

Introduction:

Inspired by D Scott's Tall Tale workshop, Tom Tan is attempting his first Tall Tale composition. Let's welcome Tom TAN, a Chinese character. A Chinese character, Tom TAN.

### A Chinese Character

Colonel Sanders, who invented KFC, used to have a Chinese protégé. His name is Tso. Tso is ambitious. Seeing Colonel's success with KFC, Tso is determined to create his own chicken dish. Educated in the United States (West Point Class 1888), he knows that he cannot steal Colonel's recipe and just be a copy cat. It is against the Constitution! He is looking for his special recipe...

Tso has a soft-spoken Chinese servant, whose name is Tan. Tan is a good cook. He has been cooking for his 500 pounds wife for the past ten years of their marriage. A side bar: the wife is about 100 pounds when they first meet. Tan feeds her well. Sidebar over. Knowing his master's problem, Tan suggests to Tso that he should put cornstarch, sugar and fire into the pot with the chicken to spice things up. Tso agrees to try. The first attempt fails – Tso feels that the chicken is not hot, passionate and exuberant enough (voice variety). They faithfully pray to ask for divine inspiration. Who said Chinese are atheist communists? Inspired by divine teaching, they decide to double down on the fire, and throw in TWO balls of fire into the pot. Bingo! The chicken taste just right. The dish then quickly spreads across the United States, from Kentucky all the way to Hawaii, from Florida all the way to Alaska, from Mississippi all the way to Missouri. Because of the success of the dish, West Point decides to award its glorious alumnus Tso an honorary rank of General. The United States Naval Academy of course cannot lose to West Point. They award Tso an honorary rank of Admiral, and refers to the dish at their main mess hall as "Admiral Tso's Chicken". I am not kidding.

Tso, now General Tso, is so moved by his achievement that one day he decides to paint a traditional Chinese picture to commemorate his entrepreneurial success as a *Crazy Rich Asian*. The first thing he paints is that initial ball of fire he and Tan throw into the pot. (Draw one flame of fire). Then he remembers that god-inspired second ball of fire, and paints it. (Draw another flame of flame on top of the other). The two balls of fire remind General Tso of a Chinese character – "never lose faith" (praying gesture). The two flames also remind General Tso that his dish sets the world on fire, which brings a smile to the General's face. After painting the two dancing flames, General Tso paints a mouth (Draw a mouth). A mouth is a pathway, where everything goes, including outgoing words, and incoming chicken. Finally, General Tso draws four strikes of different lengths, which stand for the four-piece suggested serving size of General Tso's chicken. General sees all that he has painted, "and it is very good." "What should I call this painting?" General Tso ponders (plays with his beard). He decides to name this pre-modern-art painting after Tan to thank his contribution to the dish. He still has not decided on its English name. He does not want the painting to be lost in translation.

After seeing the success of General Tso's chicken, Colonel Sanders one day comes to the Tso's house to congratulate him. Unfortunately, Tso is not at home. Tan welcomes the Colonel to the house. Not knowing much English, Tan offers Colonel tea in Chinese, "Chi-Cha", which literally means "Have Tea". I am not kidding. Colonel is 90 years old, and refuses to use hearing aid,

because it does not look COOL. He mistakenly thinks the soft-spoken Tan wants him to “CHIT-CHAT” instead. You don’t know our Colonel is a TALKER. He launches into a long monologue about his KFC, his goatee and his white suit, with both of his eyes as closed as a pickle jar, but mouth as opened as the Niagara Falls. Poor Tan. After a half-day of Colonel Sander’s monologue, General Tso returns at last. After finding out what happens between the two, General bursts into laughter. “Eureka! I finally find a good English name for the painting.”

This is how the Chinese character TAN is created, and how it gets its English translation “chit-chat”. And I am not kidding. If you like this story, you might consider TAN for your next Tattoo. By the way, this character is the family name of my ancestors – my great great great grandmother was once a 500-pound mamacita.