

SUFFIAN
HAKIM

HARRIS BIN POTTER

AND THE STONED
PHILOSOPHER



A
PARODY
LAH!



“Laugh
until cry.”

Gwee Li Sui,
author of
Spiaking
Singlish

“Hilariously-written, completely Singaporean-sounding.”

Mothership

“Our favourite Harry Potter references are given a ridiculous local update.”

The Everyday People

“So disarmingly out of left-field that even Muggles—or should I say kosongs—will find lots to chuckle over.”

May Seah, *The Movie That No One Saw*

“*Harris bin Potter* lets every void-deck dwelling, soccer-playing, heartland-loving individual dive deeply into the lore of magic, mystery, mischief and mat-inspired magnificence. Suffian’s wit and ability to make readers (me at least) spit on a page laughing is so natural.”

Tim De Cotta, musician

“I first picked up a copy of *Harris Bin Potter* just because it had a funny sort of title—its naming game continues throughout the book, with local and pop cultural references aplenty, bouncing off the Harry Potter universe. It reminded me of a book I read when I was young—*Oh No, It’s the Kitchi Boy Gang!*, which was one of my first encounters with local writing, packed with unique flavours that were never quite in the Hardy Boys or Three Investigators books. Given a chance, this new illustrated edition of *Harris Bin Potter* might conjure up the same magic for you!”

Sonny Liew, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*



HARRIS BIN POTTER

AND THE STONED
PHILOSOPHER

ALSO BY SUFFIAN HAKIM

The Minorities

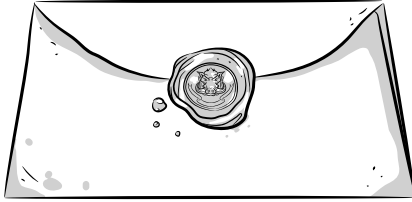
(And Author's Preferred Text, Because This Time He Wrote It Sober)

SUFFIAN HAKIM

illustrated by MUHAMMAD IZDI



EPIGRAM
SINGAPORE · LONDON



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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

First edition, November 2019.

This
collocat
colokiehl
coloqueer
kolotoure
con los terroristas
colloquial
parody
is dedicated
to the memory of
Christopher Tulsidaz,
who never showed me
how to spell
but taught me
how to laugh.

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Author's Note

Welcome back, dear reader, to *Harris bin Potter and the Stoned Philosopher*! You hold in your hands the Epigram Books edition—a considerable upgrade from the self-published version that came out in 2014 and was reprinted in 2015 and 2016. In this edition, the prose flows more logically, the jokes have been updated and THERE. ARE. ILLUSTRATIONS.

For those of you who are reading *Harris bin Potter and the Stoned Philosopher* for the first time, welcome to the adventure! I promise it will be offbeat and zany. We'll prance on the line between the farcical and the satirical, and we'll question the deeper nature of said line. We'll even dip our toes into the surreal.

It feels like a thousand years ago that *Harris bin Potter* went viral and was shared on Facebook, forums and message boards, and through word of mouth. It feels like a thousand years ago that my blog stats exploded with over 50,000 unique visits. I don't even know 50,000 people in real life.

In actuality, it was ten years ago, in 2009, that a much younger me typed out the first two paragraphs of *Harris bin Potter*. Almost four years later, it became a book. Today, it is brought to you by one of Singapore's greatest publishers.

Writing *Harris bin Potter* has been one of the greatest blessings of my life for a few reasons:

1. It kickstarted my career as an author, something I am eternally grateful for.
2. Parodies are always fun to write. It is the literary equivalent of legally dancing around naked in someone else's house.
7. I'm really bad at counting and making lists so I don't have too many other options, career-wise.

At this point, I need to send my love to my editor Eldes Tran, without whom the book would have been a discordant mess. Thank you for your patience, warmth and intelligence. I hope my future books will give you less of a headache.

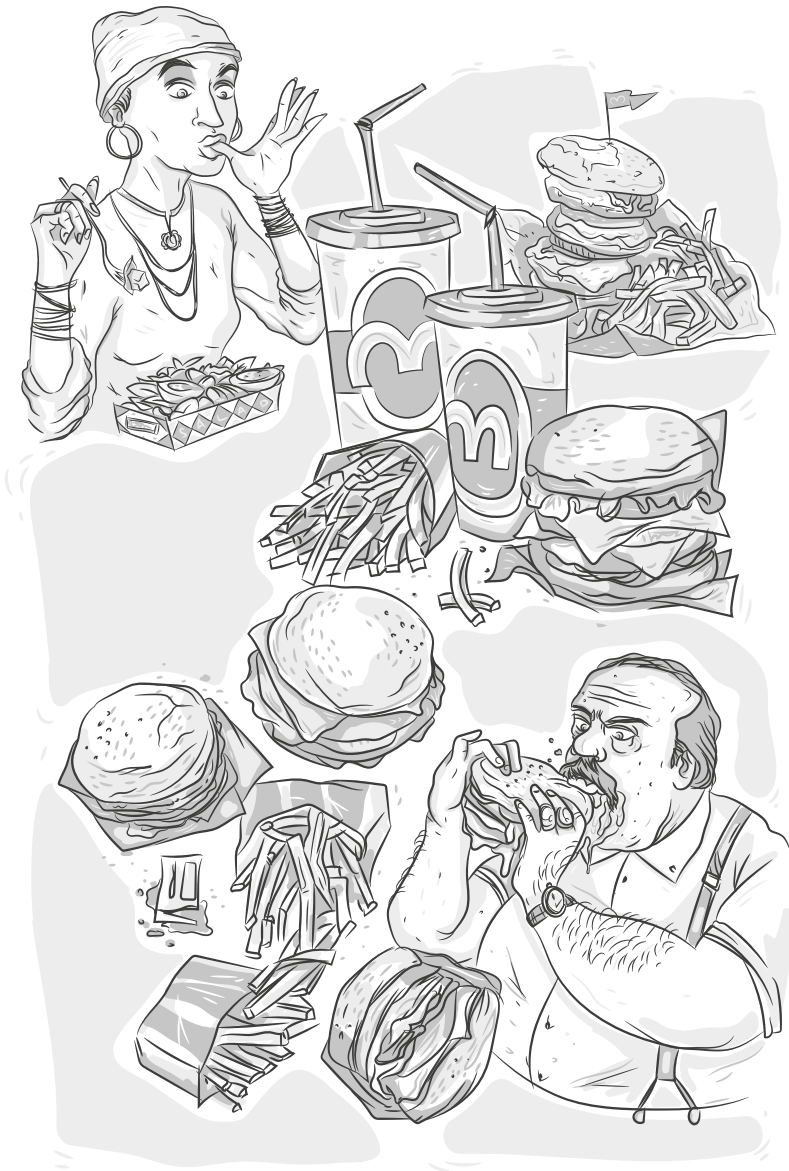
My gratitude also goes to Edmund Wee and the team at Epigram, for picking up an untested author's first attempt at a book and turning it into something much more magical.

Major love also to the brilliant Muhammad Izdi, who has wonderfully brought my imagination to life with his illustrations. I also need to send my love to the people who were there from the start of this endeavour. Marvin Miranda, Paul Twohill, Guy Vincent, Yusilawaty Yatiman, I would never have gotten here without your support and belief in those early days.

Last but not least, this goes to the love of my life, Shelby Sofya Segar, without whom this would all be for nothing.

But enough from me. Let's get into *Harris bin Potter and the Stoned Philosopher*.





Chapter 1

The Boy Who Tak Mati, Siol!

Pandir and Petom Palliteration of Block 222, Tampines Street 24, were proud to say that they wanted ten super jumbo triple cheeseburger meals—change the Coke to iced Milo—thank you very much. “And a salad,” Petom added to the bespectacled teenager serving them at the Mat-Sedap counter.

The Palliterations were the kind of people who had a healthy attitude towards overeating because it proved to others that they had the money to overeat.

And the money to overeat they had. The Palliterations weren't member-of-Parliament rich. If one were to describe them as Crazy Rich Asians, one would only be two-thirds correct. They were nevertheless able to afford more creature comforts than most, for Pandir was the CEO of a moderately successful drill manufacturing company called The Drill Sergeants Private Limited. As a company name, it was catchier than, say, Grun-

nings, which is a fictional British drill manufacturing firm. It was by far a better name than that of a training consultancy for housewife-entrepreneurs called We Drill Your Wives' Private Limited, which was often misconstrued to be a support group for housewives looking for more excitement in their lives.

The teenaged MatSedap employee blinked at the Palliterations. He considered Pandir: big, beefy, with hardly any neck—a polite way of describing a man who was so fat, the teen's colleague at the next cash register was momentarily confused as to who was supposed to serve Mr Palliteration when the rotund man waddled to the front of the queue. Pandir was wearing a black shirt, its seams straining and its buttons almost snapping off the thread, with a gaudy dragon motif sewn in glittering gold over his right breast. Because of how the shirt stretched against Pandir's form, the dragon's eyes were widened into shock and disbelief, giving the overall effect of a once-opulent beast being slowly swallowed by a supermassive black hole. Petom, on the other hand, dressed in a sky-blue, lacy "simple evening gown made by French hands"—her words—and was tall and skinny, with a long face stretched by her perpetual disdain for all things. Some of their neighbours would describe her as having a "horse face", something both Petom and horses as a species did not appreciate.

The teenager said to the couple, "Don't mind, but, can I ask—are all these meals just for the both of you?"

Pandir leaned over the counter—it creaked from the pressure—and peered contemptuously at the boy, scanning from his barely held-together smile to the green-and-black MatSedap name tag above his breast pocket that said, "Ian Tai".

"Look here, Lantai," Pandir said, jabbing a pudgy finger at the boy.

"It's Ian, sir, with an I—"

"Don't interrupt me!"

Ian cowered slightly. He felt floored, especially at being called Lantai. This man was so huge, he must have been the love child of an elephant and a steamroller, something both steamrollers and elephants as a species did not appreciate. He stammered his apology.

"Yes, all these meals are for us," Pandir declared proudly, smiling with morbid glee at the boy's fearful visage. "Now, stop wasting our time and get us our food, Lantai!"

Ian stammered the order into his microphone. His voice echoed in the kitchen behind him. Moments later, the kitchen door swung open and a frazzled man wearing a hairnet and a MatSedap apron stood there, wide-eyed and wider mouthed.

"You're joking, right?" the incredulous cook asked Ian.

Ian shook his head.

The cook's eyes darted from Ian to Pandir, to Pandir's numerous chins and immense belly. "You know, diabetes is the number one—"

"GET ME MY FOOD, OR I WILL EAT ALL OF YOU!"

Because they believed him, the MatSedap workers scurried to prepare the ten super jumbo triple cheeseburger meals—

"And don't forget my salad!" Petom's shrill voice cut through the air like a knife through a cow.

"Yes, sir. Yes, ma'am," said Ian, thinking that these might actually be his final words. Hoping to appease the large man, he stuttered, "If—if you'd like, we still have our National Day

special: the Merlion upsize. It upgrades your super jumbo meals to Merlion size, and your iced Milos to Milo Dinosaurs.”

Pandir’s large stomach gave a repulsive growl. He said gruffly, “Good. Give me that.”

Then: “Wait! What, in the name of Lee Kuan Yew’s unshaved leg hair, is a Milo Dinosaur?”

“It’s a larger cup of iced Milo topped with a generous serving of Milo powder,” Ian replied.

Petom mouthed Ian’s response to herself silently, her long face twisting in concentration and the realisation that, in the MatSedap employee’s description, there was no mention of— “Where’s the dinosaur?”

“Are you really asking— No, ma’am, there’s no actual—”

Her husband chimed in, “And which dinosaur is it? Because if it’s a T-Rex I expect a very large cup.”

“There’s no actual dinosaur in the drink. They’ve been extinct for a long time now, ma’am.”

Petom wore a characteristic frown. “Is it dinosaur flavoured?”

Ian opened his mouth, but could not find the words to express his astonishment at the utter stupidity of the couple before him. “What do you mean?” he mustered.

“You know, like Pink Dolphin,” Pandir said in support of his wife. “It’s dolphin flavoured.”

“Yes, exactly,” Petom said, nodding, while Ian Tai made a mental note to submit this encounter to ServiceIndustryNightmareStories.com later. “Is this Milo dinosaur flavoured?”

“HOW CAN ANYTHING BE DINOS—” The MatSedap employee stopped and steadied himself and cleared his throat. “No, ma’am. It is completely Milo flavoured. No dino-

sours were harmed in the making of this drink.”

“Good,” Petom said imperiously. “I don’t want one of those prissy vegan brats breathing down my neck.”

Pandir, however, was still unconvinced about the appeal of Milo Dinosaur. “So let me get this right,” he said, as the people in the queue behind him began muttering irritably. “There’s Milo powder on top of a large Milo? It sounds like a large, very diluted, very tasteless Milo with undissolved powder that you lot didn’t stir properly.”

Ian Tai, of course, denied this, and explained that it was a well-mixed Milo, with extra powder to top it. Perhaps it was to offer a variety in textures, he offered.

“Maybe that’s why they call it a Milo Dinosaur,” said Petom thoughtfully—which is to say, “full of thought”, and not “thinking of others”, for she had clearly refused to listen to her server. “Because dinosaurs don’t stir. Have you seen a T-Rex’s hands?” She brought her arms close to her body so all that stuck out were claw-like hands. She mimicked picking up a spoon with her claw-hands, then she mimicked an inability to hold on to said hypothetical spoon.

“What are you doing, ma’am?”

“Trying to pick up a spoon as a T-Rex.”

Noticing the obviously annoyed queue behind Pandir and Petom, Ian said quickly, “So that’ll be ten Merlion meals—and a salad—and, um, your drinks will be...Pepsi?”

Pandir paused. He parted his lips to answer, but snapped them back shut in the realisation that, in the course of discussing the nature of a Milo Dinosaur, his mouth had begun watering. He swallowed. Then he opened his mouth again,

causing a renegade strand of spittle to reach for the floor. He caught it with his hand and wiped it on the counter, saying, “We’ll have the Milo Dinosaurs.”

“A good choice, sir,” Ian said with a forced, courteous smile. He also made a mental note to sterilise the counter with industry-grade surface cleaner and fire, possibly.

The Palliterations took six trips to carry their food from the counter, ignoring the glares and irritated mutters of the queue they had held up, to their table in a secluded corner of the restaurant—“far away from the smelly common folk”, as Petom described it.

Over their mountain of food and solitary salad, husband and wife conversed happily. They spoke to each other of their love; they discussed popular television shows they watched, such as *Singapore Idol* and *Survivor*, though they’d lost track of which sun-drenched island the latter reality show was currently on. They also spoke lovingly of their infant son.

Two Novembers ago, Petom gave birth to a healthy seven-kilogram baby boy. They named their son Dada—not after the Malay word for “chest”, or the baby word for “daddy”, but after Pandir’s favourite art movement. Initially, Pandir had wanted to name him Dumbass (pronounced Dee-yoom-bays), which he believed sounded “exotically Scandinavian”. Petom vetoed it with the screams of a woman who had gone through four hours of labour to find out that her son was named Dumbass.

In any case, Petom found that she liked the name Dada, and was especially relieved that her husband’s favourite art movement hadn’t been SoFlo Superflat or Faeces Mural.

Petom and Pandir deeply loved Dada and in their opinion, he was the finest boy in all of Singapore. It was a strange way to describe a baby who hadn’t even turned one. Most people would describe their babies as “the cutest” or “the most adorable”. “Finest” was used to describe furniture or truffles or public train systems.

The Palliterations had a lot to be proud of, other than their vocabulary. But they did have one shameful secret. No, wait—six. They had six shameful secrets. One of them was the bin Potters.

Lalang bin Potter was Petom’s sister and only remaining family. Despite this, Petom wanted the bin Potters to represent her family like the Central Narcotics Bureau want Willie Nelson to represent it.

The bin Potters also had an infant son, named Harris. *Typical* was what Petom spitefully thought of her nephew’s name. *No way in hell* was what she thought of Dada spending time with this Harris character. *Italics* was what she thought people from Italy were called.

Presently, Petom took two small forkfuls of salad before disdainfully pushing the plate away. She then gestured to a MatSedap cleaner, and told the frail old man to throw it away.

“Please, ma’am,” the cleaner croaked, “this is such a waste of perfectly decent food.” His voice softened. “Think of the kids in Africa who are starving and have never eaten a salad.”

“Not that it’s any of your business, old man,” said Petom shrilly, “but I *am* thinking of those goddamn kids. I’m thinking, it’s probably those kids in Africa who made this salad because only people who have never had a salad can make one this horrendous.” She passed the plate to the cleaner,

and made a disgusted face as she did so. “Take it away from me now!”

After Petom finished her quarter-of-a-meal and Pandir finished his ten, they took a half-minute taxi ride back to their flat at Block 222, Tampines Street 24. At the lift landing, husband and wife parted ways. Pandir went towards the mailboxes, while Petom headed on upstairs to their flat on the thirteenth floor to check on Dada and their babysitter.

Pandir had almost reached the mailboxes when a sharp glint of light from the opposite block caught his eye. He turned to look, and realised it wasn't exactly a glint of light. It was a rather peculiar rainbow, and it was peculiar for three reasons. For one, it was night-time. Furthermore, it wasn't bowed as rainbows were named to be; this one was straight, but a “rainstraight” just sounded stupid. Also, it wasn't in the sky—this rainbow streaked across the empty void deck in the opposite block.

Pandir shook his head. Maybe he shouldn't have eaten ten meals. His head was never right when he was underfed. He opened the mailbox, grabbed the stack of letters inside, locked the box and headed upstairs.

Back in his apartment, Pandir paid the babysitter, kissed his sleeping infant son and took a shower. When he stepped out of the shower, he found his wife on the phone, crying.

“B-Blow-Blown up? What do you mean the bin Potters were blown up?” she sobbed into the phone.

Pandir put a large arm around her shoulder, and held her close. As his wife would tell him after she hung up, Petom's sister and her sister's husband had been brutally murdered by one of their kind, and baby Harris would be left in the care of

his only remaining family—the Palliterations. Despite the awful news, Pandir thought it was commendable that they were duly informed. They could have, instead, found the baby left rudely at their doorstep, with merely a perfunctory letter to explain who he was.



At the empty, dim void deck of Block 222, Tampines Street 24, midnight had taken over.

And then there were footsteps.

They grew steadily louder. They were quick, sprightly, like those of a gleefully hopping child. A long shadow stretched over the void deck, as a tall figure stepped under the lights.

It was revealed to be an old man wearing what appeared to be purple pyjama robes and vintage fuchsia cowboy boots. His complexion was heavily tanned and wrinkled, like a corduroy potato—a corduroy potato with a deep forehead and a pair of thick star-shaped glasses perched atop a rather pronounced nose. And then there was the beard—as white as the midnight sky was black—and so long that he had to tuck it into his belt. Under the illumination of the void deck lights, the man looked positively ancient. He skipped along the concrete, a rather alarming sight, especially of someone with that much white beard and whose legs looked as though someone had thrown skin over a pair of chopsticks. This was Professor Airbus Dinosaur, known to his enemies as “ARGH NO NOT YOU AGAIN”; to passers-by as “That Old Man, I Bet You My CPF Money He's on Cocaine”; and to his friends, students and colleagues as “Pakcik Dollah”.

There was a soft mewl near his feet. Pakcik Dollah looked down to see a dark tabby cat pressing its body up against his boots. “Professor Munira McGonnercall! Fancy seeing you here!”

“Well, of course,” said what used to be the cat. In its place was now a beautiful elderly Indian woman in a saree, tall and thin, severe and erudite. It became clearer that, with her human form more realised, the woman had been speaking rather sadly. “I’d rather be here than...out there.”

“Out there celebrating?” Pakcik Dollah asked the former cat. “And you should be. We’ve had very little to celebrate over the past ten years.”

“I cannot,” sobbed Munira. “Not after what happened to Lang and Jamal! Do the Palliterations know we’re coming?”

Pakcik Dollah nodded. “I called them earlier to inform them. I was thinking of just leaving baby Harris at their doorstep with a letter, but come on, who does that?”

The former cat smiled rather sadly, and several moments of silence passed between them, in which Munira was very obviously trying to maintain her composure. Then, a sad mewl escaped her lips. “Oh, Pakcik Dollah! Jamal and Lang! They were the best of us!”

“I know, dear,” said Pakcik Dollah, patting her shoulder.

“We did everything we could to protect them! And yet... that bastard...”

Pakcik Dollah sighed. “Well, not everything. If we had really wanted to protect them, we’d have pressed on with Seriously Black’s idea to send them to the Bahamas.”

“We did! I don’t know how many times I’ve asked him to leave Singapore! Oh, how I miss that stubborn man! He insisted

on staying, said he didn’t want to leave the fight against...That-Evil-Bastard-Lah-You-Should-Know-Who-I’m-Talking-About.”

“He was torn, Munira.”

She made a sound that was part gasp, part howl.

“No, no, no, not literally,” Pakcik Dollah said quickly. “I meant he was seriously considering going away, to keep little Harris safe. But Jamal knew that if he and Lang left, there would be many on our side who would question whether...”

“Whether?”

“Whether we could win this war.”

“I was thankful they didn’t leave us, but now...”

“To be honest, there’s a small part of me that’s thankful they hadn’t gone to the Bahamas,” Pakcik Dollah said. “The whether would be horrible this time of year.”

“Did you say weather or whether?”

“Whether, obviously.”

“Do you know how they died, Pakcik Dollah? Was it Avada Kedavra?”

“Avada Kedavra? No! What kind of stupid-sounding spell is that?” Pakcik Dollah’s tone then darkened. “I believe it was Chan Mali Chan.”

The professor gasped. There were no spells in the history of magic and magical people more abhorrent and repulsive than Chan Mali Chan. The gasp became sobs, and the sobs became wails that howled into the night.

But Pakcik Dollah was waving urgently for her to stop crying.

Munira stopped and both professors strained their ears. At first, only the great disquietude of midnight presided.

Then, footsteps.



About the Author

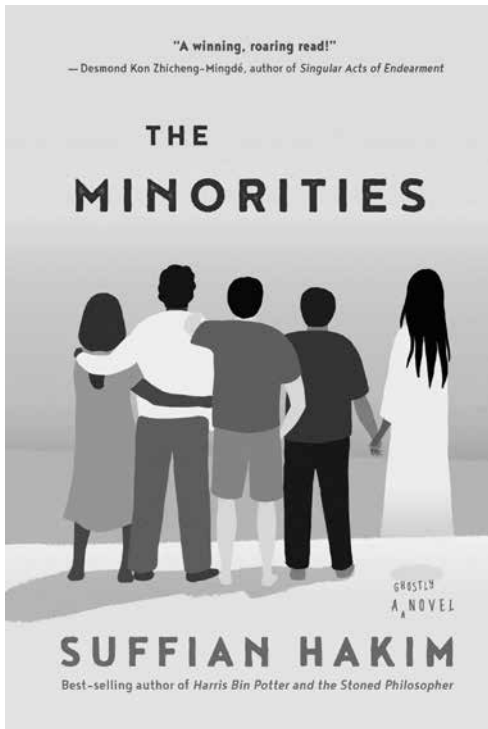
Suffian Hakim is the author of *The Minorities*. *The Straits Times* has called him “undoubtedly one of the most whimsical, creative and unpretentious young voices in Singapore literature”. Suffian is currently a writer at Big 3 Media. He was previously a regional content lead at media agency GroupM and has written for television shows such as *Random Island* and *The Noose*, and publications *Esquire* and *August Man*.



About the Illustrator

Muhammad Izdi is an artist who has been part of several international exhibitions, including in Lyon, Lille and Yangon, among other cities. He participated in the Dena Foundation Artist Residency Program in Paris and had his first solo show *The Brown Dabble* at Chan + Hori Contemporary in Singapore. Izdi graduated from Singapore Polytechnic in 2007, and later joined the Singapore Art Museum as senior designer, where he was heavily involved in branding, marketing and advertising, and larger-scale onsite exhibition graphics for the museum's galleries and external venues. Find him at www.muhammad-izdi.com and on Instagram at @lepaklukis.

Also by Suffian Hakim



“Not only is this an action-packed horror comedy coming-of-age road trip novel—it’s also a story about home. What kind of place do we want Singapore to be? A nation of model citizens? Or maybe something like what Suffian imagines: a found family of classless refugees, banding together, regardless of hygiene and visa status, both supranational and supernatural. No one else here is writing quite like this.”

—Ng Yi-Sheng, Singapore Literature Prize-winning poet
and author of *Lion City*

Available online at www.epigram.sg.

“Your aunt and uncle are kosong,
Harris. Empty. Devoid of magic.”

“But I’m...not a kosong?”



“Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no,”
Hamid said. “You come from
a line of powerful wizards.
Your great-grandfather was
Jamal bin Potter. He created
the Kitorang spell.”

Everyone knows the name **Harris bin Potter**. He’s the orphan with the S-shaped scar who loves to play void deck football and drink Milo dinosaurs. When he discovers he’s a wizard, his world changes and he enrolls at the MOE-approved Hog-Tak-Halal-What School of Witchcraft and Wizardry where he confronts the most evil spell in the history of magic: **Chan Mali Chan**.

FICTION

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“Local and postal
references aplenty...
Packed with unique flavours.”

Sonny Liew, author of
The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye