

SIDE 1 - KATE

This play is dedicated to
Ollie, Iann, John, Amy, and Linda
and is written for Rodney Edgar Armstrong.

ACT I

Scene One

(The Cliffter house is represented by a minimal set, abstract and fluid. The action of the play within the house occurs in the "living room", which contains the eating/work table, and on the "front porch". Pieces of furniture are produced as needed. Hard objects of reality, floating in space. The pieces should be that of people who have meager possessions. Prominent in the house is a large framed photograph of three young men, the Cliffter brothers, each wearing the uniform of a different branch of the military. KATE MILLER enters and addresses the audience.)

STRET
KATE. *(Holds up envelope)* Did you ever get a letter you were afraid to open? Might be good news ... might not. I've got one right here. *(Looks at letter)* It's addressed to me, Kate Miller, *Life* magazine, New York City. There's also a little heart drawn on it. Harry Luce forwarded it to me and summoning a drawl, declared *(Affecting Southern accent)* "ain't nobody supposed to open it but you." *(Lights reveal TOOD)* The letter is from Tood Cliffter ... that's right, "Tood." From Sterlington, Louisiana: 3,000 happy Christians, cornbread on every table and a pickup truck in every front yard. *(Looks at envelope again)* It's typed. Where did she learn to type? *(Pause)* I can't believe it - I'm actually afraid to open it. You see, Tood came into my life ... upper and

lowercase, a couple of years ago ... in '43. Three Southern brothers - the Clifftert boys - enlisted in three different branches of the military - and all on the same day. And their wives moved in with the boys' mamma for the duration of the war. It reeked of Americana.

~~END~~

~~(WEETSIE begins making a last minute inspection of the living room. SYBIL in a slip, holds two dresses, looking in the mirror, trying to decide. TOOD begins brushing her hair.)~~

~~KATE. (Indicating the young women) Three young gals in a (Affecting Southern accent) little bitty ol' town in Louisiana - Weetsie, Sybil and ... Tood. Harry swore to me the names alone made this Pulitzer Prize material. And the boys' mamma was named Aunt Ola. Aunt Ola, I could just see some little old lady up to her knees in grits.~~

~~(AUNT OLA enters, with hat on, carrying her purse, walking briskly.)~~

~~WEETSIE. Aunt Ola? Ain't you gonna stay for Addie Mae's picture? She'll be here any minute.~~

~~AUNT OLA. Decidin' between holdin' my husband's hand at the hospital or havin' my picture took by Addie Mae McGough (Pronounced "Magoo") - now that is a pitiful choice to start the day with.~~

~~TOOD. Aunt Ola! How is Uncle Tom?~~

~~AUNT OLA. (Matter-of-factly) He's alive. Accordin' to Donnetie on the second floor, he's a little too alive for some of them nurses.~~

~~SYBIL. Bless his 'i'll ol', wicked heart. You give him some sugar for me, you hear?~~

~~(AUNT OLA rolls her eyes, she looks at TOOD, who smiles and waves good-bye.)~~

~~WEETSIE. (Watching AUNT OLA leave) Now Aunt Ola, don't you worry. It'll take more than blood poisonin' to get Uncle Tom.~~

~~AUNT OLA. (As she leaves) It'll take more'n n poison for sure. If I thought that woulda worked I'd a tried it years ago.~~

~~(Laughs as she exits. The young women admonish her.)~~

~~(ADDIE MAE MCGOUGH enters, dressed in her idea of a "working woman's ensemble." AUNT OLA notices this as she and ADDIE MAE curtsy nod to each other. During the next part of KATE's speech, ADDIE MAE is greeted by the Clifftert wives and they prepare for the interview.)~~

~~KATE. The Clifftert story was first covered by local crack reporter, Addie Mae McGough for the *Sterlington Daily Enterprise*. Notwithstanding her taste in other matters, Addie Mae had a nose for news that informed her this story was bigger than Sterlington.~~

~~ADDIE MAE. Now this won't take long.~~

~~WEETSIE. Oh lord, Addie Mae, we're tickled. First an article about our husbands enlistin' together and now an article about us. My goodness! I'm a little self-conscious about it myself, but Sybil's eatin' it up.~~

~~TOOD. Sybil thinks she's famous now. (To SYBIL, playfully) How can you be so famous and so poor at the same time?~~

~~SYBIL. Addie Mae, you don't mind these two, you know how country girls are.~~

~~ADDIE MAE. Well, Sybil might be onto something. I been callin' the *Times-Picayune* ever since my first Clifftert~~