

YOUNG WOMAN. But I - oh, all right. (*Takes it - then.*) Ma, I want to ask you something.

MOTHER. Eat your potato.

YOUNG WOMAN (*takes a bite - then*). Ma, there's something I want to ask you - something important.

MOTHER. Is it mealy?

YOUNG WOMAN. S'all right. Ma - tell me.

MOTHER. Three pounds for a quarter.

YOUNG WOMAN. Ma - tell me - (*Buzzer.*)

MOTHER (*her dull voice brightening*). There's the garbage. (*Goes to door- or dumbwaiter- opens it. Stop radio.*)

JANITOR'S VOICE (*offstage*). Garbage.

MOTHER (*pleased- busy*). All right. (*Gets garbage can - puts it out. YOUNG WOMAN walks up and down.*) What's the matter now?

YOUNG WOMAN. Nothing.

MOTHER. That jumping up from the table every night the garbage is collected! You act like you're crazy.

YOUNG WOMAN. Ma, do all women -

MOTHER. I suppose you think you're too nice for anything so common! Well, let me tell you, my lady, that it's a very important part of life.

YOUNG WOMAN. I know, but, Ma, if you -

MOTHER. If it weren't for garbage cans where would we be? Where would we all be? Living in filth - that's what! Filth! I should think you'd be glad! I should think you'd be grateful!

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh, Ma!

MOTHER. Well, are you?

YOUNG WOMAN. Am I what?

MOTHER. Glad! Grateful.

YOUNG WOMAN. Yes!

MOTHER. You don't act like it!

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh, Ma, don't talk!

MOTHER. You just said you wanted to talk.

YOUNG WOMAN. Well now - I want to think. I got to think.

MOTHER. Aren't you going to finish your potato?

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh, Ma!

MOTHER. Is there anything the matter with it?

YOUNG WOMAN. No -

MOTHER. Then why don't you finish it?

YOUNG WOMAN. Because I don't want it.

MOTHER. Why don't you?

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh, Ma! Let me alone!

MOTHER. Well, you've got to eat! If you don't eat -

YOUNG WOMAN. Ma! Don't nag!

MOTHER. Nag! Just because I try to look out for you - nag! Just because I try to care for you - nag! Why, you haven't sense enough to eat! What would become of you I'd like to know - if I didn't nag!

*Offstage - a sound of window opening-all these offstage sounds come in through the court window at the back.*

WOMAN'S VOICE. Johnny - Johnny - come in now!

A SMALL BOY'S VOICE. Oh, Ma!

WOMAN'S VOICE. It's getting cold.

A SMALL BOY'S VOICE. Oh, Ma!

WOMAN'S VOICE. You heard me! (*Sound of window slamming.*)

YOUNG WOMAN. I'm grown up, Ma.

MOTHER. Grown up! What do you mean by that?

YOUNG WOMAN. Nothing much - I guess. (*Offstage sound of baby crying. MOTHER rises, clatters dishes.*) Let's not do the dishes right away, Ma. Let's talk - I gotta.

MOTHER. Well, I can't talk with dirty dishes around - you may be able to but - (*Clattering - clattering.*)

YOUNG WOMAN. Ma! Listen! Listen! - There's a man wants to marry me.

MOTHER (*stops clattering - sits*). What man?

YOUNG WOMAN. He says he fell in love with my hands.

MOTHER. In love! Is that beginning again! I thought you were over that!

*Offstage BOY'S voice - whistles - GIRL'S voice answers.*

BOY'S VOICE. Come on out.