAN Ya. Shiok,⁷ man.

ANGIE Liver is very high in cholesterol, Pa. If you eat too much, you'll die of a heart attack or high blood pressure or other related diseases, you know.

MR TAN Cheh!⁸ It's my birthday. Don't say these suay⁹ things at the dinner table, can or not? You sound like a Ministry of Health advertisement. Anyway, you ate as much liver as the rest of us. So don't talk like you are so healthy or something. *She is also very hypocritical. [characterisation]*

ANGIE Ma said not to waste food, so I ate it. Next time let's just order fish, chicken and vegetables. My teacher said that white meat is...

(mildly irritated) White meat, white meat...Next time we leave you at home to eat white porridge. Can't eat a meal without spoiling the fun, is it?

ANGIE Angie turns away, hurt. She only meant to be helpful. *We understand her [FEELINGS] but she's being insensitive & self-serving. There is a time & place for everything.*

MRS TAN Aiya, don't start again lah, can or not, you two?

CONNIE I liked the liver, Pa. It was better than even Grandma's recipe!

MRS TAN And you don't pour oil on the fire!

CONNIE But all I said was...

MR TAN (to Mrs Tan) Ah...why are you scolding the obedient

7 [Originally Malay] Denoting extreme pleasure or signifying the highest quality

8 [Singlish] Exclamation of disbelief or disapproval

9 [Hokkien] Catastrophic, calamitous

[Role reversal] He is being irrationally childish. This can also only worsen the situation. one and protecting the argumentative one?

MRS TAN

The [juxtaposition] of Mr Tan's [TONE] & Mrs Tan's tone clearly shows how immature he can be. Not unlike Angie. Also shows how Mrs Tan has to parent everyone.

ANGIE

MRS TAN

MR TAN

(calmly) I am not protecting anyone. I just don't want any of you to continue this because I just know how it will end again. You will be shouting, she will be crying and I will end up feeling bad for both of you. So I want it to stop now. Angie, enough of your cholesterol lesson. Next time, you don't want to eat, just don't eat.

→ stubborn. immature.

(craftily) I'm just trying to help you both live longer...

(strictly) Enough!

(grumpily) Okay, okay...you all finish up. Don't waste good food. It's not cheap, you know. Here. You like fish, you have the best part. You eat one eyeball, I'll eat the other.

[THEME] PARENTAL LOVE.

tries to forgive & make peace by
Mr Tan digs up an eyeball from the steamed fish. showing
love in his own way.
He dumps the eyeball on Angie's plate as a peace offering. Unfortunately, it isn't in a way that Angie wants.

(under her breath) Yucks! (to Mrs Tan) Uh...Mummy can have it. Here, Ma...

No, you eat it, Angie. Daddy is trying to be nice by giving you his favourite part of the fish. You should eat it.

But you like it better than me, so...

(blowing up) Aiya, so difficult! I'll eat it lah!

He retrieves the eyeball from Angie's plate. The waitress comes to clear away an empty dish. Mr Tan decides to take out his irritation on her.

Oi...excuse me. We have one more dish not yet come. You want to serve it before we go home or you want us to come back for breakfast?

[TONE: RUDE & IRRITATED].

TENSION!

↳ could be avoided if Angie were more sensitive & Mr Tan were more mature.
↳ also, they are both stubborn.

ANGIE

MR TAN

He is emotionally very immature.

[MESSAGE/MAIN IDEA]
Our parents are flawed in some way. As are we. We have to be patient & understanding with them, as they are with us.

[DIGRESSION]
Ease the tension
2 give audience
an emotional
breather.

WAITRESS Lai liao lah, lai liao lah.¹⁰

MR TAN (*muttering to himself*) Lai liao, lai liao...Christmas also lai liao.

WAITRESS (*shouting in Hokkien to offstage as she goes off*) Oi! Charp jee hor eh hay, hoe beh?¹¹

MRS TAN Wah, so loud.

Waitress exits, then comes bustling in with a trolley on which are ingredients for drunken prawns and a soup pot on a portable stove.

WAITRESS Ah...neh! Hor liao. Hor liao.¹²

MR TAN (*visibly happy*) All right! The surprise dish...drunken prawns!

ANGIE Drunken prawns?

CONNIE How can the prawns get drunk? Do they force them to drink beer?

MR TAN You girls have never tried it before, right? They're the sweetest prawns you'll ever eat. You pour wine on the prawns and then they are boiled in soup stock—and the result is so shiok, it's almost as good as winning a mahjong game.

Angie is quite excited. She goes over to the trolley to look at the drunken prawns. Gingerly she lifts one corner of the lid, which covers the basin of prawns. She drops the lid in horror. Well, obviously. Naïve.

ANGIE Aiye! They moved! I saw them moving. [CHARACTERISATION]

CONNIE Where...where...let me see.

MR TAN Of course lah. That's why they're so expensive!

ANGIE But...they're...alive!

MR TAN How else will we know that they're fresh?

ANGIE What are you going to do with them?

10 [Hokkien] It's coming, it's coming.

11 [Hokkien] Oi! Are the prawns for Number 12 ready?

12 [Hokkien] Ah...there, it's ready. It's ready.

MRS TAN (sensing another scene coming on, very casually)

Nothing lah. They just throw them around in some Chinese wine and boil them immediately. It's very quick.

ANGIE

MR TAN

But the alcohol will burn them. *[THEME - Generational Gap]. Priorities are different* *the conflict in opinions is because of*
Haiya, what nonsense. Alcohol is liquid—how to burn them? Anyway, it's very quick. They get very excited when they are drunk, and jump around a bit. That makes them more tasty!

Of course lah. If I throw you in acid, you will also jump around what.

MR TAN

You don't be rude with me, all right! You talk to your father like this, you are asking for a slap in public!

ANGIE

They are not excited, you know... (starts crying) they

jump because it's painful. They are suffering, you know! *CHILDISH. But, she is still a child. She is getting smarter but she does not yet know enough.*

Okay lah... okay lah, you two. Everyone in the

restaurant is watching. Will you two stop making so much noise. Afterwards people think you are acting for MediaCorp or something. So much drama. It's only a bowl of prawns!

MR TAN

You just tell her to shut up if she doesn't want to get it from me. *IMMATURE, Does not make situation better.*

WAITRESS

(to Mrs Tan) Aiya... lee eih gina beh hiao jiak hay ah?¹³

MRS TAN

Mmm see beh hiao jiak. Ee kak gueh nerng sim.

Mmm kum kwah ee eih hare see diao.¹⁴

WAITRESS

(to Angie) Aiya, siao lian eih. Beh hiao kin lah. Jik eih kia dia lah. Meh meh ju oo tang jiak liao.¹⁵

13 [Hokkien] Aiya... your daughter won't eat the prawns, is it?

14 [Hokkien] It's not that she won't eat. She's just too soft-hearted to see the prawns die.

15 [Hokkien] Aiya, little girl. Never mind lah. It is only a little while, soon you can eat them already.

Angie suddenly keeps quiet and refuses to answer.

MR TAN Mai chai ee! Nang sa gai nang jiak ju hor!¹⁶ If she wants to be stubborn, she can watch us eat. Next time you don't come out to eat with us.

ANGIE I also don't want to eat with you, I—

MR TAN I told you to shut up!

ANGIE I'll stay at home and eat vegetables. Ma, from today onwards, you just cook vegetables only for me, okay!

MR TAN And who pays for your food, I ask you? You talk so big, who pays for your food?

MRS TAN Both of you...why are you quarrelling over prawns? Why do we always end up like this?

(to Mr Tan) Don't worry. When I go out and work, I'll pay you back for all the food I've eaten.

(slams the table and stands up) You dare answer me like that!

Hoe lah, hoe lah...mai ah nee jiang lai jiang kee lah. Aiya, towkay ah, lee jay sia lai. Gua thong ee eh hare koh ning nang jiak lah.¹⁷

Mr Tan sits down. Angie turns away from him.

Ceremoniously, the waitress opens the lid and pours the wine into the basin of prawns. She slams the lid shut immediately as if the prawns are about to jump out. Then she opens the lid and looks at the prawns in dismay. She knocks at the side of the container, as if doing so will revive them.

CONNIE Pa...I thought you said the prawns would jump around? They're not jumping.

MRS TAN They must have died because the two of you spent so

reference to a toxic bit of local culture: ANGIE "my roof, my money, my rules".

↳ by doing so, she is "taking away" his control over her.

WAITRESS

[THEME] change & transition. Because she is growing & becoming less reliant, it changes the dynamics between them & he is struggling to deal with it [Inter-personal Conflict]

16 [Hokkien] Don't care about her! The three of us will eat!

17 [Hokkien] All right lah, all right lah...don't shout this way and that way to each other. Aiya, towkay ah, you sit down and I'll do the prawns for you all to eat lah.

much time quarrelling.

The waitress picks up a dead prawn, as if trying to shake it to life. She closes the lid, shakes them around and tries to get them to move. She is very perturbed. Mr Tan's face grows dark and he is very angry.

ANGIE

Illogical, because they were tortured with suffocation.

Also, this response

MR TAN

is inflammatory.

Exactly like Mr Tan's.

Interpersonal Conflict

There is a clash because of differences in love language.

ANGIE

MR TAN

To him, he just wants to give his daughters something that, to him, is special.

[THEME] Parental love is not always obvious, but it doesn't mean it does not exist.

ANGIE

It encourages him though. Religion can be a sensible topic.

ANGIE

WAITRESS

(to Mr Tan, triumphantly) Good. I'm glad they're already dead. You can't torture them now because they're already dead!

You shaddap¹⁸! Because of your nonsense, we've paid for very expensive dead prawns which should have been alive. If we wanted dead prawns, we could have saved a lot of money, you know! You think money is so easy to earn, is it?

I never asked to eat live prawns. I never asked you to spend so much money on my food!

Well, you're lucky you've got parents who want to spoil you. You think I got all these things when I was young? I only got to eat prawns on Chinese New Year, you know. (sarcastically) I don't know what's the big problem with you. You think the prawns got souls, is it?

Don't talk about souls, okay...if you can stand to see God's creatures suffer like that, I don't want to talk about your soul, okay! implying that his soul is damned. Far-fetched, but she is naive.

(getting up threateningly and dragging Angie by one arm) Don't you dare use religion against me! I've—had—enough—from—you!

Owww...

(bobbing up and down with basin of prawns in hand,

not knowing what to do) Aiyoh! Aiyoh!
 MRS TAN Okay...okay...enough! No...don't...
 ANGIE You can hit me but I won't eat your bloody prawns,
 okay!
 MR TAN You...
 Mr Tan lifts his hand, as if to strike Angie.
 ANGIE (simultaneously) Ahhh!
 CONNIE Pa, no!
 MRS TAN Stop it!
 WAITRESS Aiyoh!

Nobody's arm is that bad.
 He probably tried to stop
 himself but the momentum
 kept his arm going.

Point is → he tried to stop
 himself.

He keeps failing and he keeps
 trying. It is hard to be
 a parent.

MR TAN

[THEME] Parental love is not
 always obvious but that
 does not mean it does
 not exist.

[THEME - ROLE REVERSAL]

Even ~~Angie~~ (Connie,
 despite being the
 younger one, is mature
 enough to recognise that Angie
 went too far. If she doesn't
 want to eat, she doesn't
 have to but
 she does not have to force her
 stance onto others.

CONNIE

ANGIE

MRS TAN

Mr Tan accidentally hits the bowl that the waitress is carrying. The waitress drops the basin of prawns with a clatter. All the prawns spill onto the floor. Mr Tan is jolted from his anger and lets go of Angie. For the first time he notices the other diners (the audience) looking at him. Angie rubs her wrist and sobs, looking at the waitress apologetically picking up the prawns. Waitress exits. [Aposiopesis] He is very emotional and struggling with that.

I...you people...I'm going out to smoke. You all eat!
 I don't want to see a single prawn left over when I get back.

Mr Tan exits to the front of the stage. He takes out a cigarette but forgets to light it. He is deep in thought.

Ange...go and say sorry. Go, Ange...

(tearfully to Mrs Tan) Why is he like that? He's so unreasonable, Ma. Why does he always have to shout at me?

Why do you have to answer back? Would it kill you not to answer back for once? [ETHOS]

Backed by Mr Tan.

It is possible that Angie is like this because she is at that age where she is trying to figure out her identity and this is one she's picked

Between the two, Mrs Tan often uses the rhetorical device Ethos, which is why she is better than Mr Tan at controlling/ managing her daughters' behaviour. [ETHOS]

Mr Tan is more unequipped and emotional, and Angie is as emotional as he is.

[THEME] Conflicts in family do not always occur because we are so different, but because we are so alike.

He just resorts to telling them to "shut up" or "shaddup", which is not effective. It is also belittling & condescending which is his go-to when things are too much for him.

SCENE 2

19

Beat.

→ Awkward pause when she realises that her mother is right.

Why do you always put me in this position?

You go, Ma. You are good at this. Still doesn't want to bear responsibility.

You are grown up enough to speak up for prawns.

You go and speak for yourself now. But Mrs Tan is firm and is not allowing (trying to rally sibling support) Con...you come with me? her to be spoilt.

Connie is torn between conflicting loyalties.

The problem is between the two of you. Connie can't help.

Beat.

Go...

Angie goes out to speak to Mr Tan. When she sees him, Angie stops at a distance, and then proceeds cautiously.

Pa.

Pause.

Pa...come back in...please.

I haven't finished my cigarette.

Cigarettes aren't g— she is learning.

Angie stops herself from being so preachy. Mr Tan puts the cigarette back in the box. It is unlit anyway.

I...I'm sorry, Pa.

There is no response from Mr Tan.

I said I'm sorry, Pa.

Still no response from Mr Tan.

Look, what do you want me to say? I'll say whatever you want.

MR TAN

You are growing up so quickly. Too fast.

ANGIE

Ya, Pa. He is reflecting too, and being more open. By admitting this, he is being uncharacteristically vulnerable and transparent.

MR TAN And your pa is becoming very old-fashioned and awful...right? Like your grandpa was awful to me.

ANGIE No, Pa...

MR TAN Look, Angie. Pa is not going to stop eating what he likes just because you feel sorry for prawns, okay?

ANGIE But, Pa...

The use of [Ellipses] shows that there is much more but it is too much to list. Nevertheless, he tries to [ACCUMULATION]

In doing so, it paints a clear and overwhelming picture of how much he is bearing.

No, you listen. Things are beginning to change too fast for your ma and I. All these constant changes in your school syllabuses, worrying about your schools, your results...then we have our own grown-up worries too...GST increases, Electronic Road Pricing, plus any other new official schemes or policies, world financial crises, terrorists, wars, disasters—and then now you and your sister with all that conservation nonsense...

ANGIE It's not nonsense!

MR TAN Okay, wrong word. All that conservation stuff then... it's all too fast...and too much! You know what I mean?

ANGIE But you've got to keep up, Pa!

MR TAN You think I don't want to?

Beat. [THEME - Sometimes, generational gaps happen because of ageing] and it is both terrifying and inevitable. I can't, Angie. Pa and Ma are slowing down. You're growing up, so you've got to understand us a bit more. Be a bit more patient.

ANGIE But I don't want to eat drunken prawns.

MR TAN Okay, but don't force us not to eat them. It's not fair. And that goes for a bit of cholesterol here and a bit of sugar and salt there. You have your whole life ahead of you. Pa and Ma have less than half of

theirs left. *[IRONIC] because this entire conflict started with her bringing up "suay" things.*

ANGIE Pa...don't talk about these suay things, can or not.

MR TAN (suppressing a smile) You sound almost like me.

ANGIE No, I do not!

MR TAN (forcing himself to look serious) Of course you don't.

Pause.

(with a small, reconciliatory smile) Come, let's go in.

Mr Tan and Angie start walking back to the table and a much-relieved Mrs Tan and Connie.

ANGIE Let's order orh nee¹⁹. It's got lots of sugar and lard and everything bad. Just for tonight, I'll make a sacrifice and eat it. Just for your sake, Pa!

MR TAN (sitting down) Ya, sure...for my sake. It's your favourite dessert anyway!

ANGIE No, it's not! It's so unhealthy. You should see what it does to your arteries and...

MR TAN Aiya...just eat lah, just eat lah! Tomorrow we'll all go and exercise... *Compromising.*

Lights fade to black.

[THEME - ROLE REVERSAL] The text begins creating the impression that Angie is more mature than Mr Tan because she is learning & advising them where they "fail" to be responsible about their health.

This impression is further supported by how emotionally immature Mr Tan is, especially when [aux taposed] with Mrs Tan.

HOWEVER, this role reversal becomes less clear when we look at Angie's motives. She's being a know-it-all and enjoys being successful at persuading.

Mr Tan, on the other hand, constantly tries, for all his failings. So the perceived role reversal between them is not actually there.¹⁹