

Southern Surrender **- or -** **The Twain Shall Meet**

A One-Act Melodrama

By
Joan Sween

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Aurelia Archibald, a Southern widow, and her four daughters are all that remain on Archibald Plantation when it is taken over by Union forces. Expecting Northerners to be heartless brutes, they are confounded when the Yankees treat them courteously. The villain of the piece – actually a villainess – is the beautiful but treacherous Gardenia Galsworthy. She is determined to save her plantation from destruction by revealing to the Yankees where the Archibalds have hidden their jewels. Little does she realize they are also hiding Beauregard Burnside, a Confederate soldier who has been separated from his unit. The jewels pass from place to place with Gardenia hot on their trail. Beauregard is also concealed in one place after another -- the linen closet where his fingers get smashed in the door, behind the draperies where his feet get stepped on, to finally wearing ladies garments over his uniform! The Yankees just miss him from moment to moment. All ends happily, and somewhat romantically, when a courier arrives with news that the war ended the day before! About an hour.

Southern Surrender was first produced as a full-length play by Lyle High School, Lyle, Minnesota with the following personnel: It was later revised as a one act:

Director.....	David Dahlquist
Mama Aurelia Archibald	Peggy Kruger
Suellen	Brenda Stoll
Marylou.....	Kris Stadheim
Pollymae.....	Erin Carroll
Pattyann	Erin Alley
Gardenia Galsworthy.....	Denise Condon
Col. Yosemite Struthers	Robert Kruger
Cpl. Patrick O'Neil	Howard Kruger
Lt. Beauregard Burnside	Dan Walsh
Pianist.....	Brenda Everson
Stage Manager	Darwin Stadheim
Programs	Betty Halbach, Kathi Stoll, and Denise Condon

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 6 w)

MAMA AURELIA ARCHIBALD: A Southern widow.

SUELLEN: Her oldest daughter.

MARYLOU: Her second oldest daughter.

POLLYMAE: A younger daughter.

PATTYANN: A younger daughter.

GARDENIA GALSWORTHY: A strong-willed Southern belle.

COLONEL YOSEMITE STRUTHERS: Of the Union Army.

CORPORAL PATRICK O'NEIL: Of the Union Army.

LIEUTENANT BEAUREGARD BURNSIDE: Of the
Confederate Army.

TIME: Spring, 1865.

SCENE: The dining room of the Archibald Plantation house.

Dining Room Setting

USR is a large window with drapes that can be pulled open and shut. USC is a fireplace with silver candlesticks and a large clock on the mantel. USL is a door to a linen closet. DSC is a dining table and several chairs. Down left, down right, and on either side of the fireplace are entrances. It doesn't matter if they are doors in a full set, or simply openings between the three units.

Fingers Slammed in the Door Effect

Cut out an area in the door frame and fill with a soft sponge painted like the woodwork. When the door is slammed, the actor presses his hand against the sponge so it is missed by the closing door.

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(AT RISE: The drapes are open. We can hear the SFX of distant cannon fire and bugle calls. As the scene progresses the sounds become louder, so loud they could end up in the front yard -- in fact, they do.)

MAMA ARCHIBALD: *(Frantic. Looking out the window.)*
Oh. They're coming closer! Nothing can stop them!
Suellen! Marylou! *(SHE hurries to the mantel, grabs the silver candlesticks and goes into the linen closet.)*

(Mama and her daughters have suffered financially because of the war. They do not wear hoop-skirted finery. Their gowns are simple, faded, and patched. All they have left of value is the jewelry they are wearing.)

SUELLEN: *(Running on.)* Yes, Mama?

MAMA: *(Emerging from the linen closet, wrapping candlesticks in a small tablecloth.)* Suellen, go tell Clem to turn all the livestock loose and herd them into the woods! Hurry!

SUELLEN: Yes, Mama! *(SHE runs off.)*

MAMA: *(SHE runs off.)* Marylou!

PATTYANN and POLLYMAE: *(Running on. Frightened.)*
Mama! Mama!

MAMA: *(Re-entering, without the candlesticks.)* Pattyann! Pollymae! Where's Marylou?

PATTYANN: We don't know, Mama!

MAMA: *(Rushing over to close the drapes across the window.)* Go through every room! Close all the drapes! Move anything breakable away from the windows! Hurry! And look for Marylou!

PATTYANN and POLLYMAE: Yes, Mama! *(THEY run off.)*

MAMA: *(SHE lifts the heavy clock off the mantel, and exits, staggering under the weight of the clock.)* Marylou!

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(After a beat, MARYLOU enters slowly, absorbed in a letter she is reading. She gradually makes her way across the room, pausing several times to read a page and sigh. She opens the draperies for more light, and sighs again.)

POLLYMAE: *(Rushing on, thinking her mother is still in the room.)* They have all gone!

PATTYANN: *(Rushing on.)* I am done! Where is Mama? Marylou! Mama's been looking all over for you!

SUELLEN: *(Rushing on.)* Marylou! Mama is looking all over for you! What have you been doing?

MARYLOU: I have been reading a letter from Mr. Beauregard Burnside.

POLLYMAE: Tell us what he says, Marylou.

PATTYANN: Please, Marylou, before Mama comes back? Just the good parts?

MARYLOU: Oh, very well. *(SHE returns to the first page of her letter.)* "My dearest Marylou --"

PATTYANN: Dearest!

MARYLOU: "My dearest Marylou. The war still rages fiercely. Our last battle was terrible to behold. I hesitate to tell someone of your tender sensibilities this next, but I have been wounded."

SUELLEN: Oh, no! Marylou! Does he say how seriously?

MARYLOU: I can't go on! I just fainted away when I first read it. In fact, I feel faint again.

POLLYMAE: No, don't faint; go on, Marylou!

MARYLOU: *(Resumes reading.)* "I was struck in the left arm, so I can still hold a weapon in my good right. Our gallant lads move out tomorrow for a new location. We will be moving behind enemy lines and risking capture." *(General consternation from her LISTENERS.)* Always remember, my ..." *(SHE pauses and scans for a moment.)* The rest is rather personal. I am overwrought by this crushing news. I intend to retire to my room and cry my eyes out.

MAMA: *(SHE rushes on, carrying a drawstring bag.)* Marylou! Where on earth have you been?

MARYLOU: Why, right here, Mama.

POLLYMAE: Mama, is Marylou engaged to Beauregard?

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MAMA: Certainly not! Before a young lady may become engaged, the gentleman has to make application to her papa to pay serious court. Now that Papa has passed on ... *(ALL make a grief-stricken pose.)* ... Beau will have to speak to me when the time comes.

MARYLOU: Nonetheless, when the war is over -- and if I should not have too many other attractive offers -- I believe I shall accept his proposal.

MAMA: That remains to be seen. If the Burnside Plantation is ravaged before the war ends, Mr. Beauregard Burnside will be penniless, and will not, therefore, make a suitable marital prospect.

MARYLOU: Mama is right. I don't think I could truly love a man if he was so poor I had to wash his socks myself. *(A collective shudder and exclamations of disgust from PATTYANN and POLLYMAE at the thought of washing socks.)* But even if treacherous fate compels me to marry someone who is rich, I will still carry a soft spot in my heart for Beau till the day I die! Poor Beau! He will be wretched without me.

SUELLEN: Perhaps the Yankee advance will not get to Burnside Plantation and you will have the pleasure of making him wretched at first hand.

MAMA: *(Crossing to close the draperies again.)* We will all have to stand together in the face of this emergency.

MARYLOU: What emergency?

SUELLEN: For goodness sakes! Will you get your senses out of your eternal love letters for just a minute? Listen! What do you hear?

MARYLOU: Oh, Suellen, do not be so bossy! All I can hear is ... is ... what is that dreadful noise?

PATTYANN and POLLYMAE: *(Simultaneously.)* Cannons!

(MARYLOU faints. EVERYONE rushes to her assistance, fanning her face, chafing her wrists and helping her to a chair by the table.)

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MAMA: Please, Marylou, get a hold on your emotions! *(To all the GIRLS.)* The Yankees are no more than a few miles from us! We have very little time to make plans. Clem has driven the livestock into the woods. We will have to deprive ourselves of eggs and milk for a time, but at least they will not be butchered to feed Yankee troops.

MARYLOU: No milk! What about my milk pack? What is my complexion going to look like?

SUELLEN: Far better not to be attractive when the Yankees come.

PATTYANN: Mama, is it true what they say the Yankees do to women?

(MAMA, SUELLEN, and MARYLOU gasp. Mama claps a hand over PATTYANN'S mouth. Suellen claps hands over POLLYMAE'S ears.)

MARYLOU: Oh, horrors! I shall faint if one touches me! I shall faint at the thought of it!

(SHE stands in order to crumple dramatically. SUELLEN thwarts the performance by thumping Marylou back in her chair.)

MAMA: Never fear, my precious ones. If we act like ladies, I am sure even those bestial Yankees will treat us with respect. Surely they have some shred of decency. *(Aside.)* I wish I could believe that! Heaven help my girls!

PATTYANN: The Gimble girls say that the Yankees --

(MAMA, SUELLEN, and MARYLOU gasp. Again, Mama claps a hand over PATTYANN'S mouth. Suellen claps hands over POLLYMAE'S ears.)

MAMA: Pay attention, girls! The Yankees are within a few miles; we have no time to lose. Our jewels represent all the security we have left in the world. We must not allow them to fall into the hands of the Yankees. We will place all of our jewelry in this bag.

End of Freeview

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