

OH!



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Performed by

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Lighting, Set & Sound Design: Elangovan
Music (Violin): Lee Gao Ju
Production & Stage Manager: S Thenmoli

Written and directed by Elangovan

I love Singapore. It is an honest mistake. What to do? Do you think I, a magician have gone mad? You believe you are normal because you think you are mentally organized? You are proud that you are cultured and refined as your behaviour is deemed socially acceptable by other monkeys around you? You have joined the tribe that listens, thinks and excretes the same and forms the majority segment of this society? You are sane and only your dominant group will define insanity for those like me who dance to a different beat? What will happen when you meet a clinically registered insane person and your sanity is defined by that insane person's action? What will happen to your world when I get an opportunity to re-define your sanity with my magic wand at a convenience store? Have you ever been possessed by a chatty ghost before? Have you ever helped your senile mother to slice her jugular vein? Have you heard voices ringing non-stop in your head telling you to terminate those who: - do not sing the national anthem because it is the language of a race you can't stand; switch off the life-support system of the local brain-dead soldier for organ transfer to save a foreign dictator; blackmail and molest the pizza-delivery boy for being late; interrogate the idealistic reporter for telling the truth; stab a foreign talent for refusing to appreciate your magic? My home-visit is due. I *Tak boleh tahan* (cannot take it) anymore. Can I, a schizophrenic, I mean an 'urban shaman' kill someone with kindness please?

Excerpts from OH! :-

BLINDSPOT

[Spook - Dew & Reporter - Gillian]

[The editorial spook of the national print-media is disciplining an idealistic reporter in her office.]

Spook: When Marie Antoinette was informed that her French subjects had no bread to eat, she remarked: 'No bread to eat? Tell them to eat cake!' That was in the 18th century and she lost her head. Whenever the obscene word inflation hits my eardrums, I am reminded of Marie Antoinette's well-coiffed head. What will the head utter if picked up by one of our can-pickers? Will it demand for freedom of expression?

Reporter: Yes I wrote it.

Spook: Are you predicting a revolution here?

Reporter: Revolution? I am a plain journalist. I am a god-fearing Christian.

Spook: No! Reporter my dear. You need to attain some experience and maturity to be a journalist. Most of you under my supervision are mere reporters until I ink the promotion letter. And I don't care about your religious affinity. It has nothing to do with your job description and contract. Get it?

Reporter: What is this session for? Is this an investigation? Have I committed a crime?

Spook: Shall we call it an inquiry? And yes. You gave committed a media-crime that is rather pretty close to a seditious act.

Reporter: Sedition? All I did was to write an innocuous article last night and it is yet to be printed.

Spook: It was sent to me by the night editor. Brilliant foreign talent. We pay this Indian trash a good sum, just to identify troublesome 'reporters-without-borders' kind of cockroaches. His expertise is in reading between the lines in well-crafted articles. Very irreverent article. The subtext says that the people are pissed of with our system and a revolution is brewing. If a revolution is brewing, does it mean the frustrated people will decide the fate of our government in the next election?

Reporter: You are kidding. It is a human-angle article. It is about inflation and the survival instinct of scavengers. I interviewed several can-pickers about

their livelihood and difficulties. I did not write any political article. I have no political acumen or inclination. My forte is in lifestyle articles about high society and food and wines. This is my first article about lowlife characters. I suspect you are accusing me of writing an offensive political commentary. I don't have such critical intellectuality. I am politically stupid. That's why you gave me the overseas scholarship in journalism.

Spook: Have you finished? You graduated overseas. Have lived too long in a western society. The western setting encourages irreverence. A disrespect for all things contemporary. Yes the western school of journalism attributes that quality to their high innovation rate but don't forget the decadence and anti-authority stance. In our Confucian society, reverence is the order of the day. There will be no change in the social order unless prodded and poked by our master America or pushed by a natural or economic disaster for survival. Get it?

Reporter: I don't get it. It is so complex. I am getting a migraine attack.

Spook: Do you know something? Your story stinks. I flew back from my medical treatment for cancer just to neutralize the situation in the newsroom. If your article had been read by our great father, all our heads would have rolled like Marie Antoinette's. That's why I have no respect for worms like you. From now on, I will vet your stories personally. Get it?

Reporter: You are reading too much. It is a harmless article about some old ladies who make a living by scavenging for drink cans at bus-stops and food-courts. I used them as a barometer of our inflation and lauded their survival instinct to overcome financial woes in this bloody society, which worships money as god. That's all I have to say. Period!

Spook: *[Infuriated]* Period? How dare you argue with me? I have been in this business far too long. I am not an imbecile like you. Haven't you heard from your colleagues that I was handpicked by the No. 1 himself from intelligence for my exceptional skills? I was appointed here to monitor and control to make sure the media is always kept as a lap dog to serve its masters. I am a blunt and brutal high-income overseer. I can whip you into cream or make you scream for mercy you petty bitch. Now tell me. Who gave you the intro line about Marie Antoinette for the article?

Reporter: It is original. I took it from some history book.

Spook: Really? Your article touched on Rule of Law, Separation of Powers, Natural Justice, Jurisprudence, and Ethical Behavior, the conventions of Ministerial Responsibility and Popularity, and People-power. You had asked the can-pickers about the relevance of these democratic principles, which fed the fire of idealism in other countries that disposed their

dictators. But your can-picking aunties shook their hotheads and said everything is okay in this country right? Everything in this country is okay right? Everything right?

Reporter: No. They said that the gods in power have become demons.

Spook: I had it deleted and inserted what our bosses want to hear.

Reporter: It is against the fundamental principle of journalism. We have to let truth be truth.

Spook: Truth cannot be displayed as truth. It has to be cloaked with lies. The seeker will find it if he is lucky. Since independence my media has been embellished with countless lies. We are the pawns that adorn the chessboard. We spin the stories as ordered. We are going to open up the space for free speech. You must speak up. But don't ever have an opinion. We are uniquely Singapore. We are not a newspaper. We are a newsletter run by spin-doctors. Our job is to fabricate with class. You should get used to 'being used'. Just take a fat paycheck home and be happy. I will give you more all paid for assignments to cover foreign tourist spots. Agree?

Reporter: What if I disagree?

Spook: Shall I play the voice recording of your conversation with that pseudo-dissident writer at Starbucks last week? We could use it against you. Do you want to sell chicken-rice for the rest of your life with your parents at that smelly hawker-centre again?

Reporter: He was just a stranger. Introduced by a friend I met at Starbucks. He was joking about Marie Antoinette's head and the social climate of fear in Singapore. I took the line because it was funny.

Spook: *[Shouts]* Don't give those despicable motherfuckers any importance. They emerge protesting right from their mummy's cunt and into their wife's cunt and all the way into the earth's cunt. Get it cunt? You should not laugh at their jokes about our rule of law. They will always criticize that this is a capitalist society created with a communist heart. Get it? Remember! When a stranger chats you in this great nation of ours, it is either he wants to sell you something shitty or promote his religion or piss in your mouth. So watch it. Get it?

Reporter: I get it now. I made a mistake. Sorry. What should I do? Please guide me. I need your advice.

Spook: Take this tissue. Wipe your tears. I don't like to see a journalist cry. Yes you have blossomed into a journalist now. You are learning. Next time, when you want to report about negative local events, leave it to the ethnic

papers. Such negative events should not be reported or give only brief exposure. We don't want to turn off our potential business investors who rely on our English print. The locals can read the trash in the ethnic media. You should give more coverage to happy happy news items, our bosses kissing or changing babies' Diapers, well-sanitized arts events, students' tasteless events, who made the longest poop in the toilet for world record etcetera. Get it?

Reporter: Yes Ma'am. I get it.

Spook: Take a break. Airticket for a week's Bali trip is on your table. Assignment plus holiday. Come back fresh. You have to excuse me now. I have to vet other reports. *[She answers her mobile.]* Yes Sir. Chicken. Can be used. Oh! You were watching the session on your laptop. Thank you Sir. Happy National Day Sir. Good night Sir. *[To the audience]* I love Singapore. It is an honest mistake. What to do?

BON APPETIT

[Magician - Max Ling & Foreign Talent Indian - Ali]

[Hawker centre. Foreign Talent Indian is having his meal. Chinese Magician approaches him.]

Magician: Excuse me Sir. Is anybody sitting here?

Indian: No.

Magician: Do you mind if I sit here Sir?

Indian: Not at all.

Magician: Thank you Sir. *[He is fascinated by the Indian's eating habit. Drums on the table with his fingers.]*

Indian: *[Feeling uneasy]* You are not eating anything?

Magician: Don't worry about me. I have ordered my food. Just waiting. Enjoy your meal.

Indian: Why are you looking like that?

Magician: Looking like what?

Indian: I mean you keep looking at me eating. Something wrong?

Magician: Nothing.

Indian: I think they have forgotten your order. It always happens here you know.

Magician: I don't know.

Indian: Oh! I'll just eat my food.

Magician: Oh! I am also going to eat my food. They told me to wait. Too many customers. And I have been waiting so long to get a seat.

Indian: How long have you been waiting?

Magician: Last Christmas! I ordered my food last Christmas and they are still preparing it.

Indian: Christmas? *[Laughs]* If I were you, I would have killed them for making me wait so long.

Magician: One must be kind to others. In fact, they are helping me to test my patience ... to get rid of my bad karma. But my brilliant friend here instigates me to kill them.

Indian: Friend? You mean ME? I don't think I am your friend.

Magician: Not you. This friend. He is standing between us. See. He is making faces at you. Like this *[makes faces]*.

Indian: I don't see anyone. Must be invisible man.

Magician: Ordinary people cannot see him.

Indian: So you think you are ...

Magician: Extra-ordinary. Yes I am. Even if you don't agree.

Indian: *[Laughing]* Now who is this invisible friend actually?

Magician: Ghost!

Indian: You must be joking. This is really a free lunchtime entertainment.

Magician: I don't tell jokes.

Indian: Then what do you do? Bother others who are having their lunch. I think we should stop this conversation.

Magician: Thank you for your understanding. I am not having a conversation. I am talking to my friend. Nevermind. Enjoy your meal. *[Slurps and imitates Indian's physical gestures.]*

Indian: Excuse me! Are you making fun of me?

Magician: No your excellency.

Indian: Then why are you imitating me? Eating and slurping like me. Are you irritating me?

Magician: I am only enjoying my food.

Indian: There is no food for you on this table. Remember? You have been waiting since Christmas.

Magician: But there is food.

Indian: Where?

Magician: *[Pointing at Indian's food]* Here!

Indian: This is my food. I paid for it with my money. I am entitled to enjoy my meal.

Magician: No! You are eating my food. I am being generous. Be grateful that I have given up my share of the food to feed a greedy materialistic soul from fucking dirty India who speaks fucking stupid Indian English like you.

Indian: Nonsense! This is my food. And I am not going to share it with a scum like you.

Magician: Food is like god. *[Digs his nose, rolls the snot and places it in the centre of the table.]* God belongs to everyone. So food must be shared with good *[farts]* in-house music. Bon Appetit.

Indian: Oi! I am eating. Please have some decency.

Magician: Decency? You mean like this. Excuse me your honour, can you pleeeeee FUCKfuckfuckfuckmeeee!

Indian: Fuck? I am Indian. I don't fuck Chinese. For heaven's sake. I am eating ...

Magician: ... your wife's *cheebye*? Too salty? Didn't she wash it? Too much salt will increase your blood pressure.

Indian: Shut up. You are getting vulgar and personal. If you don't leave, I will call the police to put you away.

Magician: Where?

Indian: Institute of Mental Health.

Magician: Oh no! I am sorry your excellency. I didn't mean it. Have mercy on me. It is this ghost. He is making me say all this funny things. He wants me to make you angry. Please help me to chase away this ghost. I am so scared. You expected me to say all these? Go on. Use your mobile. Call the police poodles. Go on. Don't look around. All these arseholes will never come to help you. This is Singapore man. Singaporeans got no balls. While you call the poodles, I will show you some magic. I need your fork now. *[Magician practices the spoon bending magic trick.]*

Indian: *[Calls the police]* Hello! Good afternoon. I need help. There is a problem. I am having my meal at this hawker centre. In Potong Pasir. Yes. In the opposition ward. You will still come right. It depends? I know you people are very busy. But I am a taxpayer and it is your duty to save my life. Now listen. This psycho is bothering me. Male. Chinese. Yes. He is sitting in front of me. At my table. He is not eating. He is disturbing me. Physically? No. Verbally? Yes. But it affects me mentally you know. Not dirty. He is well dressed. Any weapon? Yes. His filthy tongue. No other weapon. Did not threaten to kill me. But, he is intimidating. Using vulgar words. You want me to say what he said. Sure? I am sorry to say this. He asked whether I am eating my wife's *cheebye* and asked whether it is too salty because she did not wash it. And furthermore he said that too much salt will shoot up my blood pressure. No no no. *Cheebye* is not a vegetable. It means pussy. Not pussy cat. The one that a lady like you also have. I mean your private part. Which private part? Oh my god! You want me to spell it for you. Vietnam America Germany India Norway Australia. Yes. That's what I am trying to tell you. Vagina. Sorry. I am not making any nuisance call. You have my mobile number captured on your system right? Okay? No he is not concerned about my health. He is simply talking rubbish. He is not alone. He is with his friend. You want me to find out whether his friend is PR (permanent resident) or Singapore

citizen? But I cannot see his friend. Why? Because his friend is a ghost damn it. I am not trying to be funny and I am not crazy. This guy is crazy and he is talking about my wife's *cheebye*, which even I have never seen in the light before. Why? Because I want to save electricity for the rebates offered by the government. You must do something about it now. This is invasion of my privacy. What? You want me to tell him off politely? He is making faces. *[To Magician]* Hey *cheebye*! Fuck off before I fuck your backside with that fork. No. I didn't scold you. Him. He is not moving at all. Look! He is grinning. Okay. Tell me what to do now? Why should I leave this table? I sat here first. I can afford to buy food. I pay more tax. So I have more right to this table. H has no money to buy food. He has no right to this space. Be kind to him? This could be a Singapore Kindness Movement special programme? I see. They are testing me? I might win a prize for being tolerant and kind to my fellow citizen? 1st prize to Chengdu in China to see pandas. Not bad. Anything free in Singapore is good for a foreign talent like me from India. Thank you for the information. I will cooperate. No problem. Sorry for the inconvenience. Have a nice day.

Magician: See how I bend the fork. Straight. Bent. Say, between us, who is straight and who is bent?

Indian: I am straight and you are bent. Oops! Sorry. I am bent and you are straight brother.

Magician: Are you sure?

Indian: Yes brother. What does your ghost friend say? Hello ghost. How are you? Join me? Want any drink?

Magician: My ghost friend says bent people have no right to live because they eat other people's share. Bent people have no soul. Bent people have no shadow.

Indian: Of course. Brother. Whatever you say. It's the reality. Go on talking. I'm listening. Hey! What is the prize? Give me the first prize. We can share it you know.

Magician: *[Stabs Indian's throat with the fork]* Here is the first prize for being so kind to me your excellency. Can say thank you or not? Your parents never teach you manners is it? *Bon Appetit!*