

Madhouse Canteen



“Die, you dog!” Andy yelled after killing an enormous and ugly beast in a computer game.

He quit the game and started to listen to heavy rock music, waving his arms above his head, with two fingers stretched out.



At the same time, Lucy was trying to practice the piano and Madeline jumped down on the floor from the upper bunk. Little Tim just shouted at the top of his lungs and tried to cover the entire floor with toys. Ed was running after Madeline and ran

Tim over every once in a while.

Mum came to the door and mumbled to herself:

“My God, this is a total madhouse canteen.”

Then Lucy came up with an idea.

“You know what?” she told Andy and Madeline once Mum was gone. “If we have a madhouse canteen here, we could might as well go crazy ourselves!”

“I am crazy already!” Andy announced and started twisting and turning his neck.

“Me too!” shouted Madeline, jumped down the bunk bed with a loud bump and put her tongue out.



“Let’s play that we’re actually crazy!” Lucy said. “Let’s talk crazy stuff and act crazy.”

When they sat at the dinner table, Andy started. He let the saliva drip from his mouth to his chin and turned his eyes inside out.

“I’m a floor mop,” he said, slurping saliva back into his mouth.



“Stop acting silly, at least at the table,” Mum got annoyed.

Madeline took a spoonful of curd and didn't manage to put it in her mouth three times in a row.

Now Mum and Dad started to realize that something was not quite right here. Finally, Lucy burped like a big man and asked to be excused from the table to go and throw up.



Then Dad said in a very calm voice:

“There must be crazy people on the loose. But you know, there’s a cure for it. Let’s finish our meal and I will show you!”

Nobody dared to do crazy things anymore because Dad looked as if he was up to something.

Once they had done the dishes, Dad went to the closet and got two long sleeve shirts.

“Lucy, come here!” he called Lucy. When Lucy came quietly, Dad put his big shirt on her and tied the sleeves on the back. He did the same with Madeline.



Little Tim also wanted a shirt. Mum put one of Dad's shirts on him but didn't tie up the sleeves.

Tim was walking around the room, sleeves hanging on the floor. He was like a ghost who kept on repeating:

“Mad'ouse! Mad'ouse!”



As Andy was so big that it was hard to tie the sleeves behind his back, they agreed that Andy was to become the nurse.

Soon all four children were sitting in the madhouse and didn't really know what to do. The girls had run out of things to talk about and Andy as the nurse couldn't be crazier than the mad people he was supposed to look after.



“What are we going to do now?” Lucy finally asked.

“It’s not that easy getting out of the mad-house,” Andy said. “We will need to make sure that you’re well.”

“Do crazy people sing?” Madeline asked all of a sudden.

“I don’t know,” Andy hesitated.

“How about singing a song?” Lucy suggested.

“Like what?” Andy asked. “I don’t know your baby songs.”

“Let’s sing the national anthem!” Lucy proposed. “This is something all of us have all learned!” And the three of them started singing the national anthem in a loud clear voice.



Granny had just come back from visiting a friend and stood at the door of the children's room, eyes wide open. Little Tim was also singing along in a high voice:

“Fa-la-laa, fa-la-laa...”

“What kind of a madhouse canteen is this?” Granny asked.

“This is a madhouse, indeed!” Andy said and kept on singing. Since Granny was singing in a choir, she didn't give it a second thought but sat on the floor and joined them.



“Oh my God!” Mum said in the other room.

“Where have I ended up now?”

Dad giggled quietly to himself and finally joined their choir. And what was Mum left to do then? So in the end there were seven of them singing the anthem at the top of their voice.

When they were finishing the last verse, Mum noticed that the window of the children’s room was wide open and some neighbours had gathered under the window.



They were staring up, head tilted back, and a geezer from next door asked with a stutter:

“Wha-at kind of ma-madhouse ca-canteen do you ha-have over there?”

“I’m sorry,” Mum muttered in reply. “But you know, we really do have a madhouse here.” She didn’t wait for anyone to add anything and shut the window, slightly blushing.

Now it was getting close to bed time and crazy people were let loose for this.

Before everything fell completely silent, they could hear the anthem being hummed under the shower.

“It’s quite a pretty tune,” Lucy thought and drifted off to dreamland.