

MR. JONES is sitting in an armchair, Stage R., his head buried in a newspaper. Presently, MRS. JONES enters from Stage L. in an extremely agitated state, slamming the door behind her.

MRS. JONES

That's it! I've had enough! They've tried my patience one too many times today and now I've just about had it! There's nothing more I can do – I give up!

MR. JONES

(Without looking up)
Something wrong, Mrs. Jones?

MRS. JONES

It doesn't matter what I say, nothing makes a blind bit of difference. I may as well be talking to a brick wall.

MR. JONES

Is it the children again?

MRS. JONES

Of course it's the children. When is it not the children? I never get a minute's peace with those two. It's one long constant battle of wills.

MR. JONES

Well I'm sure they'll soon settle down if you just let them be for a while.

MRS. JONES

Let them be? How on earth am I supposed to do that when they're hell bent on beating the living daylights out of each other?

MR. JONES

Boys will be boys, Mrs. Jones. You can't expect them to behave like model children all of the time.

MRS. JONES

I just need a little peace and quiet. Is that really so much to ask?

MR. JONES

Parenthood brings with it all manner of responsibilities, some of them none too pleasant. We'd acknowledged and agreed that it wasn't likely to be all plain sailing long before we made the decision to adopt.

MRS. JONES

I am fully aware of what my responsibilities are, thank you all the same. But I wonder, Mr. Jones...are you?

MR. JONES

What are you implying?

MRS. JONES

Well, you're supposed to be the man of the house, aren't you? Why don't you try doing something about it, instead of just sitting there ogling over the sports pages?

MR. JONES

Perhaps because I know when to leave well enough alone. Mark my words, it'll all blow over if you just let them sort it out amongst themselves.

(Just then several loud sounds of things crashing and banging are heard offstage)

MRS. JONES

Oh how right you are. The spirit of reconciliation never sounded sweeter. My apologies for ever doubting your word.

MR. JONES

I fail to see how resorting to sarcasm is going to improve matters.

MRS. JONES

But what are we going to *do*, for heaven's sake? We can't just let them pulverize each other into the ground.

MR. JONES

I think you're making rather more of this than is absolutely necessary.

MRS. JONES

But listen to what they're doing to each other in there! They're not just unruly, they're unhinged. We are their parents. We have a responsibility for their safety and wellbeing, and what's happening in that room right now is simply not normal!

MR. JONES

May I remind you, Mrs. Jones, that our little darlings originate from a gene pool of which we know absolutely nothing about. Moreover, the culture from which we rescued them is vastly different to our own, and I think it behoves us to remain sensitive to some of their ethnic idiosyncrasies, however cruel they may appear to us. For all we know, this may be their way of bonding. And as much as we may desire to bestow our superior lifestyle upon them, we have to accept that they're going to have their little ways.

(Just then, more loud crashes and bangs are heard offstage)

MRS. JONES

Little ways? That's putting it mildly.

(Sitting in the armchair L)

I had no idea motherhood would be so traumatizing.

MR. JONES

Well what is it they're fighting about exactly? What's the problem here?

MRS. JONES

Oh, I don't know – it's always something different. Then again, it all amounts to the same thing. Last week it was the bunk bed. Ali, being a year older, decided that he should be the one in the top bunk. Omar, having gotten used to being there, refused to budge. Pandemonium and mayhem ensued, of course, until finally Ali got his way. Now Omar's refusing to share the same room with him and it's become a full-scale conflict to see who can force the other out. They've taken to strangling each other in the middle of the night.

MR. JONES

Then perhaps you're not thinking far enough outside of the box. Why don't you suggest to them that they divide the room into separate sections, each with its own half of the bunk? That way they can both feel important.

MRS. JONES

It wouldn't make a jot of difference. It's not about sharing, it's about control. Omar wants Ali out and vice versa. Each thinks the other should sleep in the study from hereon, and both seem willing to stop at nothing in order to make that a reality.

MR. JONES

I am not having my study turned into a bedroom! That is sacred ground! Some of my greatest thinking is done in that room.

MRS. JONES

Oh calm down. No one's asking you to give up your study, I'm just trying to illustrate the gravity of a situation that, whether through negligence or wantonness, you have thus far seemed completely oblivious to.

(More loud smashing and banging is heard offstage)

MR. JONES

(Cautiously)

Then I think the time may have come for us to consider employing a little d-i-s-c-i-p-l-i-n-e.