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A Little Kitchen Music Lawrence Fixel

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Lawrence Fixel

A LITTLE KITCHEN MUSIC

.... Krista in the kitchen. She studies the assembled ingredients—the carrot, the purple onion, the celery. A painter of still lifes, her attention rests there: the colors, textures, the way they are arranged speak to her. She shakes off the momentary reverie: let's get this done, back to work... One of the guests wanders in, offers to help. They talk about this and that. She tells the friend, a woman of her own age, that she could use some help—but later. Another comes in, asks for a glass of water. She points to where the glasses are stored, and to the bottled water in the pantry...

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.... It is going well. A long time since she has prepared dinner just for friends. A matter of timing. She moves back and forth, eyes the clock on the wall, the pots and pans on the stove. Someone has put on a record; the music reaches her through the fragrances, the sounds, the noise of voices from the other rooms. She recognizes something of what she hears in the music: *A Haydn Quartet! Can't be sure. Perhaps one of the lesser known....*

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.... The windows are beginning to steam up. She turns on the oven fan. The noise takes over. The music disappears. The windows remain smudged. She opens the back door to the pantry. There's enough breeze to make the gas jets flutter. She hesitates, decides to leave the door open. Last time she was frying something in the black iron skillet, and the smoke set off the fire alarm... It doesn't take much to set it off. I'm doing what I can, as best I can. All this activity for a painter of still lifes. That's what I am now—just that, nothing more. Mother, lover, that is still there—but not like before. Remember: it's your own life, whatever that is, whoever is here, for as long as they stay: *the necessary company.*

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.... She will know when it is done. Hopefully it all comes out together. They will soon be sitting at the same table. Looking into each other's faces. Listening to each other's voices. As real as they—or rather *we*—can be. It's not a story, not a movie: we can't be sure how anything, this meal included, will turn out. Still I am trying to put this taste in these dishes—the taste that love invites, that friendship furthers. A little sustenance, a little ceremony, and something that makes it seem like an occasion. Did I read that somewhere? *Haydn, my dear, sorry you couldn't make it. Better luck next time.*