

Scene Six

The following rules are displayed to the audience for the duration of the scene:

Rule 1: Matthew must sit and eat to tell a lie... until he gets a compliment

Rule 2: Carrie must stand and dance around to tell a joke... until she gets a laugh

Rule 3: Sheena must drink and interrupt to contradict... until she has the last word

Rule 4. Adam must affect an accent and name-call to mock... until he has deflected blame

Rule 5. Edith must clean and self-medicate to keep calm... until she gets reassurance

From now on, once EDITH has started calming herself, she cannot stop calming herself until she gets reassurance.

At the top of the scene, Rules 1, 3 and 4 are still live.

Rule 5 immediately becomes live; it will remain live until EDITH gets reassurance.

EDITH approaches FRANCIS and retrieves a packet of post-operative pain medication from his shirt pocket. She swallows one tablet with a glass of wine. She begins to clean obsessively.

CARRIE. Please don't worry, I'm sorry / I overreacted.

SHEENA (*drinking, interrupting*). No, no you don't need to apologise.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). Damn right – it's the General who should be apologising. He's the worst of all!

Having deflected blame onto FRANCIS, Rule 4 is no longer live.

EDITH (*cleaning*). Now everyone calm down, I'm sure Francis didn't mean any harm. Isn't that right?

ADAM (*without an accent*). Mum, you're not glossing over this. Dad just groped Carrie.

EDITH (*cleaning*). Please, there's no need to let the food go cold, is there? Matthew?

ADAM (*to MATTHEW*). You saw that, right?

EDITH (*cleaning*). Matthew, darling?

MATTHEW (*sitting, eating*). Dad's very confused – I'm sure he didn't know what he was doing.

EDITH. Thank you, darling.

Having got reassurance from MATTHEW, Rule 5 is no longer live.

You're such a support.

Having got a compliment, Rule 1 is no longer live.

MATTHEW (*standing*). Thank you, Mum.

ADAM. Are you all determined to cover up for him? This is what he does! / What he's always –

SHEENA (*drinking, interrupting*). Adam, don't, don't. Now you're making a scene!

Rule 4 becomes live once again: it will remain live until ADAM has deflected blame.

EDITH. You know full well your father's not in his right mind.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). What are you talking about? This is his mind. It's always been his mind – he just can't hide it any more – (*To FRANCIS, affecting an accent.*) can you, General? Come on – we're taking a trip to the naughty corner.

ADAM *stands, takes the handles of his father's wheelchair.*

EDITH *moves quickly to stop him – blocking his way.*

EDITH. Where on earth do you think you're going?

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). Daddy's going to the naughty corner. That's where he sent us, when we misbehaved at the table. Or interrupted him. Or disagreed with him in any way.

Start



MATTHEW. Now come on, Adam...

EDITH. Don't be so *cruel*. Put your father back right now.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). No cruelty here – don't you worry. I'll even let him take his food with him – which is more than he ever did for us. (*Grabs FRANCIS's plate, places it on FRANCIS's lap.*) Some breast meat for you there, General? / You like that, don't you?

SHEENA. No, Adam. Stop it.

CARRIE. Please, don't do this on my account –

EDITH. Yes, don't do this on her account. It's hardly your father's fault when she... puts them on display like that.

Rule 2 becomes live; it will remain live until CARRIE scores a point.

CARRIE (*standing, dancing around*). Well I was going to come wearing a pair of curtains – but then I didn't want to wear the same thing as you, Edith...

Despite herself, SHEENA laughs. Rule 2 is no longer live. CARRIE sits.

ADAM (*to FRANCIS, affecting an accent*). Well, looks like your luck's in, Your Honour. I thought Mum only put up with your antics when you kept them out of sight, but she seems fine with them out in the open, too!

Rule 5 becomes live again; it will remain live until EDITH gets reassurance.

EDITH. This is too much – it's too much. Where are my – ?

EDITH reaches for the painkillers in FRANCIS's shirt pocket. ADAM snatches them from her.

MATTHEW. Guys, guys, everybody sit down –

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). These are Dad's painkillers, Mummy dearest – serious opiates, you can't pop them like they're Tic Tacs.

MATTHEW. Guys, the gravy's getting a skin on it.

Unable to self-medicate, EDITH is unable to keep calm.

EDITH (*without calm*). You have *always* been jealous of your father! We're all afraid to say it, but it's true. It's not Francis's fault he was a brilliant lawyer, and you're just a... just a...

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). You think I envy Skeletor's legal career? I wanted to play cricket!

EDITH. Well it's *certainly* not your father's fault that you couldn't play cricket.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). I *could* play cricket, Mum, I was playing cricket – *beautiful* cricket! But that wasn't good enough for Darth Vader. 'Line and length, son, line and length.' I tried to be Glen McGrath for you and I ended up *nobody*!

EDITH goes in search of other medication.

EDITH. He was trying to help you; he only ever had your best interests at heart.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). When was Dad interested in anyone but himself? It's always been about him – he manipulated all of us into being whoever *he* wanted us to be. He knew Judy wanted to be an actor, but he wouldn't let him –

MATTHEW. Come on, Adam, Dad got me my first singing teacher –

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). Yeah, and then he *shagged* your singing teacher six ways to Sunday – (*To FRANCIS.*) didn't you, Don Juan? Even now, from his bloody wheelchair, he's still manipulating the whole bloody lot of us...!

MATTHEW. All right, that's enough. You need to go for a walk.

EDITH (*taking a pill*). Yes, out. Get him out – he's ruining everything.

MATTHEW puts an arm on ADAM.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). You don't want to touch me, Shirley.

← Stop