

BOON (Character traits)

<p>Determined for his own goals to be met HENCE he disregards the views/desires of Mother ⇒ looks down on Mother's wishes to stay due to sentimental value</p>	<p>"Throw away these hideous statues" "Thirty-six storeys high" "I don't know how you can live in this dump" "not everyday is as irrational as you" - said to Mother "It's old and rotting" - Boon describes the house</p>	
<p>Determined to get out of the house with Mother</p>	<p>"Ma, I know you're really attached to this flat but it is falling to pieces" "you want to stay in semi-D also can" "We can move to somewhere with a fantastic view of trees. Hundreds of them, if you like" BOON TALKS TO THE TREE [Pg 95] - <i>Cutting down of tree</i> "You're just a tree. Just a stupid tree" *This is after when Jeremiah tells the family that YF is dead "You know it's true. Don't you?" 'a transcendental smile lights up his face, as he watches the spiralling ash like a little boy whose dream has come true'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to rationalise/convince Mother to move out by trying to appeal to her interests
<p>Hates his childhood ⇒ traumatised by it</p>	<p>BOON'S DREAM "But how to erase the history of your own life?" "Superman stickers refuse to come off" "black grime strangles bathroom taps" "He might as well still be here" "buried like Kryptonite in these walls" "got to do the rescuing yourself" BOON'S MONOLOGUE ABOUT THE TREE "Fifteen years later. And I am still chained to that bloody tree" "Can still feel the rough bark scraping against my back" "I wanted to die to show him what a monster he was" "But then I looked up and saw her. And I knew I couldn't do it" MOVING OUT [Pg 11] *Mother was telling Boon about how he liked superheroes/things in Boon's childhood "Boon doesn't reply" "after a long pause. Kryptonite" BOON BREAKS THE BAD NEWS TO MOTHER [Pg 83] "Bullshit. Bullshit. I am not like that bastard at all"</p>	

Wishes to live lavishly just like his property agent friends (comparison) ⇒ resentment in not being able to live luxuriously like them	<p>"I hate being a property agent. I see beautiful condos but then go back to that pigsty"</p> <p>HOUSING AGENTS - TEASING BOON [Pg 18]</p> <p>"[Boon] reaches for the keys"</p> <p>"None of your business" + "Oi!"</p>	
(CHILD) Imaginative, energetic, playful	<p>MEMORY OF THE RED UNDERWEAR [Pg 38]</p> <p>"dah dah dah DAH DAH DAH"</p> <p>"I'm Clark Kent!"</p> <p>"Superman"</p>	
Cares for Mother and wants to also ensure her happiness ⇒ I think he feels bad for her	<p>MOTHER AND BOON [Pg 98]</p> <p>"Stop it Ma! Or you'll have nothing left" - when Mother is throwing her statues</p> <p>"But Boon squats down and start taping the broken statues together"</p> <p>MOTHER DREAMS OF BECOMING A MYNAH</p> <p>"He keeps asking, do you like it?"</p> <p>"I know he's trying"</p>	

MOTHER (Character traits)

Wants to hold on to the past & not let it go ⇒ keeps past memories close to her as she treasures their sentimental value/cherishes her past memories & whatever makes her remember them	<p>"Penang. July 1978"</p> <p>"Don't you dare do anything to my home"</p> <p>"Don't you dare touch my walls"</p> <p>"This place is worth more than any amount of money"</p> <p>"Where else would you be? He said. Where else would I be?"</p> <p>"Wah ai deng chu" - which means <i>I want to go home</i></p> <p>MOTHER DREAMS OF BECOMING A MYNAH [Pg 101] (memorise highlighted quotes in book)</p>	<p>→ She cherishes the sentimental value of her possessions as they are symbolic of a happy memory that she is reminded of whenever she has these items - House, Statues etc</p> <p>→ Even though the new estate has many luxurious facilities, Mother does not care about them as what she treasures are the happy memories in her past that are represented by her old items like statues & most importantly her</p>
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		<p>house</p> <p>→ She feels resentment towards the people in her estate who strive for luxury as it is due to their aspirations that she loses her humble home</p> <p>→ She feels resentment as while the people in her estate are able to fulfil their aspirations, she is forced to move out of her home & leave behind the things that she holds dear & close to her heart</p>
Does not want to move on and chooses to stay in the past	<p>A NEIGHBOURLY CHAT [Pg 31]</p> <p>“We got no future. Our future is here”</p>	
Loves YF very much	<p>“Don’t want hundreds. I only want one. My tree”</p> <p>“This place is worth more than any amount of money”</p> <p>“Because I am still here”</p> <p>MOTHER’S DREAM [Pg 86]</p> <p>“shoulders hunched”</p> <p>“but I only cut my finger open with the knife”</p> <p>“you idiot, you stupid fool” ⇒ <i>tries to remain defensive</i></p> <p>“All I wanted was to hear him say my name”</p> <p>“Just once”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hangs on to the hope that one day YF will return to her • Still loves YF as she is still waiting for him all these years • Yearns for the presence & return of YF
Stubborn - Wants to avoid the truth - Does not want to accept YF’s death	<p>REVELATIONS [Pg 88]</p> <p>“He is a piece of dog shit but he is not a corpse!”</p> <p>ACCEPTING THE TRUTH</p> <p>“He’s a lousy liar” - Mother says this about Jeremiah</p>	

YOUNG MOTHER

<p>(SIG) The character of YM allows audience to see the development of YM to Mother & understand Mother’s emotions & thoughts through experiences in her past → so that audience can better understand Mother’s emotions & preferences</p>		

JEREMIAH (Character traits)

Contemplative	<p>“reluctantly” “uncertainly” “But...”</p> <p>“I’ve always wondered...what those last moments were like. Inside her head” ⇒ he asked Corpse for what it felt during one’s last moments</p>	
Selfless - Good person - Wants to do what is right - Righteous		
Compassionate/ Empathetic	“They’ve suffered so much already. Shouldn’t they have the right to rest in peace for a bit longer than 15 years?”	
Uncertain about his decisions/leanings at times	<p>(1) HE IS AN EMOTIONLESS BUREAUCRAT (Struggling to discover who he is as Jeremiah)</p> <p>“We have to try. Or at least show that we are trying” “We’re about policies, not people” “Nothing personal”</p> <p>THE SERVANT AND THE CORPSE [Pg 21] “And I am here to...” + “reads obediently from the file” ⇒ <i>he does not use his own words here to talk to Corpse but reads off from the file</i></p> <p>CHORUS OF CIVIL SERVANTS [Pg 33] “We are unable to make an exception for your case” “Thank you for your feedback”</p> <p>JEREMIAH AND BOSS [Pg 41] “Yes. I mean no. I mean. Monday is fine” ⇒ he says this when Director instructs him to go back to the grave</p> <p>(2) HE TRULY CARES FOR THE PEOPLE</p> <p>GRAVESIDE SCENE [Pg 48]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is unsure of who he is as a person ⇒ he tries to emulate the actions of professional bureaucrats as a civil servant and in this process loses his own self-identity • He takes a while to decidedly find who he is as a person - Jeremiah as Jeremiah, not Jeremiah the faceless bureaucrat • Jeremiah struggles to fight for what he believes in due to the demands and nature of his job as a bureaucrat <p>→ Determined to help Corpse</p>

Contemplative	<p>“reluctantly” “uncertainly” “But...”</p> <p>“I’ve always wondered...what those last moments were like. Inside her head” ⇒ he asked Corpse for what it felt during one’s last moments</p>	
	<p>“I think I may be able to help you” + “There’s got to be something”</p> <p>JEREMIAH TALKS TO COLLEAGUE [Pg 79] “Um...no” ⇒ He refused to get in Director’s office “Well, I also have priorities, Director” “What exactly is wrong with my attitude? Just because I care about what happens to somebody other than myself, even if it’s just a rotten old corpse... why does that make me the one that’s screwed up?” “Now, if you’ll please excuse me, I have a site visit to make” “Screw the PQ!”</p>	<p>→ This was the first time Jeremiah ever defied Director directly</p> <p>→ Here, Jeremiah stands firmly in what he believes</p> <p>→ He does not discriminate even a corpse</p> <p>→ The use of the informal word ‘screw’ reflects how Jeremiah is not trying to act prim and proper as a bureaucrat (by always speaking in a professional manner), but is using words that reflect his unfiltered thoughts</p> <p>→ Cares about helping the public and taking into consideration their view points than merely executing the tasks required to get done - which goes against the core ideals of Bureaucracy that involves getting things done without the consideration of human emotions</p>

CORPSE

<p>Loves his wife, Young Mother, a lot (Character trait)</p>	<p>CORPSE FINALLY REMEMBERS [Pg 75] “She loved trees”</p> <p>BOON CUTS DOWN TREE AND JEREMIAH TALKS TO CORPSE [Pg 96] “I had to go back to the tree, the house, to her” “When I reached the door, I banged on it until even the driver also curse and swear. So I curse back lah”</p>	<p>→ YM is the last thing on</p>
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	<p>"In the flames I see her face"</p> <p>CREMATION [Pg 103] "She's squatting in the kitchen" "Her favourite spot" "And she says, why so long? Si Lang Tau" "And I know I am home"</p>	<p>his mind before his death</p> <p>→ Remembers her actions, preferences</p> <p>→ Corpse's definition of home whereby 'home' for him is a place he belongs to and cherishes is with his wife, Young Mother</p> <p>→ YM is the last thing on Corpse's mind before he is cremated</p> <p>→ Minutes before Corpse's cremation, he reminisces about YM and how beautiful it would be to return back to her</p>
<p>(SIGNIFICANCE OF CORPSE) Corpse allowed Jeremiah to grow as a character + interactions with Jeremiah</p>	<p>THE SERVANT AND THE CORPSE [Pg 21] "(reads obediently from the file) In line with the government's triple RE strategy"</p> <p>GRAVESIDE SCENE [Pg 48] "I think I may be able to help you" "There's got to be something!" "You're just a corpse taking up unnecessary space in the ground. Why do I even bother with you?" "I would've become a construction worker! Not a bloody bureaucrat!" "I haven't been this hot since I was in school"</p> <p>CORSE AND JEREMIAH [Pg 67] J: "I was trying to visit my parents. Save time" C: "How come?" J: Last minute mugging, with an overdue sense of filial piety" C: "How come?" J: "Some stupid motorcyclist swerved into their lane" + "My mother was still with me" C: "I'm sorry"</p> <p>CORPSE FINALLY REMEMBERS [Pg 75] C: "She loved trees" J: "Who? Your wife?" C: "I gave her a tree in the backyard"</p>	<p>⇒ Through Corpse, the audience got to better understand Jeremiah</p> <p>→ Over here, Jeremiah speaks in a casual conversational tone → He speaks colloquially → He does not try to use bombastic words to make himself seem more sophisticated</p> <p>→ Both Corpse & Jeremiah engage in a conversation whereby Jeremiah shares a personal story</p> <p>→ Both Corpse & Jeremiah engage in a conversation where they share moments in their life</p>
<p>(SIGNIFICANCE OF</p>	<p>THE SERVANT AND THE CORPSE [Pg 21]</p>	

CORPSE) Corpse is a significant character in the play to show how the ambitions of the living overpower the desires of the dead, how Progress prevails over Memory	<p>C: "That sound. Boom Boom Boom"</p> <p>CREMATION [Pg 103] "(A buzzer sounds, and white ash rains down over Jeremiah's head)"</p>	
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AGENTS (Character traits)

(SIGNIFICANCE) Act as people who further propel and motivate Boon to aspire for luxury and opulence	<p>THE SHOW FLAT [Pg 7] "Your dream home!" "I tell you ah, the trick is imagination" "Use words like that, that they don't understand, but that smell of high-class air-con air, which they long to breathe" "If the park is a sweaty 15-minute walk away... let them imagine their children happily climbing the trees" "Your most powerful tools are their own desires. So use them. Tempt them"</p> <p>HOUSING AGENTS - TEASING BOON [Pg 18] A1: "(dangling his keys triumphantly)" B: (reaches out for keys) A1: "Oi wait until I invite you for housewarming can?"</p> <p>A1: So where are you staying? Don't tell me you're still staying with your mother! He is still staying with his mother!"</p>	<p>→ Agent is flaunting his new home to Boon & teasing Boon</p> <p>→ Agent is teasing Boon about how he still stays with his mother at a run-down flat</p> <p>⇒ This teasing and flaunting of one's wealth in front of Boon makes him envious & even more determined to want to leave the flat & experience the same level of modern luxury</p>
Act as people who embody the values and principles of Bureaucracy		
Unempathetic, insensitive, condescending, self-centred	<p>HOUSING AGENTS - TEASING BOON [Pg 18] A1: "(dangling his keys triumphantly)" B: (reaches out for keys) A1: "Oi wait until I invite you for housewarming can?"</p> <p>A1: So where are you staying? Don't tell me you're still staying with your mother! He is still staying with his mother!"</p>	<p>→ Very insensitive to flaunt his wealth</p> <p>→ Teasing Boon about something he is deeply hurt & resentful of</p>

	A2: "Not like you like that, stay in posh condo while your father stay in tai ping lao ren yuan"	→ Self-centred as A1 is living luxuriously himself but is not taking care of his father & left him to be taken care of others in old folks home
Ingenuine, Manipulative, Calculative	<p>"Your dream home!"</p> <p>"I tell you ah, the trick is imagination"</p> <p>"Use words like that, that they don't understand, but that smell of high-class air-con air, which they long to breathe"</p> <p>"If the park is a sweaty 15-minute walk away... let them imagine their children happily climbing the trees"</p> <p>"Your most powerful tools are their own desires. So use them. Tempt them"</p>	
Have superficial views	<p>"Life will be perfect once they move into their dream home"</p> <p>"There will be no more arguments with a panoramic seaview"</p> <p>"No betrayal that cannot be overcome with infinity pools"</p>	

- Young Mother
- Young Father

YOUNG FATHER (ALL Quotes)

MEMORY OF THE NEW HOUSE [Pg 28]

Q) why is Boon's presence important? BOON

- He can understand why Mother treasures the house so much.

- Amplifies the characterisation of mother

Ma?

He is shocked to see the memories, but they don't notice him.

Le si lang tau¹.

Young Father enters, smiling.

You never told me you had so much money...

You sure you can afford this?

No need to worry about that. Not enough then borrow lor.

Borrow from people also one day you have to pay it back. You sure or not? Work lor...you work lor...I'm not going to work. I'm going to enjoy life. I'm going to sit back in this kitchen and drink bird's nest and look out of this window, while you make money for me. Can or not?

Can...For you, anything also can.

Real or bluff?

Since when did I bluff you? It's okay, you know, if you don't like it. We don't have to stay here.

It's an investment. Can still sell and make money.

Xiao² ah. Everything also money money money.

Of course I like it. Why shouldn't I like it?

I like everything. Even the walls. I like the walls...

They're so...white. I've never seen walls so

the weight

ACT 1: SCENE 8

29

of
memory that Mother
carries with her.
Years of hard,
tiring work -
5 memory of
progress!

All progress will
eventually become
10 YOUNG FATHER
a memory

Even when she was
younger, she
15 did not want
to anything else

YOUNG MOTHER

white before. (smells the wall, breathing in deeply)

I've never smelled walls so white before.

No one else has lived here before. My whole
life, I've lived inside borrowed walls, bathed in
borrowed bathrooms, slept on borrowed floors.

But now. (pauses, finds it hard to go on)

Everything. The walls, the kitchen tiles, the
window grilles, the door knobs. Even the door
knobs are...beautiful.

Xiao zha boh³. Door knobs also beautiful.

You think this is good, you just wait. Next
time when I make enough money, I'll buy you
a big bungalow, want or not? Inside, got spiral
staircase and marble floors. Outside, a big garden
full of rambutan trees and your very own
swimming pool. I tell you, you haven't seen
anything yet. ➤

Don't need anything else. This is good enough.

Your dreams are too big for me.

20 YOUNG FATHER

And yours are too small. You just wait. (pause)
Come here. I got a surprise for you.

YOUNG MOTHER

You mean still got more surprise? What?
In the kitchen? Boon may find this

YOUNG FATHER

No.

25 YOUNG MOTHER

Backyard? What do you have in the backyard?
She runs out to the backyard. Young Father follows her.

BOON

Wah piang eh⁴.

30
what does mother mean by
the continuous use of the
word "borrowed"?

- MEMORY OF YOUNG MOTHER AND FATHER [Pg 46]
- FLASHBACK - PAINTING [Pg 53]

YOUNG FATHER

Loves his wife - Young Mother	
Inability to suppress his anger at times	
(SIGNIFICANCE)	

YOUNG MOTHER (ALL Quotes)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MEMORY OF THE NEW HOUSE [Pg 28]
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MEMORY OF YOUNG MOTHER AND FATHER [Pg 46]