

KOLA PATA BHUT
THE HOPSCOTCH GHOST

BY

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and

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THE FLOOR IS PAINTED WITH FOUR HOPSCOTCH GAMES WHICH RUN FROM THE CORNERS OF THE PLAYING SPACE TO THE CORNERS WHERE THEY MEET. THE ACTORS EACH HAVE A SERIES OF NOTES WHICH ECHO THE PITCH AND RHYTHM OF A PLAYGROUND NOISE OR CALL. THEY MAKE THEIR CALLS FROM OFFSTAGE ACCOMPANIES BY PERCUSSION, AT FIRST IN HARMONY BUT BUILDING TO A DISCORDANT CLIMAX. (EXAMPLES OF CALLS - He's got my ball. Mind out. Mind out. She hit me. Dor be (Catch him) Hogur khoray. (Behind you). Not playing anymore. THE SOUNDS HAVE A SINISTER EDGE. THE 'SONG' CUTS AT ITS PEAK. THERE IS A MOMENT'S SILENCE. FOUR STONES ROLL ON TO THE HOPSCOTCH GAMES. THE ACTORS ENTER PLAYING EXAGGERATED HOPSCOTCH AND COUNTING IN ENGLISH AND SYLHETI. AS THEY REACH THE FINAL SQUARES THEY 'JUMP-TURN' TO FACE THE AUDIENCE.

ALL It was Monday morning in the playground.
 PERCUSSION SIGNAL.
 THE ACTORS BECOME A GROUP OF CHILDREN CHEERING A TEAMMATE RUNNING FOR A ROUNDER.

ALL CHANTING. Ee-yan. Ee-yan. Ee-yan. CONTINUED.
 THE CHANT IS CONTINUED BY THREE AND FOUR AS ONE AND TWO TAKE UP A SEPARATE CALL.

ONE/TWO Come on. Come on. Come on. CONTINUED.
THREE TAKING UP SEPARATE CALL. Dour. Dour. Dour. (Run)
 THE CHORUS SEEMS TO BE COMING TO A TRIUMPHANT CRESCENDO BUT IAN - WHO WE SEE ONLY THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS - IS STUMPED OUT AT THE LAST BASE.

ALL Orr. A GROAN OF COLLECTIVE DISAPPOINTMENT.
ONE Orr, he's out.
TWO Fhossa. (Rubbish)
THREE Zhure dourto asil. (Should've run faster)
FOUR COMING THROUGH OTHER COMMENTS. That was crap!
 FOUR BREAKS AWAY FROM THE GROUP. THEY PART MISERABLY.
 PERCUSSION SIGNAL.
 ONE AND TWO FORM AN ARCH AND THREE, A BOY, BEGINS TO SKIP THROUGH IT. THEY SING

ONE/TWO/THREE In and out the dusty bluebells,
 In and out the dusty bluebells,
 In and out the dusty bluebells.
 Who'll be the leader?
 THE GIRLS 'CATCH' THE BOY BETWEEN THEIR ARMS. THEY CONTINUE SINGING AS THEY ARE INTERRUPTED BY FOUR
 Pitter patter, pitter patter on your shoulder
 Pitter patter, pitter patter, on your shoulder
 Pitter patter, pitter patter on your shoulder,
 He'll be the leader.

FOUR Sissy game, baby game, sissy game, fhossa game CONTD.
 DIRECTED AT CAUGHT BOY. THE SINGING IS STOPPED BY FOUR'S CHANT.
 PERCUSSION SIGNAL.

THREE BREAKS OUT OF GIRLS' ARMS AND TAGS FOUR.
Onay tui. (You're on.)

THREE

FOUR IS MOMENTARILY SURPRISED THEN TAKES ON THE GAME.

FOUR

Acha. (Alright)

ONE AND TWO RUN AWAY SCREAMING. FOUR GIVES CHASE. SHE QUICKLY CATCHES ONE AND THREE WHO STAND WITH THEIR ARMS OUTSTRETCHED WAITING TO BE RELEASED. FOUR CHASES TWO AND JUST TOUCHES HER WITH HER FINGERTIPS.

FOUR

Got you!

TWO DOESN'T STOP RUNNING BUT 'FREES' ONE AND THREE.

TWO

Didn't.

FOUR

Dorsi. (Got you) Tumi bhaadh. (You're out)

TWO

STILL RUNNING. I am not.

FOUR

You're out. (TO ONE) Naly nee, oy thai to.
(She is, isn't she.)

TWO

I was thuckoo, wasn't I. TO THREE, HOLDING UP
CROSSED FINGERS.

THEY HAVE STOPPED RUNNING BUT CONTINUE TO MOVE AROUND EACH OTHER. THE ARGUMENT IS OVERLAPPING.

FOUR

You weren't.

TWO

I was.

FOUR

I got you.

TWO

Thuckoo.

FOUR

Tumi shobshomoy thuckoo deo.(You're always thuckoo.)
Cheat.

TWO

Na, ami cheating khorina-na.(I'm not cheating.)

FOUR

You are. You are. You're out. Tumi cheat!

TWO

Not!

FOUR

Well, you're out now. SHE SLAPS HER UPPER ARM.

TWO

Ow! Duk faiysay bay. (You hurt me.)

I'm not playing with you anymore.

FOUR

Khub bala. Khelis na. (Good. I don't care.)

TWO

TO THREE. Come on. SHE LEAVES. THREE FOLLOWS.

FOUR

I don't want to play with you anyway. FOLLOWING
TWO ALMOST OFF. Frog features.

Amar benge o-thor logay kheltonay. (Frog features)
MARIYAM IS LEFT CENTRESTAGE.

ONE

Mariyam decided there were more important things
than tag.

MARIYAM (ONE) SEARCHES IN HER POCKET AND TAKES
OUT A LARGE INDIAN SWEET WRAPPED IN PAPER.
SHE CAREFULLY UNWRAPS IT AND BREAKS OFF A PIECE.

FOUR

Kintoo Shanaz otho sure, asilna.
(Shanaz, however, wasn't so sure)

BECOMES SHANAZ. She always spoils the game
Just because I beat her.

SHE SEES MARIYAM HUDDLED OVER HER SWEET

Thor atho kitha? (What have you got?)

MARIYAM HOLDS OUT THE SWEET TO SHOW HER.
SHE GESTURES THAT SHANAZ CAN TAKE A PIECE.

SHANAZ TAKES SOME AND PUTS IT IN HER MOUTH.
THEY CHEW TOGETHER IN SILENCE.

SHANAZ

Shop tonay ansos ni?

MARIYAM NODS.

SHANAZ

Thomas Street?

MARIYAM NODS.

SHANAZ

HOLDING OUT HER HAND FOR MORE. My uncle's sweets
are much nicer.

SHE TAKES MORE SWEET. MARIYAM TAKES MORE AND PUTS
THE REST BACK IN HER POCKET.

THEY CHEW IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT THEN SHANAZ LAUGHS.

SHANAZ

My Dad lagey-zen-lal soolala phaglabheta.
(My Dad looks like a tramp with red hair)

MARIYAM GIGGLES.

He does. Tain uncle-or shop paint khorra.
(He's painting my uncle's shop)

Black and white bitray (inside). Red outside.
Paint dropped on his head. Splat.

Asta matat forsay. (All down here.)

THEY LAUGH.

Ar asay ni? (Have yo got anymore?)(SWEETS.)

MARIYAM

HESITATES. Thura. (A bit.) SHE FEELS IN HER POCKET.

SHANAZ

He's finished painting now.

Soon I'll be able to have sweets whenever I want

because ... SHE PAUSES. MARIYAM TAKES OUT THE SWEET.
SHE DOESN'T OPEN IT.

My uncle says ...

MARIYAM

Kitha? (What?)

SHANAZ

Ami khoytam na... (Well, I'm not supposed to say.)

MARIYAM

What?

SHANAZ

Because itha secret. Because if I tell everyone'll
want to come, ammay khosoin. (My mum says.)

MARIYAM

Come where?

SHANAZ

Amar uncle-or shop-opening-o. Big party.

(To my uncle's shop opening party.)

MARIYAM

Oh.

SHANAZ

Ladies can't go. It's only for men. But I'm going.

And there'll be loads of sweets and pickles.
Borior asar, rasgullas, rasmallai, bundia, halua,
zhilapi ...

MARIYAM

SHANAZ

Gulaphzam?
Yes, of course, gulaphzam. Mountains and mountains
and mountains and mountains - of gulaphzam.
Otota. (Loads.)

SHANAZ

MARIYAM

SHANAZ

Ami amar Eidor dress phinmu. (I'll wear my Eid dress.)
I like gulaphzam best. SHE BEGINS TO UNWRAP SWEET.
Ammay khosoin, (My mum says) I can ask one girl
to come. PAUSE. Zhudi ami sair. (If I want to.)

MARIYAM

SHANAZ

Can you? SHE OFFERS THE LAST OF THE SWEET.
If I like. SHE TAKES THE LAST PIECE, BREAKS IT
AND PUTS A LITTLE BACK IN THE WRAPPER.
Itha Friday after school, oybo. (It's Friday after
school.)
SHE PUTS SWEET IN HER MOUTH.

MARIYAM

You'd better ask your mum if you can come.
EATING THE LAST OF THE SWEET AND SCREWING UP THE
PAPER. She'll let me. Thain dhiba. (She will)
I'll come.

SHANAZ

MARIYAM

SHANAZ

Khub bala. (Good)
Do you want to come to my den tonight.
Yeah.

SHE HOLDS UP HER FINGER TO LINK WITH MARIYAM.
THIS BECOMES THE CUE FOR THE LAUGHING LADY CLAPPING
GAME.

Laughing lady, very funny,
This is how you count the money,
Wisha wisha,
Turn around the busha.

MARIYAM MAKES A MISTAKE WITH THE MOVEMENTS.

MARIYAM

SHANAZ

Aw!
Clumsy claws! It's like this. Omne (This way.)
Dekho. (See) SHE SHOWS HER. MARIYAM COPIES.

SHANAZ

MARIYAM

MARIYAM/SHANAZ

Aicha. (Okay)
Start again.
Hirbar. (Start again.)

THIS TIME MARIYAM GETS IT RIGHT. THEY RUN THROUGH
THE RHYME VERY QUICKLY AGAIN. MARIYAM SUDDENLY
LOSES CONCENTRATION. SHE HAS SEEN RAZIA STANDING
IN THE CORNER OF THE PLAYGROUND. SHANAZ TURNS TO
LOOK.

MARIYAM

SHANAZ

Igoo noya aysay. (She's a newcomer)
Straight from Bangladesh.
IMITATING, MOCKING THEIR INNOCENCE. Ah, shobta ze
bala lageyr. (Ah, everthing's so nice.)

MARIYAM Ze shundor. So beautiful. MOCKING.
SHANAZ She's got big ears.
MARIYAM And muta dhat. (Big teeth.)
SHANAZ Horse-or-lakhan.
 THE GIGGLE AND BEGIN TO IMITATE HORSES, CLIP-CLOPPING NEIGHING, MAKING A LOT OF NOSIE. MR MONTGOMERY JOINS RAZIA AND THEY BEGIN TO WALK ACROSS THE PLAYGROUND TOWARDS MARIYAM AND SHANAZ.
MARIYAM Ssh, Shanaz. SHE SEES RAZIA AND MR MONTGOMERY APPROACHING. AS SOON AS THEY HAVE WALKED PAST THEY COMMENT.
SHANAZ Tair soori dekh. (All those bracelets)
MARIYAM Nouko rong diche. (And her nails)
SHANAZ Bright pink. Same khorja pinche. (Like her dress)
MARIYAM Oy. (Yes)
SHANAZ I bet she's in our class.
 PERCUSSION SIGNAL.
FOUR Thik tharar mon motoiy (And sure enough)
ONE After playtime
THREE Mr Montgomery-ay class-o shobray khoila
TWO About the new girl.
THREE Or tried to ... BECOMES MR MONTGOMERY.
 THE CLASS REPRESENTED BY PERCUSSION ARE MAKING A TERRIFIC NOISE.
MONTGOMERY Quiet everyone, please.
 PERCUSSION CONTINUES.
 Shobay chub khorja bo. (Settle down now.)
 SLIGHTLY QUIETER.
 USING AUDIENCE. Becky, come down from that window ledge. I want you all quiet by the time I count three. USING FINGERS. One. QUIETER. Two.
 PERCUSSION SUBSIDES. SHARPLY. Becky please.
 HIS SHARPNESS REVIVES THE PERCUSSION SLIGHTLY. THEN IT BEGINS TO FADE.
 I do not wish to scrape you off the playground like a blob of strawberry jam. Thankyou.
 THERE IS STILL SOME NOISE, Two and a half.
 PERCUSSION ALMOST FADING OUT. Three.
 RAZIA IS STANDING BESIDE MR MONTGOMERY. SHANAZ AND MARIYAM ARE SITTING CROSS-LEGGED, ARMS FOLDED.
 Sit on your bottom, Ahmed. (USING AUDIENCE)
 Don't you know where your bottom is?
 That's better.
 Now who's sitting nicely?

Mariyam. SHE SMILES WITH PLEASURE BUT DOESN'T LOOK AT HIM.

SHANAZ

I am, sir. Ami, ami.

MONTGOMERY

Yes, Shanaz, but Mariyam is also sitting quietly.

SHANAZ

Aw. SHE PULLS A FACE.

MONTGOMERY

I'd like to introduce you to Razia.

Razia will be joining our class from today.

I'm sure you'll all do your best to make her feel welcome.

ALL

SHANAZ, MARIYAM, PERCUSSION IN RHYTHM. Yes, Mr Montgomery.

MONTGOMERY

Bala. Now, who'd like to look after Razia for the rest of the day.

SHANAZ HAND SHOOTS UP, GRUNTING WITH DESIRE TO BE CHOSEN.

Ami dooi-ta sensible children sayi.

SHANAZ NUDGES MARIYAM AND HAULS HER HAND UP.

MONTG

Careful, Shanaz. You'll do yourself an injury.

MARIYAM WHISPERS IN SHANAZ EAR.

MARIYAM

Khosna, amrar logay ayto. (Ask her to come with us.)

SHANAZ

TO RAZIA. Amrar logay thakh, Razia. (Stay with us)

RAZIA

Aicha. (Okay)

SHANAZ

Mr Montgomery, she says please can she come with us.

MONTG

Alright, alright. You and Mariyam can look after Razia. PERCUSSION IS STARTING AGAIN. Quieten down.

We are going to do number work until dinnertime.

I want you to show Razia how nicely and quietly

we can get our maths books and number cards out.

PERCUSSION NOISE IMMEDIATELY STARTS.

GENTLY. Quiet now. PERCUSSION INCREASES.

MONTG

LOUDER. Quietly. PERCUSSION INCREASES.

MONTG

SHOUTING. Chup! (Quiet!) PERCUSSION INCREASES.

MONTG

What did I just say?

MONTG

PERCUSSION CUTS. SILENCE. PAUSE.

SHANAZ

Quiet, sir.

PERCUSSION SIGNAL.

FOUR

The Shanaz (So Shanaz) SHE FETCHES UNIFIX.

ONE

Ar Mariyam. (And Mariyam)

TWO

Razia ray dekhailo (Showed Razia)

FOUR

How to use unifix. SHE THROWS A GIANT-SIZED PIECE OF UNIFIX AT RAZIA WHO CATCHES IT AND GOES OFF TO FETCH MORE PIECES.

THREE

Tharar thairay ekhta book ar pencil dhilo. (They found her a book and pencil)

THREE GIVES A BOOK AND PENCIL TO ONE WHO HANDS IT TO TWO.

THREE

And a number card.

THREE GIVES IT TO ONE WHO GIVES IT TO TWO. FOUR RETURNS WITH MORE UNIFIX.

RAZIA

READING. What is the missing number?

ALL

And they started work.

SHANAZ

Seven and something equals twelve. You've got to fill it in.

Sayir. (Put four) SHOWS NUMBER WITH FINGERS.

MARIYAM

Na. (No)

SHANAZ

It's four.

RAZIA HESITATES, STARTS TO WRITE.

MARIYAM

QUIETLY TO RAZIA. It's five.

SHANAZ

It's not. Because look it's ...

SHE BEGINS TO LINE UP THE UNIFIX.

Ami dekhai. (I'll show you)

MARIYAM

Okay.

THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS SHOULD BE PLAYED AS A CLOWNING ROUTINE. RAZIA BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM WHO ARE BOTH ATTEMPTING TO DEMONSTRATE, USING THE UNIFIX, THAT THEY ARE RIGHT.

SHANAZ

Ek, doi, tin, sayir, fas.

MARIYAM COUNTS HER UNIFIX SILENTLY WHILE SHANAZ COUNTS ALOUD. MARIYAM HAS SEVEN PIECES. SHE LOOKS AT SHANAZ' PIECES. SHANAZ MAKES IT CLEAR THAT SHE'S+ NOT HAVING ANY OF HERS. MARIYAM GOES OFF TO BRING ON MORE PIECES. SHANAZ TAKES TWO OF MARIYAM'S LEAVING M WITH FIVE AND S WITH SEVEN. M COMES BACK ON WITH FOUR MORE PIECES. SHE LOOKS SUSPICIOUSLY AT S. S IGNORES HER. SHE PUTS DOWN HER NEW PIECES. SHANAZ LOOKS AT THEM. M LOOKS WARNINGLY BACK AND RUNS OFF TO GET TWO MORE PIECES. S QUICKLY TAKES FIVE OF M'S PIECES LEAVING HER WITH FOUR. M COMES BACK WITH TWO MORE. SHE SEES THAT S HAS TAKEN HER PIECES. S IS COUNTING ALONG HER LINE OF TWELVE PIECES. HER BACK IS TO M. JUST BEFORE S REACHES THE END OF THE LINE M MAKES A GRAB FOR SOME OF S'S PIECES. SHE MANAGES TO TAKE ONLY ONE BEFORE

SHANAZ

Twelve. SHE TURNS TO SEE MARIYAM WATCHING.

SHE BEGINS TO COUNT ALONG THE LINE TO M.

Seven. SHE BREAKS THE LINE, COUNTS REMAINING PIECES.

Four. There. Seven and four equal twelve.

SHE RETURNS TRIUMPHANT TO WRITE IN HER BOOK. MARIYAM IS PUZZLED.

RAZIA

It's four then? SHESITS NEXT TO SHANAZ.

SHANAZ

Yes!

MARIYAM

Na!

MARIYAM SITS THE OTHER SIDE OF RAZIA

RAZIA Yshh, ami busziarna. (Now I don't understand.)
SHANAZ You're confusing her. Amaray middle-o boytheyde.
 (Let me sit in the middle)
 SHE PUSHES RAZIA OUT AND SITS IN THE MIDDLE.

MARIYAM Na. SHE COVERS HER WORK AND TURNS HER BACK ON
 SHANAZ AND RAZIA, SHANAZ NUDGES MARIYAM. MARIYAM
 MAKES A FACE AND PULLS HER WORK FURTHER INTO HERSELF.

RAZIA Will you help me then? Ami four deetam ni?
 (Shall I put four?)

SHANAZ Oy.
RAZIA Thik ni? (Sure?)
SHANAZ Yes. DOUBTFUL. Because, um, thai wrong. (She's wrong.)
 SHE LOOKS AT MARIYAM WHO CONTINUES TO KEEP HER
 WORK COVERED, HER HEAD ALMOST TOUCHING THE PAPER.

SHANAZ Thai gusha oysay. (She's sulking now)
 MARIYAM TURNS AND MAKES A FACE BUT SAYS NOTHING.

SHANAZ Gusha-ni. (Sulky)
MARIYAM Na.
SHANAZ Sulky socks.
 Sulky socks, moans a lot. SHE TICKLES MARIYAM.
 Don't be an ickle sulky socks, Maw-wee-am.
 Pleezey wheezy, just for meezey.
 SHE TICKLES HER, MARIYAM BEGINS TO CRACK.
 Just for meezey. Ket khut. ket khut. (Tickling words)
 MARIYAM GIVES IN TO GIGGLES. RAZIA JOINS IN.
 MR MONTGOMERY NOTICES. HE STANDS WATCHING BEFORE
 THEY NOTICE HIM.

MONTG Erhum. Yes, you three.
 THEY STOP AND LOOK AT HIM GUILTILY.
 Kitha loiya otho fuss? (What's all this fuss?)
 RAZIA AND MARIYAM TURN SIMULTANEOUSLY TO SPEAK IN
 SHANAZ' EARS.

RAZIA IN ONE EAR. Tell him you're helping me.
MARIYAM IN THE OTHER EAR. Tell him I'm helping you.
SHANAZ Kichu naiy. Nothing, sir.
MONTG Well, it's the noisiest nothing I've ever heard.
MONTG Onay silliness tho ar (Stop your silliness and)
 get on with your work.
 HE TURNS AWAY FROM THEM. THEY START TO GIGGLE.
 HE TURNS BACK AND GLARES SILENCING THEM.

MONTG And I expect all your number cards finished by
 dinnertime.
 THEY GROAN AND FREEZE, MARIYAM HUDDLED OVER HER BOOK.
 SHANAZ AND RAZIA TOGETHER, OVER ANOTHER BOOK.

PERCUSSION SIGNAL.

TWO
MONTG

The day flew by.

Tidy up time.

MARIYAM BEGINS TO CLEAR THE UNIFIX.

RAZIA
SHANAZ
RAZIA
SHANAZ

TO SHANAZ. Ononi? (Over here?)

Na. Over here. OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO MARIYAM.

Oh.

Come on.

WHILE MARIYAM'S BACK IS TURNED SHANAZ AND RAZIA LEAVE HER TO IT.

SHANAZ

Come on, she can tidy up the rest,

We'll get first place in the line.

MARIYAM IS TRYING TO CATCH UP THROUGHOUT SEQUENCE.

MONTG
SHANAZ

Dinnertime.

Line up.

Don't push.

Clear your plate.

Eat your veg,

Even if it's smelly cabbage.

get your coat,

Play outside,

Wait your turn to use the slide.

MONTG
SHANAZ

In time.

Register.

We're here, sir.

MONTG
SHANAZ/MONTG
SHANAZ

Now we're going to make

This boat.

Draw it, paint it, cut it, glue it, name it,
date it, decorate it.

Just like mine up on the wall.

TO THE AUDIENCE. Itha best.

Keep up, come on.

Come on, come on, come on, come on.

Keep up, come on.

THE THREE GIRLS END UP SITTING TOGETHER 'BEING GOOD'

MONTG

And then Goldilocks ran all the way home.

THE BELL RINGS.

Home time. TO HIMSELF. Thank God for that.

THE CHILDREN ARE LEAVING. CLASS PERCUSSION.

Quietly.

SHANAZ

The bell means we can go.

You have to get your bag and coat. Bye, Mr MONTgomery

See you tomorrow.

MONTG

Bye, Shanaz. Bye, Mariyam, Bye, Razia.