**Mom, You Never Told Me . . .**

Jeffrey L. Arans

Mom and Dad, I’ve decided I really do appreciate you. When you left for your extended vacation in the Orient last month, you put me in charge of the house. The result: I now know the agony you've had to put up with from us kids.

For the first three weeks, things ran smoothly. Per your instruction, I watered the grass every day, before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., and I soaked the indoor plants once a week. Also, Mom, I walked the dog four times a day just because you said it was very important that she be out that many times—I disagreed, as you'll recall, but nonetheless I walked her. Yes, I was a good boy. But when Kari, your darling daughter got home from summer camp, I had to become a part-time parent. That's when the trouble all started.

First, she made a shopping list. Now, as you know, Kari is a vegetarian and everything she wanted to eat, well, I didn't. But, of course, little sister must always win out. So I went to the market and when I got home with what I thought were excellent buys and good, healthy, comparison-priced groceries, I was met with: “What kind of yogurt is this?” and “Why couldn't you have bought some real ice cream,”

“Well!” and “Humph?” I replied. After all, I told her, I'm the one who went to the market.

Such Indignation! Such manipulation! If this is parenting, I thought, thank goodness you're coming home soon.

Then Sis invited a friend to stay overnight—which I really didn't mind. What I did mind was that the half gallon of lemonade I made the previous day disappeared in 24 hours and the half gallon of artificial mint chip ice cream—which Kari had roundly criticized as so unorganic—was also consumed. All of it.

Now I have some idea, Mom and Dad, of how you must react when, having made thousands of gallons of frozen orange juice, you yourself feel a craving for orange juice, run to the refrigerator, pull open the door, full of desire for that tall, refreshing glass—only to find an empty Tupperware bottle with dried pulp stuck to the sides and bottom. Did I ever drink the last drop? Naw, it couldn't have been *me*.

Soon Kari enlivened my week even more. One morning I gave the kitchen floor a close look and decided it could use a good moping. For the first time in my life, I poured cleanser into a bucket, dipped in the mop and put it to the kitchen floor. Mom, you never told me how strong that ammonia is. Phew! —but it got the floor sparkling clean and off to work I went.

When I got home, what did I discover ? You guessed it. Not a dirty floor—a sticky one. How could that be? Ammonia and water never got sticky before. A little prodding from me finally got the facts out. Having spilled the sugar intended for her Wheat Chex, Kari mopped up the mess with warm water. Well, Mom, you know how it is, water and sugar make a pretty gooey combination.

Oh yes, we've had a slight catastrophe. You probably haven't heard about this over in the Orient, but Southern California got some rain not long ago from tropical depression Doreen. Perhaps you knew we had a little hole in the roof—I certainly didn't know or I'd have taken action. Anyway, don't be surprised to find that the ceiling in the master bedroom now lies on the floor.

The insurance man said it would cost $15,000 or so to ix, but to worry.

I am glad you’re coming home, because I can't take all this much longer. What with raising a family, teaching proper morals, emptying dishwashers and walking dogs, I just don't see how you find any time for yourselves.

So to you, Mom and Dad, and to any other parents who may feel somewhat neglected, unappreciated, and undercredited, I offer these words as full payment for past debts in the hope 1 can somehow makeup for all ungrateful sons: Thank you for everything you've done. It took me 20 years to say it, but I appreciate you-really I do, I promise.