

Potong

TO CARE/CUT

orbit #005

Potong

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Johnny Jon Jon

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At the heart of irreality: The plays of a playwright with a made-up name

FOREWORD by Nabilah Said

*“...for when you gaze long into the abyss. The abyss gazes also
into you.”*

—Friedrich W. Nietzsche

Who is Johnny Jon Jon? The pseudonym, reminiscent of a child’s chant, is both a gift and a curse. As a playwright with a day job outside of the arts, Jon Jon’s chosen moniker grants him a level of anonymity, or at least some professional distance. At the same time, it is also a smokescreen—the repetition inherent in the name somewhat infantilising, potentially acting as a barrier to access and mass popularity. Yet, therein lies the potential for surprise and possibility. A former senior police officer, a strategist and a crisis negotiator (vocationally, at one point of his career, and as a father of three children, occasionally), Jon Jon would perhaps find it hard to describe himself, not least without defaulting to self-deprecation and cynicism. I once asked Jon Jon for a 100-word biographical write-up for an event we were both part of. The one-line answer came via text, but his deadpan tone was unmistakable: *Johnny Jon Jon is a hit or miss.*

Hawa

Hawa was first produced by Hatch Theatrics and staged at the Substation Theatre, Singapore, as part of Hatch Theatrics' 2015 season. In 2016, *Hawa* was staged at LASALLE College of the Arts as part of a double-bill at the Singapore Theatre Festival. In 2017, *Hawa* travelled to the Republic Theatre, Australia, as part of the Brisbane Festival.

Hatch Theatrics 2015 Season

Directed by: Faizal Abdullah

Performed by: Isabella Chiam, Al-Matin Yatim, Saiful Amri, Mishaal Syed Naasar, Suhaili Safari

Singapore Theatre Festival (2016) & Brisbane Festival (2017)

Directed by: Faizal Abdullah

Performed by: Koh Wan Ching, Al-Matin Yatim, Saiful Amri, Faizal Abdullah

CHARACTERS

AHMAD

ZAKI

SITI

KARIM

SCENE 1

[It is the inside of a HDB apartment. AHMAD waits outside of the apartment by the door. Stage light is dim. Text fades in on screen.]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

“Bismillah your old self to find your real name.”

AHMAD: Assalamualaikum. *(Peace be upon you.)*

[Silence.]

AHMAD: *[Louder]* Assalamualaikum.

[Silence.]

AHMAD: *[Louder]* Assalamualaikum.

[Silence.]

* Image credit: K H A T T A A T T/ Shutterstock.com

AHMAD: Ah salah rumah kot. (*Maybe this is the wrong house.*)

SITI: Waalaikumsalam. (*And upon you peace.*)

AHMAD: Awal ke saya? (*Am I early?*)

SITI: I'm not sure if one can ever be early for a funeral.

AHMAD: Ha? Kelakar kau eh? Setakat orang meninggal aje buat apa lah nak nangis-nangis semua kan? Kau ni... Cina? (*Ha? You're a funny one eh? Just a funeral so nothing to be so emotional about eh? You are... Chinese?*)

SITI: Chinese.

AHMAD: Block betul. Nombor unit... ini #06-583? (*The block number is correct. The unit number... is this #06-583?*)

SITI: Yes.

AHMAD: You got call for funeral service?

SITI: Yes. I did. Are you the undertaker?

AHMAD: Dah aku nak kena call yang Cina punya pula. (*Oh now I have to call for a Chinese undertaker.*) Sorry ah! I call for you Chinese one.

SITI: No. You're the undertaker from Zoom Zoom Muslim Funeral Services, right?

AHMAD: Funeral Director.

SITI: I'm sorry?

AHMAD: *Funeral Director.*

SITI: Undertaker... funeral director... what's the difference.

AHMAD: Professionalism!

SITI: So undertakers are less professional?

AHMAD: If you call me the Undertaker, that makes me a professional wrestler!

SITI: Right. Funeral Director it is then.

AHMAD: Yes. Funeral Director. I am the Funeral Director, Ahmad bin Ismail of Zoom Zoom Muslim Funeral Services Pte Ltd. We have the best price in town, just for your loved one. Wholesale prices, also available.

SITI: Wholesale prices?

AHMAD: Ya wholesale. One dead, one price. Two dead, special price. Three dead, wholesale price.

SITI: If an entire family is dead, I thought you'd waive off the fees out of compassion.

AHMAD: Well, it happens.

SITI: So you'd do that?

AHMAD: No.

SITI: But you just said "it happens".

AHMAD: Ya. Life happens. People live, people die. Rest in peace. But I still need to get paid. You think hospital got give free if twins or triplets?

SITI: Well, if you put it that way.

[Silence.]

AHMAD: Your name is Siti kan? Boleh cakap Melayu? Susah lah cakap English. *(Your name is Siti, right? Can you speak Malay? It's difficult for me to speak in English.)*

SITI: Yes. Sikit-sikit. *(Yes. A little bit.)*

AHMAD: Ok jadi kau nak pakej yang mana? *(Ok so what package would you like to take up?)*

SITI: Yang biasa? *(The regular?)*

AHMAD: Kau nak upsize? *(Do you want an upsize to go with that?)*

SITI: Upsize?

AHMAD: Makan lah. Kau nak makan tak? (*For the food. Do you want food?*)

SITI: Kena ada makan? Ini funeral. Bukan kahwin. (*Must there be food? This is a funeral. Not a wedding.*)

AHMAD: Mesti lah kena ada makan. Kalau tak orang datang tak ada makan tak baik pula. (*Of course there has to be food. It would not be good for the guests to come and not have food.*)

SITI: Tak apa. I settle the makan. (*It's ok. I'll settle the food.*)

AHMAD: Betul tak nak makan? Pasal kalau nak makan, nak kena cakap dengan caterer awal-awal lagi. (*Are you sure you don't want food? Because if you want food, I have to give the caterer a heads up.*)

SITI: Hmm... tak apa. Pakej biasa aje. No upsize. (*Hmm... it's ok. Just the regular package. No upsize.*)

AHMAD: Ok. Pakej biasa aje... bas pun tak ada tau? (*Ok. The regular package... there's no bus provided yeah?*)

SITI: Bas... Bas untuk siapa? (*Bus... Who is the bus for?*)

AHMAD: Bas untuk yang masih hidup. Untuk yang mati dah sedia van. (*The bus is for the living. The dead have their own van.*)

SITI: Oh. Never mind. I don't need the bus.

AHMAD: Betul kau tak mahu bas? Kalau ada bas bagus. Parking kat Pusara Abadi tu susah sikit. (*Are you sure you want the bus? Parking at the cemetery can be quite a hassle.*)

SITI: It's ok.

AHMAD: Ok... kalau gitu... semuanya... \$1600... Cuma cash aje. Tak baik nak hutang-hutang ni semua. Kesian arwah nanti. (*Ok... if that's all... it'll be \$1600... Cash only. It's not good for the deceased to be in debt.*)

Potong

Potong was first produced by Teater Ekamatra and staged at the Malay Heritage Centre, Singapore as part of Teater Ekamatra's 2018 season.

Teater Ekamatra 2018 Season

Directed by: Irfan Kasban

Performed by: Farah Ong, Mohd Fared Jainal, Munah Bagharib, Salif Hardie

CHARACTERS

SITI

SALEHA

ADAM

NENEK

DINI

SCENE 1

[It is the inside of an apartment. Stage light is dim. Text fades in on screen.]



In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

“Listen, O drop, give yourself up without regret, and in exchange gain the Ocean.”

SITI: When you reach there, what are you supposed to do?

ADAM: Mak, we’ve already talked about this.

SITI: We have?

ADAM: Yes we have.

SITI: Well, I want to be sure.

ADAM: What’s there to be sure of?

* Image credit: K H A T T A A T T/ Shutterstock.com

SITI: That you'd get circumcised.

ADAM: I am an adult, Mak.

SITI: No you are not. Not yet.

ADAM: Not yet? I am 18. I am old enough to buy alcohol.

SITI: Have you been drinking?

ADAM: No.

SITI: Have you been drinking?

ADAM: I am an adult. I can decide for myself if I want to drink, Mak.

SITI: You know what I think about it right?

ADAM: Yes.

SITI: And?

ADAM: Look, I didn't drink ok? I was just trying to make a point.

SITI: So it's important to hurt me when you have a point to make?

[[Jeda/Pause.]]

ADAM: I am sorry.

SITI: You may think that you are an adult now. But you're not. Not yet. Not till you go back and serve your National Service AND get yourself circumcised.

ADAM: So the measure of my adulthood now lies in me holding a gun and the absence of my foreskin?

SITI: Don't be dramatic. Maybe they won't even trust you with a gun.

ADAM: Right. So the measure of my adulthood now lies in the absence of my foreskin then?

SITI: You can never trust a man with his dick.

ADAM: Until it's circumcised?

SITI: Even then. Look at your father.

ADAM: Mak, why does it always have to go back to him?

SITI: You started it.

ADAM: With the whole drinking thing?

SITI: Yes.

ADAM: You're vindictive.

SITI: You're his son.

ADAM: And yours too.

[[Jeda.]]

SITI: Right.

ADAM: That's it?

SITI: That's it what?

ADAM: As in we're leaving it at that?

SITI: Leave what?

ADAM: My circumcision.

SITI: Yes. So, what are you supposed to do?

ADAM: We've been through this already.

SITI: Really?

ADAM: Why are you acting so weird? We just talked about it. You can't just forget about it. Is it menopause? Are you going menopausal?

SITI: Are you saying I'm old?

ADAM: I did grow older, you know?

SITI: Oh fine. Ok so you're packing and... Ah, what are you

supposed to do when you get there?

ADAM: Get myself circumcised.

SITI: And?

ADAM: And show you the medical bills.

SITI: And?

ADAM: And what?

SITI: Send me a photo.

ADAM: Of what?

SITI: Of the circumcision lah what else!

ADAM: What the hell, Mak? Seriously. What the hell. You want me, your only son, to send you a picture of my dick?

SITI: It's normal right?

ADAM: I don't know, Mak. I don't know what's normal anymore now.

SITI: Well are you going to do it or not?

ADAM: No.

SITI: Do you sayang your Mak?

ADAM: Mak, you know I sayang you.

SITI: Then?

ADAM: Then I won't send you a dick pic that is what then.

SITI: Don't talk cock.

ADAM: You are the one talking about it!

SITI: Just send me the picture. It's no big deal.

ADAM: I am not sure that you know what you are asking from me.

SITI: I am your mother.

ADAM: I'm pretty sure this qualifies as child abuse.

SITI: I thought you said you're all grown up now.

[[Jeda.]]

SITI: You know, back then, your grandmother would take a rubber band and snap it at your uncle's bebird (*penis*) whenever he wets himself?

ADAM: That's abuse!

SITI: It's education. When someone beats the rug, the blows are not against the rug. They are against the dust on it.

ADAM: Do you hear yourself?

SITI: Well, he didn't wet himself anymore after that.

ADAM: Why do I even argue?

SITI: Because I never snap your bebird.

ADAM: Thank you.

SITI: It's a big deal, you know? Getting circumcised. Back then, we had a big party for your uncle. I'm sorry I won't be able to have one for you.

ADAM: I don't mind waiting till it's a better time.

SITI: There's never going to be a "better" time. Just get it over and done with.

ADAM: Fine fine. So are you going to send me off at the airport?

SITI: When is that again?

ADAM: It's tomorrow!

SITI: Right. I'm not.

ADAM: No? Why not?

SITI: I don't want to embarrass you in front of your friends.

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