

Dr Chee – The War of the Words

A shambolic exercise in one act

by
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

JAILER	male, middle aged, impeccably uniformed.
DR CHEE	male, 40s, in reality Dr Chee Soon Juan, Singapore human rights' advocate, dressed in prison garb.
WHITE RABBIT	male or female, aka the "Herald," for age and appearance see John Tenniel's illustration in Ch XI of Louis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland."
JURY	male, elderly, balding with a fringe of white hair, dressed in a dark suit and tie.
KING OF HEARTS or QUEEN OF HEARTS	male or female, cast either the KING or Queen as the judge, for age and appearance see Carroll Ch VIII.
MAD HATTER	male, for age and appearance see Carroll Ch XI .
MARCH HARE	female [sic], aka "Peter," see Carroll Ch VII for age and appearance.
PAT	male, elderly, dressed as a gardener.
ALICE	female, 20s, Dressed as a maid.

PLACE: Singapore

TIME: In a prison cell: the near present. In a courtroom: the recent past.

THE SET: (1) A prison cell consisting of a single frame of prison bars and a cot. (2) A courtroom consisting of a carpenter's workbench, a low stool, and a jury box containing one chair surrounded by a cardboard box.

Dr Chee - The War of the Words

SCENE 1

A jail cell in Singapore, where DR CHEE is being held.
The JAILER—holding a tray of food—speaks with DR CHEE through a partition of bars. DR CHEE is reclining on a cot and has lifted himself on one arm to speak.

JAILER

Dr Chee, your dinner.

DR CHEE

No thank you.

JAILER

You look very pale. If you don't eat, you will become sick.

DR CHEE

I am already sick.

JAILER

Dr Chee, please eat your dinner.

DR CHEE

I am afraid that if I eat, I will die. Do you want me to die?

JAILER

(looking down)

I simply want you to eat your dinner.

DR CHEE

They are one and the same.

JAILER

You haven't eaten for eight days.

DR CHEE

Do they ask you to keep records?

JAILER

I am required to take notice of the status of your health.

DR CHEE

Do you take the same notice of the other prisoners?

JAILER

I am required to do my professional duty.

DR CHEE

How long have you been doing your professional duty?

JAILER

Almost ten years.

DR CHEE

Do you ever form an opinion of the prisoners in your care?

JAILER

Some are cooperative. Some are uncooperative.

DR CHEE

Have you ever recommended caning for a prisoner?

JAILER

I am required to report behaviour that is uncooperative and disruptive.

DR CHEE

Do you know that those are the same reasons for which I have been incarcerated?

JAILER

I am aware that you refused to pay a fine of \$5,000, which in the judgement of the court was appropriate for the offense.

DR CHEE

For speaking in public.

JAILER

For violating the Public Entertainments and Meetings Act.

DR CHEE

For speaking in public without a permit. Article 14 of our constitution guarantees freedom of speech, association and assembly.

JAILER

But the law requires a permit.

DR CHEE

This dichotomy doesn't seem to bother you.

JAILER

The law is the law. Your application was rejected on the grounds that your speaking in a public gathering would lead to law and order problems.

DR CHEE

Has my speaking in public ever lead to law and order problems?

JAILER

The law was created to prevent problems.

DR CHEE

The law was created to stifle public disagreement with the policies of the people in power.

JAILER

The People's Action Party has won every election since self-government in 1959. The people have spoken.

DR CHEE

It is difficult to speak against the people in power without facing fines or arrest. It is impossible to make and distribute media contrary to government opinion.

JAILER

We reserve the right to take into account the concerns and values of the majority of Singaporeans. We must not upset the balance of Singapore's multiracial society. We would all be at a loss.

DR CHEE

I see that you are familiar with the statements of the Ministry of Information. You know what they call that kind of talk in the free world? Propaganda.

JAILER

Why do you persist? You know that your efforts fall on deaf ears.

DR CHEE

They are only so deaf as will not listen. They are only so blind as will not see.

JAILER

Singapore is the jewel of South Asia. There are many wealthy people living in Singapore. Why, even I am able to afford a maid and a gardener.

DR CHEE

That brings us to why I am here.

JAILER

I do not understand.

DR CHEE

Of that I am certain.

DR CHEE lies on his back and closes his eyes. The JAILER leaves the tray and exits.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2

A courtroom. A long note is sounded on a toy trumpet. Enter the WHITE RABBIT, JURY, JAILER and DR CHEE. The WHITE RABBIT positions himself next to a high workbench holding a toy trumpet. The JURY sits in a comfortable armchair surrounded on three sides by a cardboard box. DR CHEE stands in front of the bench while the JAILER stands behind him holding a rather thick walking cane. When all are positioned, enter the KING OF HEARTS.

WHITE RABBIT

(blows trumpet)

Hear yee, hear yee. All rise. Court is now in session. The right honorable his Majesty the King of Hearts presiding.

The KING OF HEARTS steps on a stool and sits on the workbench with his legs dangling over the front.

KING OF HEARTS
(addressing DR CHEE)

State your name.

DR CHEE
Dr Chee Soon Juan.

The WHITE RABBIT pulls a note pad from his belt and writes on it.

KING OF HEARTS
Dr Chee, please show the court your police permit.

DR CHEE
Which permit are you speaking of?

KING OF HEARTS
I would like to remind Dr Chee that the court will ask the questions and you will provide the answers.

DR CHEE
Indeed! Then all my problems are solved.

KING OF HEARTS
Jury, render a verdict. The plaintiff has stated that he does not now nor never did possess a permit.

WHITE RABBIT
Not yet, not yet. There's a great deal to come before that. He needs a permit to enter the court.

KING OF HEARTS
Jailer, does the plaintiff possess a permit to enter this court?

JAILER
No, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS
Is it true, Dr Chee, that you entered this courtroom without a permit to do so?

DR CHEE
The police refused to issue me a permit.

KING OF HEARTS

Answer the question. Did you enter this courtroom without a permit to do so?

DR CHEE

Yes, I did.

KING OF HEARTS

Jailer, was this man refused a police permit to enter the court?

JAILER

He was your Majesty: due to public safety concerns.

KING OF HEARTS

(to DR CHEE)

Guilty of entering the court without a permit and posing a danger to public safety.
Herald, record a fine of \$1,000 payable to the court by Dr Chee.

The WHITE RABBIT writes furiously on his note pad.

KING OF HEARTS

Now we can begin the proceedings. Herald, read the accusation.

WHITE RABBIT

You are charged that you, on the 10th day of September 2006 at about 12:15 PM, in the vicinity of Raffles City Shopping Centre, North Bridge Road, Singapore, which is a public place, together with 5 persons did participate in an assembly intended to demonstrate opposition to the actions of the Government, which assembly you ought reasonably to have known was held without a permit under the Miscellaneous Offences Public Order & Nuisance Assemblies & Processions Rules, and you have thereby committed an offence punishable under Rule 5 of the said Rules.

KING OF HEARTS

(looks at the jury box)

Jury, consider your verdict.

JURY

Guilty, your Majesty.

WHITE RABBIT

Not yet, not yet. There's a great deal to come before that!

KING OF HEARTS

Call the first witness.

The WHITE RABBIT blows one long blast on the trumpet.

WHITE RABBIT

First witness!

The MAD HATTER enters with a teacup in one hand and a piece of bread-and-butter in the other.

MAD HATTER

I beg pardon, your Majesty...

KING OF HEARTS

You Sir, are not on trial here.

MAD HATTER

...for bringing these in, but I hadn't quite finished my tea when I was sent for.

KING OF HEARTS

You ought to have finished.

(lifts his head imperially)

Take off your hat.

The MAD HATTER drinks a bit of tea.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Refuses to take off his hat by order of the court. Fine him \$100.

The WHITE RABBIT writes the figure on his note pad.
The MAD HATTER takes a bite of bread.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the MAD HATTER)

I said take off your hat.

The MAD HATTER looks around and then takes a sip of tea.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Refuses to take off his hat a second time by direct order of the court. Fine him \$1000.

The WHITE RABBIT records the fine on the note pad.

MAD HATTER

(looks around)

Begging your pardon your Majesty...

KING OF HEARTS

To no avail. Fine him \$100 for begging in public without a permit.

MAD HATTER

...but whose hat are you referring to?

KING OF HEARTS

Yours, of course.

MAD HATTER

(touches the hat on his head)

You mean this?

KING OF HEARTS

Are you mad?

(splutters)

Yes! Your hat.

MAD HATTER

But your Majesty, this is not my hat.

KING OF HEARTS

(now yelling)

For the third time: take off your hat.

MAD HATTER

May it please your Majesty to know that I cannot take it off a third time unless you direct me to put it back on at least twice.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Fine him \$3000 for arguing in public together with five persons without a permit.

The WHITE RABBIT records the figure.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the MAD HATTER)

State your name.

MAD HATTER

My name is Wrong.

KING OF HEARTS

We'll make it right then.

MAD HATTER

But your Majesty, I cannot Right a Wrong.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Note that the witness cannot write.

The WHITE RABBIT scribbles furiously on the note pad.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the MAD HATTER)

And what is your occupation?

MAD HATTER

I am an officer of the rules, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Which ones?

MAD HATTER

One through five, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Excellent. Give your evidence and don't be nervous, or I'll have you fined on the spot.

MAD HATTER

At nine o'clock I received a telephone call.

KING OF HEARTS

From whom?

MAD HATTER

Why from Peter, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

And what did he say?

MAD HATTER

That there were members of the SDP giving a talk and selling newspapers, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the JURY)

Consider your verdict.

JURY

Guilty as charged.

WHITE RABBIT

There's more evidence to come yet, may it please your Majesty.

DR CHEE

(to the MAD HATTER)

Did you write this down?

WHITE RABBIT

Objection. He can't write.

(points to note pad)

I've got it written here.

KING OF HEARTS

Sustained.

(to the MAD HATTER)

Did you tell anyone?

MAD HATTER

About what?

KING OF HEARTS

About Peter.

MAD HATTER

What about Peter?

The KING OF HEARTS leaps down from the bench, grabs the MAD HATTER by the nose and leads him around in a circle.

DR CHEE

Objection. The judge should not lead the witness.

KING OF HEARTS

Overruled.

The KING OF HEARTS leads the MAD HATTER in another circle and then returns to the bench by way of the stool.

KING OF HEARTS

At the time did you tell anyone about Peter?

MAD HATTER

It slipped off my mind.

DR CHEE

When did you remember to tell someone?

MAD HATTER

Well--

WHITE RABBIT

Your Majesty, would you like to object to the question?

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Yes. I object to the question. Overruled and sustained.

(to the MAD HATTER)

You may stand down.

MAD HATTER

I can't go no lower, I'm on the floor as it is.

KING OF HEARTS

Then you may sit down.

The MAD HATTER sits on the floor.

KING OF HEARTS

Next witness.

The WHITE RABBIT blows two long notes on the trumpet. The MARCH HARE enters the courtroom.

KING OF HEARTS

State your name.

MARCH HARE

Peter, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Give your evidence.

MARCH HARE

Which evidence might that be, your Majesty?

KING OF HEARTS

Whichever you care to give.

MARCH HARE

I was taking my tea when this fellow... this fellow here --

(points to DR CHEE)

-- asked me if I wouldn't like a copy of his newsletter.

(throws up his hands)

How was I to know?

KING OF HEARTS

How were you to know what?

MARCH HARE

How were I to know if I wouldn't like the newsletter. I hadn't seen it yet.

KING OF HEARTS

What day was this?

The MARCH HARE pulls a sheet of paper out of his pocket and reads from it.

MARCH HARE

At the food court, your Majesty. In the City Shopping Centre.

KING OF HEARTS

And where were you taking your tea?

The MARCH HARE continues to read from the sheet of paper.

MARCH HARE

He gave me the newsletter.

KING OF HEARTS

Go on.

MARCH HARE

Thank you, your Majesty.

(turns to leave)

KING OF HEARTS

Continue with your evidence!

MARCH HARE

(continues reading)

I didn't like it.

KING OF HEARTS

The newsletter?

MARCH HARE

(looks up)

No, your Majesty, I didn't like the tea.

MAD HATTER

Hurrah! Hurrah! Can't abide a bad cup-o'-tea. Hurrah! Hurrah!

KING OF HEARTS

Jailer, suppress that man.

The JAILER takes a paper bag from the bench, puts it over the head of the MAD HATTER, rolls him to the floor, and stands with one foot on him.

KING OF HEARTS

Now, I didn't ask about the tea. What was in the newsletter?

MARCH HARE

Why just news, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

But did this man give you a newsletter for which you didn't ask, and then spoke to you as well?

MARCH HARE

He did, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Did he speak to other people?

The KING OF HEARTS nods at the MARCH HARE. The MARCH HARE nods back and returns to reading from the sheet of paper.

MARCH HARE

Why just news your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

How many?

MARCH HARE

Why I believe he did.

KING OF HEARTS

Are you certain of that?

MARCH HARE

Five or more.

KING OF HEARTS

Jury, I think we have reached a verdict.

WHITE RABBIT

Not yet, not yet. There's much more to come.

KING OF HEARTS

What did you do then?

MARCH HARE

(drops the paper)

Why I called to complain.

KING OF HEARTS

And to whom did you speak?

MARCH HARE

An officer of the rules, I think.

KING OF HEARTS

And what did you tell the officer?

MARCH HARE

That it ought not be done this way.

KING OF HEARTS

And what time was this?

MARCH HARE

Why tea time, of course. Why else would I complain?

KING OF HEARTS

That will be all.

The MARCH HARE exits.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Note that a complaint was made.

(to DR CHEE)

What do you have to say to these charges in your defense?

DR CHEE

Did the police act independently or were they ordered to suppress legitimate opposition to the government by the ruling party?

KING OF HEARTS

There can be no legitimate opposition to the government or the ruling party. The Rules have seen to that. Your question is objectionable. Overruled.

(bangs his gavel three times)

Next witness.

The WHITE RABBIT blows three long notes on his trumpet. PAT enters. He is dressed in an outfit suitable for gardening and his clothing is “soiled.”

KING OF HEARTS

State your name.

PAT

Pat.

KING OF HEARTS

State your occupation.

PAT

Gardener.

The KING OF HEARTS leaps to the floor and walks around PAT inspecting his clothing.

KING OF HEARTS

Have you no respect for this court? Do you know where you are?

PAT

(looks about himself)

Sure then I'm here!

KING OF HEARTS

Herald, note the location of this man and fine him \$400 for improper dress.

PAT

But yer honour, I ain't wearin' no dress.

KING OF HEARTS

Fine that man \$100 for making an irreverent comment.

WHITE RABBIT

That would be an “irrelevant” comment your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Herald, note the witness’s lack of relevance and fine him in spite of it.

PAT

But yer honour, how am I going to eat next month?

KING OF HEARTS

That is not my concern.

PAT

Well it should be; every man’s a right to eat.

KING OF HEARTS

(glares at PAT)

Eating is not a right. You must work to eat.

PAT

I do work, yer honour.

KING OF HEARTS

And in whose employ?

PAT

(points to the JAILER)

That man there, yer honour.

KING OF HEARTS

(to the JAILER)

Do you employ this man?

JAILER

I do your Majesty, and I might add that I pay him handsomely at that.

The THE KING OF HEARTS returns to the bench.

KING OF HEARTS

You heard the Jailer; he pays you handsomely.

PAT

(considers the statement)

It ain't enough.

JAILER

(points his cane at PAT)

One more word out of you and I'll cane you into subordination.

PAT

And it'll be the last time for you.

JAILER

Why you insubordinate stupid little man! You are fired. You will never work again as a gardener.

The JAILER approaches PAT with his cane raised to strike and is restrained by the WHITE RABBIT.

KING OF HEARTS

(bangs gavel on the desk several times)

Order. Order. I'll do the caning in this court. Fine the Jailer \$100 for raising cane.

PAT

I've about 'ad it with him. I don't cares much anymore.

KING OF HEARTS

(points gavel at Dr Chee; looks at PAT)

Do you know the defendant?

PAT

I do, yer honour.

KING OF HEARTS

Did he speak to you at the food court and give you a flyer?

PAT

He did, yer honour.

KING OF HEARTS

What were the contents of the flyer?

PAT

Mostly paper, yer honour.

KING OF HEARTS

What did the defendant say to you?

PAT

'E said that the contents of the flyer might'n be of interest to me.

KING OF HEARTS

Herald, record that the defendant influenced the witness.

(looking at PAT)

That will be all. You are free to go.

PAT

I ain't free to go nowhere. I come here to this court an' get a fine and lose my job and now I gots no place to go. I ad' a good job an' a place 'til I got old. Now I'll be livin' in a public toilet.

KING OF HEARTS

It is none of my concern. Jailer, escort this man from the court.

(looks at the JAILER for a moment)

On second thought --

(addresses the WHITE RABBIT)

-- Herald, escort this man from the court.

The WHITE RABBIT takes PAT by the arm and escorts him out of the courtroom, then returns.

KING OF HEARTS

(bangs gavel rapidly four times)

Next witness.

The WHITE RABBIT blows four blasts on his trumpet.
ALICE enters the courtroom.

KING OF HEARTS

State your name.

ALICE

Alice.

KING OF HEARTS

What do you know about this business?

ALICE

Nothing.

KING OF HEARTS

Nothing whatever?

ALICE

Nothing whatever.

KING OF HEARTS

What is your occupation?

ALICE

Maid servant, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Were you assembled in the Food Court when Dr Chee was handing out his flyers?

ALICE

I was you Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

And what did you observe?

ALICE

I observed Dr Chee handing out the flyers, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

And this is what you told the officer, right?

ALICE

That's Wrong, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Yes, yes of course. I can tell right from wrong.

The KING OF HEARTS nods his head from side to side and up and down.

KING OF HEARTS

And at what time did you observe Dr Chee handing out the flyers?

ALICE

It was tea time, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Are you certain of that?

ALICE

I'm certain of that, your Majesty. You see, Mistress had requested Oolong, but we only had Lapsang Souchong. So, I needed to run to the Food Court. It was there I took the flyer, but it was really the tea I was after.

KING OF HEARTS

Oolong did you say?

ALICE

About five minutes... at most. More than that and I would have had no dinner that evening.

KING OF HEARTS

Then why did you stop to take the flyer?

ALICE

(looks down and then at Dr Chee)

Dr Chee is very good looking.

KING OF HEARTS

That is irreverent.

WHITE RABBIT

That would be "irrelevant" your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

(addresses the WHITE RABBIT)

Then why bring it up?

(MORE)

KING OF HEARTS (cont'd)

(to ALICE)

Did Dr Chee speak to you?

ALICE

He did your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

What did he say?

ALICE

He told me to have a nice day, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Record that Dr Chee made demands on this woman.

The WHITE RABBIT scratches away furiously on the note pad.

KING OF HEARTS

What did you do then?

ALICE

I returned to the apartment, your Majesty. I made the tea, and then I prepared the evening meal. And while that was cooking, I did wash laundry and hung it to dry. But that is always difficult because we are on the twelfth floor and the bamboo poles are suspended from the window sill.

KING OF HEARTS

And where did you say you were from?

ALICE

I don't remember saying--

KING OF HEARTS

-- You don't remember where you were from?

ALICE

No... Yes, your Majesty?

KING OF HEARTS

(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Record that the maid has lost track of her origins.

(to ALICE)

Do you have a work permit?

ALICE

Oh yes, your Majesty. The agency got me a permit for only \$1,000. I remember clearly the conditions of my employment, your Majesty, or I would not have a job. I am grateful to be chosen by my employer to work here. And I redo my work when it does not please my Mistress or when she calls me “stupid” because then I know she is angry and not pleased with my work, and I never talk to anyone, especially the other maids in the building because that would be disrespectful, and I never sing while I am working for not to disturb my Mistress, and I am very happy to have my own small room under the stairs, but I do wish I could get out now and then—other than to do the shopping—but I know that there is much work to do and I must be to bed early and up before any one to prepare --

KING OF HEARTS

-- Enough!

ALICE

That is exactly what I was thinking, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

Thinking! Thinking! If maids were paid to think no work would get done.

ALICE

Yes, your Majesty.

DR CHEE

(to ALICE)

If you were represented by a union, Alice, you would not have to work under these conditions.

KING OF HEARTS

Strike that remark from the record. It is irreverent.

WHITE RABBIT

Irrelevant, your Majesty!

Irregulated. JAILER

Irritating. MAD HATTER
(lifts bag from his head)

Irresponsible. JURY
(standing up)

Irrevocable. MARCH HARE
(reentering the courtroom)

Irreversible. PAT
(reentering the courtroom)

Irresolute. KING OF HEARTS
(leaping to the floor)

The players move to form two lines facing one another. In one line are the KING OF HEARTS, the WHITE RABBIT, the JURY, the JAILER, and the MAD HATTER. In the other line are DR CHEE, the MARCH HARE, and PAT. ALICE sinks to the floor between the two lines. ALICE'S head moves from one line to the other as the words are fired back and forth.

Irrefutable. DR CHEE
(to the WHITE RABBIT)

Irrational. WHITE RABBIT
(to the MARCH HARE)

Irradiant. MARCH HARE
(to the JURY)

JURY
 (to PAT)
 Irrecompensable.

PAT
 (to the JAILER)
 Irrebutable.

JAILER
 (to DR CHEE)
 Irreconcilable.

DR CHEE
 (to the MAD HATTER)
 Irrefragable.

MAD HATTER
 (to the MARCH HARE)
 Irregardless.

Silence. Everyone fixes a glare on the MAD HATTER.
 ALICE looks at the MAD HATTER, raises her arm, and
 points directly at him.

ALICE
 Faux pax!

The MAD HATTER groans and collapses to the floor in
 a sitting position. The MARCH HARE slowly raises his
 arm and point directly at the JAILER.

MARCH HARE
 Irrecusable.

The JAILER grips his chest as if shot and falls to the
 floor in a sitting position. All those on the floor continue
 to follow the war of the words by turning their heads in
 the direction of the speaker and then to the fallen
 adversary.

KING OF HEARTS
(points to the MARCH HARE)

Irremediable.

The MARCH HARE falls to the floor and sits.

PAT
(to the KING OF HEARTS)

Irruptible.

The KING OF HEARTS falls to the floor and sits.

WHITE RABBIT
(points to PAT)

Irreal.

PAT groans as he falls to the floor and sits.

DR CHEE
(points to the WHITE RABBIT)

Irradicable.

The WHITE RABBIT groans and falls to the floor and sits. Only DR CHEE and the JURY remain standing. All eyes are on these two as they circle one another. The JURY slowly raises his arm and points directly at the heart of DR CHEE. ALL those on the floor give out a collective gasp.

JURY
(drops his arm)

Nevertheless.

(steps back several paces)

We have succeeded. We who are often accused by you of interfering in the private lives of citizens. If we had not done that, we would not be here today, we would not have made economic progress. We decide what is right, who your neighbor is, how you live, what noise you make, how you spit, what language you use. Never mind what the people think. We who are more than ordinarily endowed physically and mentally.

DR CHEE
Lucky you. I come to this courtroom armed only with my faith in democracy, and the belief that one day Singapore will be a free and democratic country.

JURY

We the jury find you guilty as charged, guilty as charged, guilty as charged, guilty as charged --

DR CHEE

-- There is a difference in punishing someone who has committed a crime versus punishing someone who is fighting for a better life for the people.

JURY

Guilty as charged, guilty as charged, guilty as charged --

DR CHEE

-- You realize that my fight is beyond this court, which renders but one opinion. There is another opinion that will be made and it will resonate far beyond the confines of this Court and deep into history.

JURY

(repeatedly)

Guilty as charged.

The lights dim, but one spot continues to illuminate DR CHEE. He puts up an arm to shield his eyes from the bright light. The JURY'S voice is slowly amplified and reverberated. And then, in one instant, all is silent and dark.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3

As the lights come up DR CHEE is tossing fitfully on his cot. A bright light is aimed directly at his head. He is using one arm to cover his eyes. After tossing and turning several times, he gets up and walks to the bars of his cell.

DR CHEE

Jailer... Jailer... Jailer!

The JAILER appears on the other side of the bars. He is wearing a nylon stocking that covers his head and face. His jailer's cap is on his head.

JAILER

Yes, Dr Chee?

DR CHEE

What's with the light? It's the middle of the night. How am I supposed to sleep?

JAILER

Why simply close your eyes.

DR CHEE

You try sleeping under these conditions.

JAILER

Perhaps you need something to eat?

DR CHEE

Why is there a light on in my cell in the middle of the night?

JAILER

It's for the camera. Why, Dr Chee, you must realize that you have given us great cause for concern about your health. We need to monitor your condition day and night. We want to prevent another case like that of the unfortunate Mr Lim Chin Siong.

DR CHEE

You would deny cause and effect. And you would have me follow in his footsteps.

JAILER

Why Dr Chee, you receive the same food as the rest of the inmates in this prison.

DR CHEE reaches to the floor and picks up a tray filled with uneaten food. He deliberately overturns the tray, spilling its contents on the floor. He holds up the tray. On the bottom is written a large "S."

DR CHEE

Are all the trays labeled with the initials of the individual prisoners?

There is an awkward moment of silence as the two men stare at each other.

DR CHEE

I am no stranger to this prison; the trays have never been marked.

JAILER

Why Dr Chee. You are a frequent visitor to these confines, and I would not be surprised if the kitchen has decided to honor you with your own tray.

DR CHEE

You --

Dr Chee turns away from the JAILER for a few moments.

DR CHEE

(turning back to the JAILER)

I must sleep. Please turn off the light.

JAILER

I am afraid I can't do that, Dr Chee.

DR CHEE

What can you do?

JAILER

I can arrange for a sedative. Valium perhaps?

DR CHEE

One hundred twenty-five milligrams for ten consecutive days.

JAILER

I am certain that the medical staff would not acquiesce to such a request.

DR CHEE

I am only requesting the same treatment you reserved for Mr Devan Nair.

JAILER

I am unfamiliar with that situation.

DR CHEE

You are lying.

JAILER

You are insubordinate. I will include that in my report. You are of course familiar with the penalty for insubordination?

DR CHEE

And you sir, are you familiar with the consequences of living a lie?

The JAILER rips off his hat and stocking mask revealing his true identity—that of the JURY.

JURY

What lie? You ignore the facts. Our means have achieved for us—for Singapore—unimaginable wealth, power, and the admiration of nations. We have given new meaning to the word capitalism.

DR CHEE

Without democracy your so-called capitalism is nothing more than exploitation. I have seen and I have lived a better way of life. I want that life for our people: a life where everyone has a voice in their future: not a future bound to a contract with the devil.

JURY

Why do you persist in demeaning yourself with these petty complaints? We have broken you and those before you. You have become dust beneath our feet.

DR CHEE

You, you of all people who have made a pact with the devil, should understand why I persist. I heed the words of Faust's rescuing angel: "Whoever strives in his endeavor/We can rescue from the devil."

The JURY remains silent and defiant.

DR CHEE

As for our dust: continue to create more of it, for in time it will rise silently to choke you and your kind; no angel will intervene on your behalf, and when the dust has settled, we the people will breathe free.

END OF PLAY.