

BOOKENDS

► Stephanie Yap

READER: Yeo Yain Yam, 30, actress. Best known for her roles in films like *Singapore Dreaming* and *881*, the native of Johor is also a Life! Theatre Award-winning stage actress.

She will make a cameo in *Chesty Nutty Bang Bang: The Hairspray Of The Phoenix*, which is this year's edition of the annual theatrical roast. It is on at the Drama Centre Theatre from Wednesday to Feb 3.

What are you reading now?

I am reading *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. I was browsing at a bookstore and the line "For you, a thousand times over" on the second page caught my eye.

It is a story about two boys who grew up together. It starts in Kabul and carries on all the way to the United States, goes through Pakistan and ends up again in the US. It is a sad yet hopeful story, at points even painful.

The book beautifully captures the inner feelings of the characters, and these draw pictures of the place, the house and their lives in my mind.

As I read it I feel I am also part of the



ST FILE PHOTO

scene. It is like a time tunnel that transports you here and there - flashes of pieces of life that somehow add up to a clear, evocative picture, the relationship between the two boys, fathers and sons, and the twist in the story at the end.

If your house was burning down, which book would you save?

If my house was burning down, I wouldn't be saving books.

If I really had to save a book, it would be *Wong Ah Fook: Immigrant, Builder And Entrepreneur* by P. Lim Pui Huan, because I borrowed the book from a friend and I have to return it.

It documents the history of immigrants in the early days of pre-independence Malaysia, revolving around one of the founding fathers of Johor Baru.

It's a part of history that is not often told. It contains a lot of rare old photos and reproductions of paintings of the city from a private collection.

ysteph@sph.com.sg

The Kite Runner (\$17.12 with GST) is available at major bookstores, while *Wong Ah Fook* (\$24 with GST) is available from Select Books.



SUNDAY TIMES 20th Jan 2008

BESTSELLERS

Fiction

- (1) *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- (-) *7th Heaven* by James Patterson
- (3) *Double Cross* by James Patterson
- (6) *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* by Mitch Albom
- (2) *For One More Day* by Mitch Albom
- (7) *The Afghan* by Frederick Forsyth
- (8) *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time* by Mark Haddon
- (10) *P.S. I Love You* by Cecelia Ahern
- (5) *Stone Cold* by David Baldacci
- (9) *Venetian Betrayal* by Steve Berry

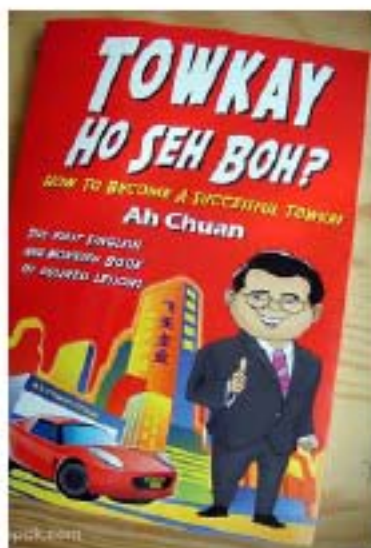
Non-fiction

- (2) *English As It Is Broken* by The Straits Times
- (4) *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne
- (3) *Marley And Me: Life And Love With The World's Worst Dog* by John Grogan
- (1) *Flying Star Feng Shui Made Easy* by Lillian Too
- (5) *Think Big And Kick Ass* by Donald Trump and Bill Zanker
- (7) *NS 40: In My Time* by Mr Miyagi
- (8) *I Can Make You Rich* by Paul McGeehan
- (-) *Towkay Ho Seh Boh? How To Become A Successful Towkay* by Ah Chuan
- (6) *The Age Of Turbulence* by Alan Greenspan
- (9) *The Complete TurtleTrader* by Michael W. Covel

Children's

- (1) *True Singapore Ghost Stories #17* by Russell Lee
- (2) *Valley Of The Giant Skeletons* by Geronimo Stilton
- (3) *Christmas Catastrophe* by Geronimo Stilton
- (-) *Mr Midnight #41: There Is A Witch In My Watch* by James Lee
- (4) *High School Musical 2* by N.B. Grace
- (5) *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling
- (6) *Heart To Heart (High School Musical: Stories From East High)* by Helen Pernelman
- (8) *The Mysterious Cheese Thief* by Geronimo Stilton
- (-) *The Daring Book For Girls* by Andrea J. Buchanan and Miriam Peskowitz
- (9) *Mr Midnight #40: What's That Under Our School?* by James Lee

This is Lifestyle's compilation of the week's bestseller lists from Books Kinokuniya, Borders, MPH, Page One VivoCity, Popular and Times bookstores. Numbers in brackets are the previous week's positions.



**NO. 8 ON
STRAITS TIMES
BESTSELLERS
LIST**

HEAR WHAT OTHERS SAY:

THE KEROPOK - SINGAPORE DAILY PHOTO

[HTTP://KEROPEKMAN.BLOGSPOT.COM/](http://keropekman.blogspot.com/)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2008

towkay ho seh boh? ... how to become a successful towkay. I was given this book to read. It's really a good read and a hilarious one too. It's something very Singaporean because of the language is a mixture of Singlish and Hokkien.

(Singlish is the so called Singapore version of unofficial spoken English. Something like how Aussies have English words that only they will understand, or pidgen English spoken by me or my friends from Solomon Islands and Samoa that I don't understand. Hokkien is a Chinese dialect spoken widely in Singapore.

If you have your enough of Drucker or Harvard Business Case Studies, get hold of a copy of this. It has very good business do's and don'ts. Some chapters inside: (I think people in Singapore and Malaysia will laugh) - Zou Seng Li Ai Gan Dan (Business ideas must be simple)

- Mai Zuo Number One (Don't be Number One)
- Ka Ka Lai Lah! (Be Brave!)
- Lao Sit Si Pun Ji (Honesty is your Capital)
- Tae Suah Liat Boh Tua Hee (A Short Fishing line never catches a Big Fish)
- Bao Shua Bao Hai (Do Everything in the beginning)
- Lang Kon GST, Wa Kong ERP (Others Say GST, I say ERP)
- Mai Zuo Lao Gao (Don't be a monkey)
- Ji Tua Tua, Thang Dua Lui (Big Aspirations, Big Money)
- Gang Lang Ma Si Lang (Employees are Humans too)
- many many more... haha...

RYAN'S RAMBLINGS: IT'S A RUGGED LIFE!

<http://ruggyryanlivesat.blogspot.com/2008/01/book-reviewtowkay-ho-seh-boh-how-to.html>

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 2008

Book Review: Towkay Ho Seh Boh? - How to Become a Successful Towkay

This book advertises itself as "The first Singlish and Hokkien book of business lessons", which was reflected in the book title. No joke. The writer certainly went out of his way to make sure that the book was written in a very heartlandish, distinctly Singaporean and colloquial tone. Very often, one comes across phrases like "I die die also must tell you...", "If people look at you and see you as a pai kia (gangster) they will run away..." in the book. Oh, don't worry if your command of Singlish and Hokkien is not great (I am terrible at Hokkien) – the author has helpfully included English translations.

To me, there are pros and cons with adopting such an informal style of writing. The pro is that it helps to endear the book to Singaporean readers. The advice the book dishes out seems less instructional and less dry as a result of the informal style. Instead of the feeling of attending a lecture or reading through some instruction manual, it feels as though one is having an informal chat with a towkay at some kopi tiam, listening to him share his wealth of experience which he has accumulated over the years through striking out on his own as a towkay.

On the other hand, some people may feel that because of the informal style of writing, this book is not professional and thus not worth buying or reading. As we all know, many people like to judge a book by its cover. But if readers do bother to read this book, I think they will find that while this book may not be as thick or as serious looking (or intimidating) as those self-help business tomes already out there on the market, but the 48 different advices within are succinctly put across and make good sense. They are helpful not only to budding towkays, but also to people who want to learn about life in general.

Let me cite one of the advices as an example. The advice is titled "Steady Poon Pi Pi" (Be Highly Skilled and Always Steady). In essence, the advice is that if a person wants to make it in business, he has to leverage on others' expertise to make up for his own deficiencies, since nobody can do everything. But in order to do so, he must be able to bring something to the table first, and that means building up an expertise in an area that would be invaluable to others. Hence, a budding towkay must invest the time and effort to build up an expertise that would be useful to others, to be "steady poon pi pi" in that area before he can tap on other people's strengths.

Also, what I like about this book is that it expands on some of the popular conventions emphasized in some business books. For instance, business books often only advise that one has to delegate the work away and build a business system that can run on its own, otherwise he will eventually be overwhelmed by the workload. But this book tells you that this is only half right, and in fact "Bao Shua Bao Hai" (Do everything) is inevitable, particularly in the beginning stages of building a business. The author "Ah Chuan" then explains why this is the case.

In a nutshell, I think this book is extremely readable and succinct - the author dispenses no less than 48 advices to readers within 121 pages. What's more, some of these pages contain humorous illustrations to make the book more interesting and lively. Don't be fooled by the informal style of writing or the humorous illustrations though - this book has some serious learning points that being a towkay is not all glamorous. There are plenty of blood, sweat and tears involved behind the big money and success that towkays are associated with.