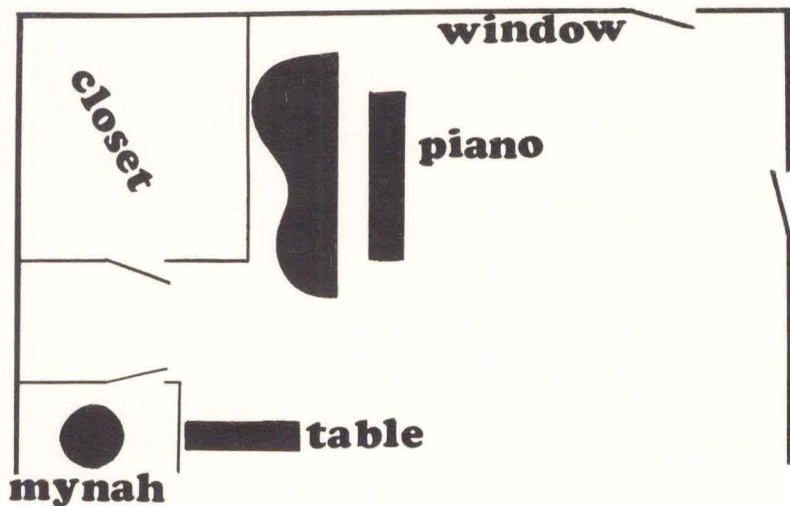


Philip HUGHES /  
SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN  
WITH MYNAH



There is the sound of a car pulling up, then steps, and a man mounts the front steps.

MYNAH

How de do! Wanna arm wrestle? Go away!  
My cage is bigger than yours! Hello!

MAN

Aren't you a clever bird. Hello.

The mynah is stopped dead. The door is answered.

FRANK

Joe! Frieda, get coffee for Joe here!

FRIEDA

How do do! Won't take a second.

A letter-sweatered collegiate is tossing a football into the kitchen. He lets his mother through and goes to meet Joe.

FRANK  
My son, Fred.

JOE  
Hi, Fred.

FRED  
Hi, Joe!

FRANK  
And my daughter, Fran.

JOE  
Hello, Fran.

FRAN  
Hi!

FRANK  
How's the trip?

JOE  
Just followed your map.

FRANK  
Have another copy. For next time.  
He flicks a xerox off a stack on the table. Joe folds it away.  
Nice car, Chevy. Continental in the drive.

FRAN

We have a snowmobile, too!

FRED

Don't forget my Mercedes.

FRANK

Nah! In a Lincoln you can hear the dash clock!

FRED

That's on a Rolls.

FRAN

When can *I* get a car, Dad?! When can I, huh?!

FRED

Stick to your mo-ped, short stuff!

She punches him, he cuffs her back, they scuffle like puppies.  
Frank nudges Joe, winks. Frieda returns, stepping over the brouhaha.

FRIEDA

Yuban, Joe?

FRANK

No, but he ukes! . . . Joke!

FRED

Karate, eh?!

He floors her.

FRAN

Someday I'll beat you, Big Brother!

Father and son laugh. Fred launches Fran erect in one bound.  
They radiate animal spirits, looking set to run the decathlon, do an  
orange juice commercial, join the Pepsi generation.

FRANK

Fan-tas-tic! The whole family! Karate, football, tennis, general high jinks. . . . Active? We invented the word, eh, boy?!

He slaps his son on the back. Detonated, Fred chins himself on a door lintel. Attention lurches 180° as Fran tears into Rachmaninoff. Frieda waves her hands, taps piano, slams hands on it. Fran stops.

FRIEDA

Fran, dear. Why not show how NICELY you play the piano?

FRAN

Yes, Mother.

She resumes less ferociously, in an abbreviated performance. Applause.

FRANK

That's my little girl!

JOE

Certainly plays with verve.

FRANK

\$1200 for lessons! Second place, county competition!  
Third runner-up, Miss Connecticut!

Fred thrusts flowers from a vase.

FRED

You may not be so hot in the gym, Sis, but at the keyboard—Wonder Woman!

FRAN

Oh yeah?!

She rises to a handstand on the bench. Applause. Frank gives an ear-piercing whistle. Fred laughs, hugs himself, pelts with more flowers. Frieda slams hands on piano, shakes head. Frank grabs a large card from the table and holds it up: 9.6. Frieda gets vacuum from closet. Fred helps with clean-up. As people finish bustling, they "turn off" and sit like statues. Fran comes down.

JOE

So, what else do you do?

FRAN

You name it, Mister!

JOE

(laughing, affable) How about hobbies? What do you do when you're not . . . ?

FRAN

Sail.

JOE

Oh, do you? Done some boating myself. Great fun.

FRAN

I've done a lot!

JOE

I'm sure you have. Nice, being out on the water, on a clear afternoon. I enjoy spending whole days, don't you?

FRAN

I'm Vice Commodore!

JOE

Surprised if I found otherwise. I bet sailing provides you an opportunity to be doing something — right? — and at the same time get away from it all.

FRAN

I guess. No people. Not even a piano.

JOE

Or bench. Free, to be yourself.

FRAN

How about a little “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue”?

JOE

... the wind take you. ...

FRAN

This may sound crazy. ...

JOE

Try me.

FRAN

Sometimes out there ... I forget my last name. I mean, if someone asked me suddenly. Isn't that ... ?

JOE

I believe it.

FRAN

Why am I telling you this! What a bore! Wanna hear Ma and me do “Chopsticks”? Some cheerleading? Poms right over. ... I guess it's the being out there, with no schedule. ... Almost won the regatta last year!

She lunges toward the mantel, but he checks her.

JOE

Trophy. Very good. But I'll bet, Fran, it's not so much the competition. . . .

FRAN

No races?

JOE

. . . as just getting on the boat and going.

FRAN

. . . the wind . . . the swell of the water. . . Like what it must have been like before you were born.

She blushes, self-appalled. Frank momentarily springs to animation.

FRANK

World class!

Avoiding Joe, Fran tickles the ivories.

JOE

Just scudding along. . . .

FRAN

Yeah, well. . . .

JOE

Out in the blue. . . .

FRAN

Sun. Salt air. Invigorating.

JOE

Not to perform, be anything in particular. Just. . .

FRAN

Right.

JOE

No goals or role-models. Just free, yourself. . .

FRAN

(striking loud chord: ) . . . and ALONE! . . . Excuse me; have to go out back. Some sails to hang up.

JOE

I understand.

She exits. Silence, for a count of five.

FRANK

FRIEDA

Well sir!

Have some fruit? (passing some)

Don't mind if I do!

Father and son toss apples. Fred catches his in his mouth.

JOE

Well, Frank, this is some menage. With your success, I guess a posh suburb like Donnybrook Heights was just. . .

FRANK

"The house that widgets built." Guess how many last year: 237,000.

FRED

A long way from selling silver polish door to door.

JOE

You certainly had your fingers on the public's pulse.

FRED

Or somewhere.

FRANK

"The name doesn't go on before the quality goes in."

FRED

That's what he said about getting up to 220, making the team, and wearing my letter.

FRANK

Well, it was my school, too, ya know!

Fred points out the "S" on his sweater and mutters. . . .

FRED

Strasbourg goose. . . .

On his feet, Frank prompts Fred in a chorus of a school song, then goes to the closet and wheels out a projector. Fred pushes a button and watches as if following descent of a screen. Frieda moves about as if pulling down shades. Fred goes to the kitchen and throws the football in several times. On the last toss two balls return. After glancing into the yard, Fred rejoins the group.

FRANK

Now, here is Fred on defense. . . . Huh? Huh?!

JOE

Certainly plays with "conviction."

FRANK

Now, offense. Stiff-arm, and right over the tackler!

Fred chins himself again. Frieda slams hands on piano. The lintel comes off. Frank slaps Fred on the shoulders, then gets ladder and hammer from closet and tends to repairs. Frieda pulls up shades. When the parents run out of bustle, they "shut off" as before.

JOE

Fantastic football, fella. You obviously have the old family. . . . So; what are you studying? Business. No? Law. Medicine?

FRED

Anatomy. Biology. (lowering voice:) I think I'll teach.

JOE

Oh, I *see*. Once you have the degree and are out. . . .

FRED

Right.

JOE

Anatomy. Not so much for the sports tie-in. Not the physical angle. Instead, for the . . . the. . . .

FRED

Order.

JOE

Uh. Order? Mm. "Order." I *see*. The rationale *behind*.

FRED

To look at some guy in motion: "Ah ha! Adrenal gland on line!" I see the person with all his parts functioning — like a slide in a biology lecture — or an old Bufferin commercial, with the transparent stomach.

JOE

Transparent guts. Clear as a football play, all X's and O's. What sets off the performance. What struts about. . . .

FRED

You know. . . .

He looks about and Joe and Fred lock pinkies momentarily in the age-old kids' sign of "keep a secret."

. . . it's a strange thing, my liking for anatomy.

JOE

Tell me about it.

FRED

When I'm in my room, not studying or tossing the pig-skin, I just sit and . . . say the bones of the body.  
208. Takes about half an hour. I don't know why, but I enjoy that.

JOE

Peaceful. Ordered.

FRED

Yeah.

JOE

Like a monk saying his beads. Transcendence. Purity.

FRED

Uh. Well. Something like that.

He begins moving his lips; catches himself.

Pardon. Think I'll go check out back. Look at the constellations. Nice meeting you, Joe.

JOE

They say it's a good night for Orion. And say hello to your sister for me.

FRED

I will. I definitely will.

Grabbing up the Hubble guide to the galaxies, he exits. Silence, for a count of five.

FRANK

Gosh, kids are great. Growing. Winning. More to report in each year's Christmas cards. Resumés getting longer. Moving up and on.

FRIEDA

Even sitting out on the lawn. Just not to make a habit of it.

JOE

You know, I would have expected you to have a dog.

Frank opens the closet and whistles. A person dressed in a dog suit bounds out yapping.

FRANK

Up, boy! Down, boy! Roll over! Catch! Fooled ya, boy!

The "dog" comes to rest near Joe, who pats him.

JOE

Feisty animal. Well trained. Dog, dog, dog, dog. . .

Silence, for a count of five. The dog goes to the back door and Joe lets him out, then on his return samples a cookie from a plate.

Mmmm. Make these?

FRANK

First prize at! . . . at! . . .

JOE

The kids, this house. . . . Do you have help?

Frieda shakes her head.

FRANK

But she could have!

JOE

Everything so. . . .

FRIEDA

S&H Green Stamps.

JOE

Don't tell me: that quilt. . . .

FRANK

Tell 'm what the museum said, honey!

FRIEDA

You.

JOE

While Frank's away with the widgets, and the kids are yawling and ketching or telling their bones, here you are. . . .

FRIEDA

Listen, Joe; all of that is nothing. Just hustle and bustle.

FRANK

Ahem. It is not "nothing." The reason I married you. why, in all. . .

FRIEDA

Now here is something. Go ahead, look. They're by me.

JOE

Collection of poetry. No. Double Crostics?

FRANK

Tell him what Doris Nash Wortman said!

JOE

I particularly like 37 down.

FRIEDA

Which puzzle? Which one?

JOE

"Dislike of being with people; love of solitude."  
Apanthropy.

FRIEDA

You know the word! Oh, he knew it!

JOE

Now, this other puzzle: 49 across.

FRIEDA

What? what?

JOE

Longanimity.

FRANK

What's *that*?

FRIEDA

"Silently suffering while planning revenge."

JOE

22 across: "Conditions where things appear more beautiful than they are."

FRIEDA

Kalopsy. Try 3 down, same puzzle.

JOE

"Collective egoism or group conceit." Nosism.

FRIEDA

Oh! Oh!

JOE

Witzelsucht.

FRIEDA

Hyperhedonia.

JOE

Aphilophrenia.

FRIEDA

Luctation.

FRANK

Lactation. Means milking something.

Frieda grabs a dictionary and exits. A count of ten.

Well sir!

Uneasy, Frank launches out of his chair and makes gestures of turning on something. Quadrophonic sound blares. Joe looks impressed but Frank switches off, activating a pong game on a big-screen TV, standing mesmerized by the little ball traveling back and forth, till it disappears off one side of the screen. Moving to the mantel, he picks up a trophy on either side of a ship model, sets them back, wanders about, wrings hands; sits.

JOE

Yard?

Frank exits. Joe peers into the kitchen, then onto the lawn. In the gathering dusk glow ten eyes. Joe turns away. Suddenly the lights dim. The flowers in the vase wilt. The lintel falls off again. The piano begins playing "Dry Bones" ("The knee bone connecta to the thigh bone. . ."). The pong game turns itself on and two monks are seen tossing an electronic football. There is the sound of sloshing water and the ship model sinks through the mantel out of sight. A football ejaculates from the kitchen. Joe holds up a large card from the table — 9.4 — swiveling it about to face every part of the room, then replaces the card and exits.

Bye, bird.

MYNAH

Bye! Go away, we don't want any! Who was that masked man? Oh, buckle down, Winsockie, buckle down! Buckle down . . . !

Definitions of "performing words" unannotated in script. Source: *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary*.

witzelsucht: emotional state characterized by futile attempts at humor

hyperhedonia: abnormal pleasure from doing ho-hum things

aphilophrenia: feeling one is unloved, unwanted

luctation: striving for success