Ipomoea Batatas || Food Justice Monologue

By: Ariel Brown

Yes, yes, hi! Over here! Pick us! Pick -- us...We've lost count of how many times we've been

skipped over. We've dreamt about this since we first sprouted on the farm. But it is not as we thought it would be. We are called Ipomoea Batatas, but we go by many names. You may call us, sweet potato. We were born on a big industrial farm in Louisiana, but we have roots all over the world, going back thousands of years to Central and South America. Now we are here, at what is called a food pantry, but no one has picked us...for many hours.

Our life begins from old seed potatoes planted in the ground. A fungicide is sprayed, which kind of makes our skin burn. Once we are over a foot tall, the farmers clip us by hand, and replant us by machine. It takes 100 days to grow into our beautiful, starchy root form. Big chain machines dig us up and farmers sort us. It saddens us to see friends take another path as they go into separate bins, but we know they will be doing good.

We are all born to do good. To use the nutrients nature gives us to help other life, and then return to nature. We help humans the most. Some of them don't get to eat healthy foods because other humans take it all for themselves. They do not share the nutrients and give back to nature. We learned this from our old seed potatoes. Places like this food pantry are the best for a vegetable to end up, to feed those without healthy food. So, after the farm, we are taken to be cured, then brought here.

Curing makes us stronger and protects us from rotting. And it makes us taste sweeter for the humans. We're stored away for 6 weeks in cozy, hot, humid air until they need us. Then, workers take us to a factory where we are washed with a really harsh machine rain. They dry us and sort us again to be taken to our new home. And we were ecstatic! But now...

It hurts to see people choose the cans and plastic packages over us. But it is not their fault. These items will last longer than us. But we are the ones who can make them better! What about us, over here! Your bodies turn us into vitamin A and fiber! We can be baked, boiled, roasted, or steamed to perfection! Sun-dried and drizzled in delicious sauces! We can even be fried and made into scrumptious desserts and snacks! And you can eat our leaves to make greens or salad!...Will no one pick us? We must give back!...

Will we not be able to share our gifts?...We’re here to help you!...The pantry will close soon and -- Ouch! That’s going to leave a bruise...A very small human this one is. But...they’re examining us! We are in perfect condition! Sweet and nutritious! Yes, yes put us in your basket! Bring many of us to your home! Oh wow! We’ve been picked! This feels sweeter than we imagined! We are going to give ourselves to help a human family! And be born again. And in our next life we can return to this place and help more people! This human mother cries over our basket. They are so happy to see us!