

WATERMELON BOATS by Wendy MacLaughlin

1st Production May 8, 1979

Directors. Larry Deckel and Michael Hankins
Sets & Lights. Marcia O'Grady
Costumes. Anne E. Winsor

CAST

KATE. CYNTHIA JUDGE
KITTY. MARY JOHANTGEN

CHARACTERS

KATE.
Tan, thin, and healthy. She wears jeans, button down shirt and sweater tied around waist.

KITTY.
Rounder, softer, and more feminine. She wears peasant blouse, full skirt and two braids tied with ribbons. They age from eleven to twenty-one in the course of the play and change hair styles as indicated in the action. The action takes place on the shore of a lake at three different moments over a ten year span.

All programs and publicity material for this play must carry the following notice:

COMMISSIONED AND FIRST PRODUCED BY ACTORS
THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

WATERMELON BOATS

AT RISE: KATE and KITTY sit on step ladders facing the lake which is located where the audience sits. Both hold watermelon boats, hollowed-out melon rinds with candle masts. All props are imaginary and use of them is mimed.

1
Start

KITTY. (face front) How much longer?

KATE. (checks watch) Twelve seconds. Oh, help, your candle went out. (Mimes lighting a match on jeans.)

KITTY. (cupping candle) Thank heavens you brought more matches.

KATE. Five, four, three, two, one. . . . push them off. (They each push a boat into the water and watch them sail.)

KITTY. (blows a kiss) Bon Voyage.

KATE. (waves) Good luck.

KITTY. How many do you think there are?

KATE. A million at least. But ours is the best.

KITTY. All the others look like stupid watermelons.

KATE. Aren't they gorgeous?

KITTY. Fabulous.

KATE. Fantastic.

KITTY. The best watermelon boats we've ever made.

KATE. With the candles they look like stars dancing across the water.

KITTY. Sir Galahad sailing out to sea in search of The Holy Grail.

KATE. Mine'll be first across I bet.

KITTY. Why?

KATE. It's smaller. The wind'll pick it up.

KITTY. They look the same to me.

KATE. The secret's in the cutting.

~~KITTY. (preening) Kate, notice something?~~

~~KATE. No.~~

~~KITTY. I'm wearing a bra.~~

~~KATE. I'm never going to wear one.~~

~~KITTY. My mother says you'll look like a cow if you don't.~~

~~KATE. I like cows.~~

~~KITTY. Hanging to your knees.~~

~~KATE. She just says that to scare you so when you have breasts you'll smash them all down.~~

KITTY. Ummmm. (*unbraiding hair*) Who do you think we'll have for sixth grade?

KATE. Mr. Hawkins, I hope.

KITTY. Me too. He has neat eyes. Every time he looks at me I have to go to the bathroom. Did you know I was born nine months after my brother died?

KATE. Exactly?

KITTY. He died January ninth. I was born October ninth.

KATE. (*incredulously*) They did it the day he died?

KITTY. I can't believe boys put that. . . .

KATE. The whole idea is gross.

KITTY. I wonder what it feels like.

KATE. No boy is ever going to do it to me.

KITTY. Never?

KATE. Well maybe if I get married, but I probably won't be because of my career.

KITTY. There're still pictures of him all over the house. My father wanted me to be a boy.

KATE. Mine, too.

KITTY. ~~Doesn't that just make you furious?~~ (*frustrated with her hair*) Why does Mother braid my hair so tight?

KATE. Here, let me help. (*unbraids Kitty's hair and mimes brushing*)

KITTY. Thanks. You've been my best friend since first grade. Isn't it amazing we've been coming to this lake for six years? Am I yours?

KATE. My what?

KITTY. Best friend.

KATE. Sure.

KITTY. Do you have a lot of best friends?

KATE. Some.

KITTY. Don't you think it's weird we're best friends and we're both named Katherine?

KATE. Lucky everyone calls you Kitty and me Kate.

KITTY. Kitty's a funny name.

KATE. Perfect for you.

KITTY. I like Kate better.

KATE. When I'm a great writer everyone'll call me Katherine.

KITTY. Like Katherine Mansfield.

KATE. Who?

KITTY. "I want by understanding myself to understand others." She wrote that in 1922. In her journal.

KATE. Oh . . . yes.

KITTY. I have total recall. People with high I.Q.'s usually do.

KATE. (*impressed*) You know your I.Q.?

KITTY. Ah-huh.

KATE. How?

KITTY. Once I looked it up in Miss Porter's office.

KATE. What's mine?

KITTY. That's not my business.

KATE. But you know it.

KITTY. I might.

KATE. Then tell me.

KITTY. I shouldn't.

KATE. I'll tell Miss Porter if you don't.

KITTY. Weeeeeellllllll . . . I don't remember exactly but it's lower than mine.

— 1 end

(*Fog horn blows. KATE stops brushing and fixes her hair.*)

KITTY. If this fog ruins the race I'll die. I can't even see our boats. Oh there they are. Look, Kate. (*no answer*) Kate? You're still mad.

KATE. (*cold*) I'm not but the rest of the class is furious. We had a chance to win the Drama High School Cup three years in a row.

KITTY. It's just a stupid play. I'm sorry, Kate. I know you wrote it and it's very good but

KATE. It would have looked good on my college transcript.

KITTY. I'm sorry. I told you to give me sets. I'm good at art. Why'd you make me be that brainless maid?

KATE. Come off it, Kitty. You died to be the maid. The maid got to wear the cute costume.

KITTY. Well no one told me she had any lines.

KATE. Only one.

KITTY. You know I freeze in front of people.

KATE. Four words. Four simple words and you screw them up.

KITTY. My parents must have gone through the floor with embarrassment. God, I wish I had a drink.

KATE. I've told you a million times, every ounce of liquor you drink destroys ten thousand brain cells.

KITTY. Who cares about my brain anyway? Boys certainly don't.

KATE. You really make me mad, you know it? When are you going to grow up? Really, Kitty. When?

KITTY. (*imitating*) Really, Kitty. When? You sound exactly like my parents. Grow up, Kitty, be like Kate. Kate has her feet on the ground. Kate has a head on her shoulders. I don't want to be like you. I want to be me. Anyway I can't be you, can I? Boy, am I insecure. Guess it's because I haven't had my period in two months. (*a laugh*) You don't think I'm pregnant do you?

KATE. Two months isn't very long.

KITTY. I stopped the pill.

KATE. [REDACTED]

KITTY. Who wants to get cancer?

KATE. Who wants to have a baby?

KITTY. I can always get an abortion.

KATE. Don't be crazy.

KITTY. I don't have the vaguest idea who the father might be. Can't imagine any of the imbeciles we know being a father. Can you?

KATE. You've got to stop sleeping around.

KITTY. I can't. I mean, I don't want to.

KATE. Have some respect for yourself.

KITTY. I like it.

KATE. You like being used? That's what they're doing, you know. You might just as well be a urinal.

KITTY. It's not like that. When I'm close to a boy . . . really close, I feel important. For a time someone needs me. I'm connected to someone, part of the same thing. Afterwards, though, at home in bed. . . . I feel more alone. (*pause*) Kate, do you think there might be a real person growing inside of me? A little body with fingers and toes?

KATE. Why do I feel responsible for you?

KITTY. Promise you'll come with me if I have to have an abortion.

KATE. I'd do anything in the world for you but that.

KITTY. You have to.

KATE. I can't. It's wrong.

KITTY. I would for you.

KATE. Abortion is wrong.

KITTY. What'll I do?

KATE. I'm sorry, Kitty. I have to follow my conscience.

KITTY. You're really hard, Kate. You know it?

KATE. If having principles is hard. . . .

KITTY. Even here . . . in the spring, at the lake. I'm all relaxed but you're still so tight. Thin . . . brown . . .

KATE. I wish I could help you.

KITTY. Thin . . . brown and hard. Year round.

KATE. So be it.

KITTY. Very dull.

KATE. What?

KITTY. Thin. . . . brown and hard. Year round. It's very dull.

Booooooortttttting.

KATE. (*tight lipped*) Sorry.

KITTY. Maybe in your senior year you should let go a little.

Maybe. . . . smile at a guy.

KATE. Too disciplined, I guess.

KITTY. Well brought up.

KATE. Probably.

KITTY. Or afraid.

KATE. Afraid?

KITTY. You might spoil the image. Perfect woman. Nobly planned.

KATE. Well, it's late. I have to go.

KITTY. I bet you spend the night thinking of lines you won't cross. Perfect stays on one side looking down her nose at the rest of us screwing it up on the other.

KATE. (*turns to go*) Goodnight, Kitty.

KITTY. (*grabs her arm*) And you think you're going to be a writer? That's a laugh. Who's going to read you? You don't know the first thing about life.

(*Foghorn blows. They change hair styles.*)

^{2 stars}
KITTY. (*shivers*) Ohhh it's getting cold. (*They put on sweaters.*) Not even a moon. But look, the first star is out. Sometimes I think there're people just like us up there thinking we're a star. Oh God, Kate, promise you won't write that in your first book. Everyone'll think I'm psycho.

KATE. I doubt I'll write one page, much less a book.

KITTY. You're kidding.

KATE. No.

KITTY. You're going to be a famous writer.

KATE. Who says?

KITTY. You've always said.

KATE. Changed my mind.

KITTY. You can't do that.

KATE. Stop staring at me.

KITTY. I counted on you.

KATE. The fog's breaking up. *(looks out)*

KITTY. I have a famous friend.

KATE. Swell.

KITTY. You've always known where you were going and how you'd get there.

KATE. That was grade school.

KITTY. High school too.

KATE. Well, college is different. Not only harder but there're lots of people out there smarter. And they don't try and please everyone all the time. You were right, Kitty, I do want to be perfect. Remember when you said that?

KITTY. No.

KATE. Five years ago. Here at the lake. At first I was furious. Then I wanted to cry but I couldn't. Know why? I didn't feel enough.

KITTY. That's better than feeling too much, like me.

KATE. You're sensitive.

KITTY. I'm too easily hurt.

KATE. You know what I do when I start to feel something? I come on with my holier-than-thou superior look. Inside I'm dying to experience everything, but I never will because I act like I already have. Oh, Kitty, what if I die without ever feeling anything?

KITTY. Then you won't feel guilty all the time. That's what makes me feel like throwing myself in the lake.

KATE. Right now you wouldn't believe how guilty I feel. If I don't become the world's greatest writer my parents won't be proud of me and you'll be disappointed.

KITTY. But you'll make it. You've got talent.

KATE. I'm not as smart as you.

KITTY. But you're stronger.

KATE. No, Kitty, you are. You wouldn't let me change you.

KITTY. Did you want to?

KATE. I thought you wanted me to.

KITTY. All I want is to get married, be a good mother and have you as my friend.

KATE. You don't need me.

KITTY. You're my friend. My perfect friend. I love you.

KATE. The only thing perfect about me is that.

2 end
(Fog horn blows.)

KITTY. *(climbs ladder)* From up here you can see our boats. Way out. Sailing together, neck and neck.

KATE. *(climbs ladder)* We're not across yet.

KITTY. But we're going to make it.

KATE. The trick is the journey.

KITTY. Isn't it hard to believe we're already twenty-one?

KATE. Seems like only minutes ago we were eleven.

KATE. *(extends hand)* Sometimes I wish we didn't have to get any older.

KATE. *(takes Kitty's hand)* Wouldn't it be nice if now could be always?

(They hold hands as the light gets blinding bright before fading to black.)

THE END