

WALLS

Characters

JAMES - Father

JOAN - Mother

JAMIE - Son

JANE - Daughter

NOTE: The style and the setting of the play should remain abstract. The characters jump from one story to the next without any pauses.

When the characters are talking to the audience, the other characters are either frozen or doing their own activities: JAMES reads the paper, JOAN irons, JAMIE sits in a chair to watch TV, and JANE reads a book.

The lights come up on a two platforms. The parents, JAMES and JOAN are on the upper platform. The children, JAMIE and JANE are on the lower level. They don't look at each other. They look out towards the audience.

ALL: Walls

JAMES: Tall

JANE: Thick

JOAN: High

JAMIE: Solid

ALL: Walls.

JANE: So high you can't see over them.

JAMES: So high you can't see anything on the other side.

JAMIE: Sometimes I feel surrounded.

JOAN: Sometimes I feel so shut out.

JANE: I can't get through to them.

JAMES: I just can't get through to them.

JAMIE: They don't see me.

JOAN: They don't see me anymore.

JANE: They don't see the real me.

JAMES: They just don't see.

ALL: Walls.

JAMES: When I was a child, I respected my parents. I did what I was told. I was told that I was going into the family business, practically since the day I was born. And I never thought about doing anything else.

JOAN: When I was little, my mother told me about the wonderful man I would marry. That was all I had to do - find a wonderful man. She was so happy when I brought James home to dinner the first time.

JAMIE: When I was a kid, my Dad coached my baseball team. At first I thought it would be great – me and Dad hanging out playing baseball.

JAMES: Jamie! What do you think you're doing! Don't look at me. Slide! Slide!

JAMIE: Next year I switched to soccer.

JANE: When I was a kid, Mom made take dance lessons. Ballet.

JOAN & JANE: All little girls want to take ballet.

JANE: I wanted to play baseball.

JOAN: Graceful Janie, think graceful.

JANE: I could never keep my fights clean, I could never keep my hair in that little bun and I was not graceful.

JOAN: All little girls want to take ballet.

ALL: Walls.

JANE: So high you can't see over them.

JAMES: So high you can't see anything on the other side.

JAMIE: Sometimes I feel surrounded.

JOAN: Sometimes I feel so shut out.

JANE: I can't get through to them.

JAMES: I just can't get through to them.

JAMIE: They don't see me.

JOAN: They don't see me anymore.

JANE: They don't see the real me.

JAMES: They just don't see.

ALL: Walls.

JAMES: (*almost yelling at JAMIE*) Jamie, what do you think you're doing?

JAMIE: I'm not doing anything. I'm watching TV.

JAMES: And how do you expect to get anywhere watching TV?

JANE: Mom you don't need to iron my clothes.

JOAN: (*to the audience*) She used to be so pretty. She used to wear beautiful dresses. She used to want to watch me do the ironing.

JANE: Mom, you don't need to iron my clothes. I'm old enough. I can do them myself.

JOAN: But I don't mind.

JANE: I can do them.

JAMES: Joan, can you get me a new shirt? I spilled coffee on this one.

JANE: (*to the audience*) That makes me so mad! He treats her just like a servant sometimes. She treats herself like a servant. Why doesn't she want to do anything more with her life? Everyone else in my class, all their mothers are doctors, and ad executives, and administrative assistants and my Mom wants to iron my clothes.

JOAN: Someday dear, you'll do this for the man that you marry.

JANE: I'm never getting married. If that is what happens to you when you get married, I don't want anything to do with it. She can't even see that I want more out of life than a husband.

JOAN: What do you mean you're studying tonight? It's Saturday night, don't you have a date?

JANE: No I don't.

JAMIE: She couldn't get one if she tried.

JANE: You shut up! What are you doing tonight?

JAMIE: I gotta work. See ya.

JOAN: James, I'm getting worried about Jamie. All he does is work.

JANE: Everyone worries about Jamie.

JAMES: Work? He's not working, he's a busboy at a restaurant. That's not work. That is the fast track to nowhere. I'm going to have to speak with him. He's spending too much time there.

JANE: Hey Dad, I'm taking an accounting course at school. I'm doing really well and...

JAMES: Accounting? What do you want to take that for?

JANE: Well I was thinking....

JAMES: (*completely ignoring her*) Jamie!

JAMIE: What?

JAMES: How do you expect to get anywhere watching TV!

JAMIE: (*to audience*) How do I expect to get anywhere? He knows that I know that he knows that he's not talk about any old anywhere. He's talking about...

ALL: The business.

JAMIE: The business.

ALL: The business has been passed down from generation to generation. My grandfather handed it down to my father and my father handed it to me. And some day, the business will go to you my son.

JAMIE: There's just one teeny tiny flaw in that plan.

JANE: What are you doing?

JAMIE: Nothing.

JANE: That's what it looks like.

JAMIE: What do you care?

JANE: I don't.

JAMIE: So good.

JANE: Good.

Both JAMIE and JANE turn to the audience.

JAMIE: My sister, she gets to do anything she wants.

JANE: *(at the same time as JAMIE)* My brother gets to do anything he wants.

JAMIE: She can get whatever grades she wants and it doesn't matter.

JANE: I get straight A's.

JAMIE: If my grades slip even a little bit, there's practically a riot around here.

JAMES: How are you going to make it out in the world with grades like this? How are you going to make it, that's what I would like to know. Do you think you're going to coast? Do you think you're going to work as a busboy for the rest of your life? Is that what you think? Answer me! Answer me!

JAMIE: He doesn't even look at Jane's report card.

JANE: Mom, Dad, I got straight A's this semester.

JOAN: Good for you dear.

JAMES: Yes, Yes. *(He goes back to his newspaper)*

JOAN: Are you going out on Saturday night?

JAMIE: How fair is that? I get put through the ringer and she gets nothing. Nothing!

JANE: Sometimes, my Dad doesn't even see me. It's like I don't exist. Except when it comes to dating. My brother can do whatever he wants. He can go out and come home at whatever time in the morning.

JAMES: Boys will be boys.

JANE: I have a curfew.

JOAN: It's for your own good Jane.

JANE: He can even drink and not get into trouble.

JAMES & JOAN: Boys will be boys.

JANE: He can take the car out whenever he wants.

JAMIE: Thanks Dad!

JANE: But whenever I try to ask for it...

JAMES: I told you no.

JANE: Why not? Jamie gets to take the car.

JAMES: Jamie is older than you. He's a better driver.

JANE: He had to take his driving test three times. I only had to take it once. The driving instructor said I was the best driver he had ever seen.

JAMIE: She's always throwing that in my face.

JAMES: I told you no.

JANE: But why? You at least have to give me a reason.

JAMES: You're not taking the car and that is final!

JANE: Everything is final in this house. Everything is decided for me! When do I get to make decisions for myself? Mom, why can't I take the car out?

JOAN: Your father said so Jane.

JANE: What do you say? You know I'm a better driver than Jamie. Who had that fender bender last year?

JAMIE: She's always throwing that in my face.

JOAN: Jane, your father....

JANE gives a scream of frustration and turns away.

JOAN: *(to the audience)* I thought I was doing the right thing. Stay home for the children. It was the right thing. I don't doubt it for a second. But they're growing up so fast. Both my children seem gone to me. Did I do the right thing? Sometimes I can't even see myself.

JAMIE: Bye Mom.

JOAN: Aren't you staying for dinner?

JAMIE: I have to get to work. I'll get something there.

JOAN: Are you sure you can't wait two minutes? I can make you something...

JAMIE: No time. Bye!

JANE: Bye Mom. I'm going to the library. Sonya and I are going to study there.

JOAN: Can't you study here?

JANE: No way. See ya!

JAMES: I won't be home for dinner. Have a good day dear.

JOAN: These days, the house seems so large. The walls seem so high. How do I get out? How do I get out?

JANE: Bye Mom!

JOAN: Wait a moment. You're not wearing that are you?

JANE: What?

JOAN: Jane. You can't go out in public looking like that.

JANE: What's wrong with it?

JOAN: Wouldn't you like to put a little make-up on?

JANE: No I wouldn't.

JOAN: You look like you dress at the Goodwill.

JANE: I know. That's where these clothes came from.

JOAN: Jane! You can't go around wearing other people's clothes. What if they saw you?

JANE: What if who saw me?

JOAN: What if the people who gave the clothes up saw you in their clothes. How embarrassing!

JANE: I don't care.

JOAN: Jane, wait! They desperately need ironing!

JANE: I'll be late. Bye Mom!

JOAN: James – didn't you see her?

JAMES: *(behind the paper)* See who?

JOAN: Didn't you see what Jane was wearing?

JAMES: Can't say that I did.

JOAN gives a small scream of frustration.

JAMES: Did you say something Joan?

JOAN: Not at all.

ALL: Walls.

JAMES: Tall

JANE: Thick

JOAN: High

JAMIE: So high.

ALL: So high you can't see over them.

JAMIE: Mom, Dad I have something to tell you. I've decided where I want to go away to school next year.

JAMES: You've been thinking about school, excellent, excellent.

JANE: Hey Dad, can I tell you about this great....

JAMES: Later, Jane, later. Please Jamie go on.

JAMES: I want to learn to be a chef. I want to own my own restaurant.

JANE: You what?

JAMES: You what?

JOAN: Oh Jamie!

JAMES: He's not getting any of my money to go to cooking school!

JAMIE: *(to audience)* His money. His money.

JAMES: He's got to be crazy to think I would have anything to do with that. Cooking school?

JOAN: He just mentioned it dear. There's still time for him to change his mind.

JAMIE: I'm not going to change my mind. Not this time.

JAMES: He's not going to get one red cent from me for this ludicrous idea. What about the business? He's just going to leave me in the lurch, is that it?

JANE: *(to the audience)* What I've always wanted to do is go into the family business.

JAMIE: One red cent? I've never seen one red cent from him. I've had to scrape together money for everything since I was nine years old.

JAMES: A man has to learn how to stand on his own two feet.

JANE: Why is it no one ever talks about Jane going into the family business?

JAMIE: I'd never ask any money from him. I knew he'd freak out on me. Why does he care so much? He thinks it reflects badly on him to have a son in cooking school. Dad, some of the best chef's in the world are men.

JAMES: Not one red cent!

JOAN: Watch your blood pressure dear.

JAMIE: Mom, don't you understand? Why can't I do something I want to do? Why can't he see I'm excited, that I've found something I want to devote my life to. All he talks about is the business. The business.

JAMES: You and me son. Working together. Side by side.

JANE: Side by side. The only side-by-side thing I could do around here is side-by-side ironing with Mom.

JAMIE: Doesn't he realize we'd kill each other by the end of the first week?

JOAN: Your father is very upset right now Jamie.

JANE: I want to go into the family business.

JAMES: What?

JANE: I want to go into the family business.

JAMES: This is no time for jokes young lady.