

dishes and filled the sink with water.

"Sara," Dottie asked, "why don't you go get started on the laundry? Maggie and I can do the dishes. You two don't seem to be hitting it off tonight."

"I'd rather do the dishes." Sara went right on putting the leftovers into smaller bowls.

Dottie turned on Sara and raised her voice. "If you don't mind, young lady, I'm raising you. You are not raising me. I asked you nicely to start the laundry. Now I'm telling you. Get yourself down to the basement and get going on the laundry."

Sara formed her face into a nasty scowl. "You don't treat Maggie that way. You're always ordering me around. Maggie gets treated like a princess or something."

"Yeah." Maggie answered. "The princess is washing your dirty dishes."

"Maggie." Dottie leaned on the sink. "Please."

"Okay, mom." Maggie put her arm around her mother. "I won't say another word." Dottie's oldest daughter suddenly felt sorry for her mother. Dottie looked tired and upset. Her makeup was worn off and her hair hadn't been combed since she came home from work at four o'clock. Maggie looked at Dottie and thought that there were times when she looked much older than her forty years.

Dottie went to the kitchen door and listened to Sara thumping down the back hall toward the door that led to the basement. When Dottie heard the whooshing sound that signaled the closing of the basement door, Dottie turned to Maggie. "I was hoping I'd get a chance to talk to you alone to-