**STEPMOTHER.** As you well know, my little moppets, this *may* be the most important year of your lives. The Prince has returned from his studies abroad, and this ball that's being given in his honor is for one purpose only.

**PORTIA.** They want him to choose a bride.

> *(She laughs her goofy laugh.)*

**STEPMOTHER.** Every girl in the kingdom wants to marry the Prince. Including you, Portia.

**PORTIA.** Uh-huh.

**STEPMOTHER.** And you, Joy.

**JOY.** *(Sourly.)* Uh-huh.

**STEPMOTHER.** On our shopping tour today I bought you the most beautiful materials and all the frills and froufrou my purse could afford. *(Her voice hardens.)* So whether or not you marry the Prince, you'll both have to marry somebody this year.

**PORTIA.** *(Snapping into frightened obedience.)* Yes, ma'am.

**JOY.** Yes, ma'am.

**STEPMOTHER.** *(Her voice softening again.)* Now there's one thing you must remember. When you want to marry a man, you can't rely on your beauty alone. Now, Portia – you are named for a great lawyer.

**PORTIA.** Uh-huh.

**STEPMOTHER.** I want you to show off your intellect as well as your beauty. Do you understand?

**PORTIA.** Naturally.

**STEPMOTHER.** And Joy, I want you to live up to your name. I want you to be vivacious and alert as well as beautiful.

**JOY.** Uh-huh.

**STEPMOTHER.** That does not mean, however, that I want you to neglect your appearance. Our family has always been noted for its fascinating women. So now let's all go upstairs and get our beauty sleep. I'm exhausted from all that shopping. Tomorrow I'm going to have to get a massage. That's the only thing that does me any good – a good pounding. That's what your father used to say.

**PORTIA.** *(Following her to the stairs.)* I'm all tired out, too, Ma, going from store to store the way we did.

> *(**JOY** and **PORTIA** climb the stairs, arguing with each other.)*

**JOY.** *You're* tired?

**PORTIA.** Yes, *I'm* tired.

**JOY.** I suppose you think you're the only one that's tired!

**PORTIA.** Well, who bought the most?

**JOY.** That has nothing to do with it!

**PORTIA.** That has everything to do with it!

**STEPMOTHER.** Go to bed, both of you!