

Taurus: Harmony

There was a final angry retort from one of the raised voices upstairs, a door slammed, and all was still. Mother sighed. The boys had been fighting again — something they had done most of their lives, but the older they grew, the more disturbing it became. They were only a year apart in age, shared many of the same friends and interests, and did well at school, and their parents had been unable to determine any reason for the friction that so often seemed to exist between them.

“Bruce, Don, come down here,” called Mother. “I want to talk to you.”

Slowly the boys came downstairs, sensing the reason for Mother’s request. She and Dad always made such a fuss about their fights, but the boys themselves rather enjoyed them. They settled uneasily on the edge of their seats, anxious to leave, as Mother asked, “What was it about this time?”

“Aw, nothing, Mom,” said Don, embarrassed.

“You mean it was about something so silly you don’t want to tell me, isn’t that it?” inquired Mother.

“I suppose so,” came the reluctant answer. “Why do you and Dad care so much about our fights, anyhow? We don’t bother you.”

“Don’t you?” asked Mother softly. “Remember the concert we went to last week? Even you boys enjoyed it.” The boys nodded. “Now tell me, exactly why did you like the music so much?”

“Well — it sounded good,” said Bruce, after a pause.

“Would it have sounded so good if, say, the trumpet players and the violinists had followed different music from that of the rest of the orchestra, or played only when and how they wanted instead of when the con-

ductor directed?" continued Mother.

"Of course not," answered Bruce.

"Then what do the musicians have to do before an orchestra can play pieces that sound good?"

Bruce and Don looked at each other, thinking that the conversation was taking a rather elementary turn, and wondering what Mother was getting at. "Well, they have to play together, I suppose," said Don. "If they don't, then the music's not together either."

"Right," said Mother. "It's not harmonious. Now I want you both to think about something. Our lives here at home, your lives at school, Dad's life at his office, all can be compared to the work of a musician in an orchestra. All the people in our home together play a single piece of music. All the students at school together play a single piece of music. All the workers in Dad's office together play a single piece of music. If all the players harmonize with each other, the piece sounds good and is pleasing to everyone, but if even one player refuses to harmonize with the others, the music is ruined, and those who play it or hear it are disturbed. When one student in your class causes trouble, what happens?"

"The teacher gets mad, and sometimes we get mad," said Don.

"And do the rest of you get your lessons learned when this is going on?" inquired Mother.

The boys shook their heads.

"And what do you suppose happens when someone in Dad's office refuses to cooperate with the others, or to do his job?"

"He probably gets fired," said Bruce.

"Yes, if it goes on long enough. Well, I can't fire you," Mother went on as the boys grinned sheepishly, "but I certainly can't do my job here the way I'd like, and neither can Dad, when you two are involved in one

of your arguments. When you bicker, or fight, or whatever you want to call it, the harmony in our house is disturbed, and because the harmony is disturbed, the people in our house are disturbed, and life is not nearly as pleasant as it would be if there were harmony."

The boys were silent for a long moment. Finally Bruce said, "Guess we never thought of it like that before. Sometimes you and Dad argue too — only never like Don and me —" he added hastily, "and we always feel bad when you do. That must be why."

"But we never thought that when we argued it would make *you* feel like that," interposed Don. "I guess we *are* part of the music in this house, too."

"You certainly are," smiled Mother, "very much a part. You two are as important as anyone else in this family, and what you do and how you act affects us all."

"OK, pal," Bruce turned to Don, "what do you say we try to be more harmonious? I won't play out of tune if you won't."

"That suits me," said Don and, laughing, the boys shook hands.

"Ma'am," Don, still laughing, turned to Mother, "your orchestra is going to sound a lot better from now on. Maybe you ought to start charging admission to the concerts!"

Mother smiled as she watched her sons ascending the staircase, their good-natured banter sounding far different from the biting words they had been using during their recent altercation.

"Wish I had thought of this long ago," she said to herself. "I was always sure that, down underneath, those boys think a lot of each other. It will be wonderful to have some proof of that, for a change!"