

article, and when I told them that this one was gonna be on y'all, "the wives left behind," they loved it.

WEETSIE. The Times-Picayune?

TOOD. *(Always having to explain things to WEETSIE)* It's a newspaper, Weetsie. In New Orleans.

WEETSIE. *(Her own logic)* New Orleans? We ain't got no people in New Orleans.

*(Shared amused look between SYBIL and TOOD.)*

SYBIL. As far as Weetsie is concerned, New Orleans might as well be the moon.

KATE. Weetsie needn't have worried. Harry had people in New Orleans.

*(KATE observes remainder of scene.)*

ADDIE MAE. *(Taking notes)* Well, now, you're Sybil ... right? *(Pointedly)* I've noticed you in town.

SYBIL. I am ... *noticeable*, ain't I? Sybil Clifft. Harrist was my maiden name. That's H-a-r-r-i-s-l. With a "r" at the end.

*(Watches ADDIE MAE write it down.)*

ADDIE MAE. Well ... Sybil Harrist *(Over-pronounces the "r" sound)*, everybody in northeast Louisiana is plumb fascinated by the story of the Clifft brothers.

WEETSIE. My Jerry Don is in North Africa. North Africa! Johnny, Sybil's husband, is in Sicily. There really is a Sicily!

ADDIE MAE. Sicily! My, my!

STIDE 2 - Addie Mae, Sybil, Weetsie, Tood

TOOD. And Tommy is in the South Pacific.

ADDIE MAE. *(Visions of hula girls)* Oooh. Tood, wouldn't you like to go to the South Pacific?

TOOD. *(No nonsense, but not meanly)* Not while there's a war goin' on.

ADDIE MAE. You got me there! And what about Lloyd? He was too old to enlist, right?

WEETSIE. Right. Him and Lois is still here. Just up the road. He's puttin' together the Clifft Brothers' Bait and Tackle Company for when the boys all get back.

SYBIL. Yeah, for the brothers.

*(SYBIL and TOOD share a look of skepticism.)*

~~STRT~~ ADDIE MAE. *(Catching SYBIL's and TOOD's exchanged look. Broadly, after a careful pause)* How is livin' together?

SYBIL. *(Pause. Lightly, but with sarcasm)* We all love it. Just love it. Don't we, Tood?

WEETSIE. It just seemed like a good idea for us all to move in with each other to save on expenses and stuff. Our allotment checks is just fifty dollars apiece, and that don't go far, especially when you're tryin' to save a little bit. And if I stayed with my people up near Crosseit and Jerry Don didn't get a chance to write enough, he'd be caught between a rock and a hard place tryin' to decide whether to write to me or to his mamma. None of the boys likes to write to me or to

SYBIL. I think Johnny is the only one of them that can actually write. You know he was in business school in Monroe when the war got in his way.

TOOD. The war is such an inconvenience for Sybil.

*(TOOD and SYBIL both laugh.)*

WEETSIE. Sybil thinks you ought to be able to buy Maybelline with ration stamps.

ADDIE MAE. (*Incredulously*) Well, don't they still write to each of you separately?

TOOD. Well, sometimes. If one of the boys wants to just be kinda romantic or just say something private, he'll write to us personal (*rolling her eyes at SYBIL*) and he has to put a big heart on the envelope so we all know that ain't nobody supposed to open it up.

ADDIE MAE. You mean there are times when you open each other's mail?

SYBIL. *All the time. Unless there's a heart on it.*

TOOD. It was Lloyd's idea and me and Sybil didn't get no vote. Donaldson Street ain't no democracy.

ADDIE MAE. Well, I'll be.

WEETSIE. (*Carrying on: the adult*) Well ... sharin' the letters is a good idea. Every time one of the boys writes, it's kinda like they are all writin' so we read each other's letters. And that way we hear something might near every day. Like Sybil got a letter yesterday, and Tood got one last Tuesday ... and I'll probably get one any day now.

SYBIL. Right. Jerry Don's got Weetsie so trained he don't have to draw too many of them little hearts.

WEETSIE. (*Steel*) I ain't trained, Sybil, I'm married. M-A-R-R-I-E-D. Look it up.

TOOD. (*Cutting SYBIL and WEETSIE off*) And it helps Aunt Ola out, to hear everything her boys writes. And we write our letters at the same time. In fact it's letter-writin' night tonight.

ADDIE MAE. My, my. Just so much to write about! (*Gathering her rather large and pretentious attaché case*) Well, I got to have this down at the paper right away, so I have

got to went. (*ADDIE MAE hands WEETSIE the framed photograph as she readies her camera*) Listen, let me get a shot of y'all holdin' this photograph of the three boys. (*They begin to pose with the photograph. ADDIE MAE observes them through her camera*) If the *Times-Picayune* has good sense, they'll put y'all's picture on the cover of the Sunday Section.

WEETSIE. (*Eagerly: Miracles do happen*) For the cover of the *Times-Picayune!* (*Salutes proudly.*)

TOOD. (*Amused at WEETSIE*) The *Times-Picayune!* (*Salutes in good-humor.*)

SYBIL. Aw hell, why not? (*Salutes dramatically, pushing to the center of the photo.*)

END

(*ADDIE MAE snaps photo and exits quickly. The LIGHTS fade slowly on the three young women in their pose.*)

### Scene Two

(*KATE reappears in LIGHT as LIGHTS fade on the three wives in their pose. Still holding the letter.*)

KATE. They were too good to be true, so we'll put them on the cover of *Life*. That's what Harry thought. (*Pause*) Addie Mae's article did make it to the *Times-Picayune* which found its way to Harry's desk. He called me into his office. "Kate," he said, "I'm giving you a shot at the cover." (*Pause, flabbergasted*) The cover! The cover of *Life!* Well, I went nuts. Then the sonofabitch told me the li'l ol' pea-pickin' story. (*Total disgust*) And the reason he was sending me was