

For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls

by
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STORY OF THE PLAY

A “melodrama plus,” this play cleverly intertwines a classic “losing the farm” plot (in this case the restaurant) with a realistic subplot in which high school drama students are putting on (what else?!) a melodrama. The two plots dovetail nicely at the end, as the high school play triggers the resolution of the “real” melodrama. The over-the-top characters include the Colonel and his daughter Belle trying to keep the family restaurant (and Belle’s heart) from the clutches of the villain I.C. Blizzard, a fast food franchiser. The hero, Beau, suffers from a perpetual crisis of confidence that he deals with by cooking and obsessive psychoanalysis. The student characters trade insults that imperfectly hide a budding romance. Holding both plots together is the Colonel’s no-nonsense Yankee wife, who is the drama teacher of the high school. With a big cast and lots of laughs, this play also makes a perfect faculty/student production.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Approx. 8 m, 9 w)

- CHRISTINA:** High school senior, bright and self-confident.
MRS. CLANGHORNE: No nonsense, competent as teacher and parent; patient but with a sardonic side.
SADIE: High school senior, loves word play, serious about drama and loves to cut loose on stage.
JED: High school senior, extroverted class clown who grows up during the course of the play.
JIMMY: Likeable, not too bright, not the typical drama type.
COL. WOODROW CLANGHORNE: Stereotypical gentleman of the Old South.
BELLE: A Scarlett O'Hara type, but not as bright or conniving.
GRANNY: Old Southern lady trying to be contemporary.
BEAUREGARD: Self-effacing and polite to a fault, mired by psychobabble.
MRS. COBB: Sophisticated, confident in public, but vulnerable.
DIANE: Loyal shadow.
J. P. STACKCASH: ** Good old boy, confident businessman.
HORACE BILLINGS: ** Good old boy; oily, playing every angle.
I. C. BLIZZARD: The fast food franchise king. A classic villain; charming on surface, evil intentions, craven when caught.
MRS. MOSKEVITCH: Stereotypical New York Jewish woman, pushy, broad accent. Also doubles as hillbilly woman.
MR. MOSKEVITCH: Long-suffering husband. Also doubles as hillbilly man.
SOUND / CARD GIRL

NOTE: It is more effective if the "adult" parts have heavy Southern accents while the students maintain the standard accent to the differentiate the plots.

**Stackcash and/or Billings may be cast as female.

SETS

(Multiple simple sets needed for this play.)

1. A rudimentary set of a poor peasant house with door and frame SR; table and two chairs; narrow bed or couch; fireplace tools. Main curtain is pulled to frame the little set.
2. The interior of a once fine restaurant, with three tables with tablecloths, candlesticks, silver, and fancily-folded napkins. Everything is a bit faded and looks out of date. There are a couple of nice pieces of furniture, antiques. One table SR has been cleared so it can be used as a desk. Far SR is a small counter with a cigar box for cash register.
3. A fast food joint with a couple of plastic tables and chairs.
4. A classroom with several desks.

PROPS/COSTUMES

Shawl
Basket with baby doll
Signs ("Oh!" "Boo!" "Applause!" "Hooray")
Halo, wand and wings
Black cape and mustache
School books and backpacks
Antebellum gowns, gloves, fan or parasol
Portable CD player
Cook's hat and apron
Food on trays
Fast food uniforms
Three-piece men's suits
Sandwich and glasses of water and tea
Legal papers and pens
2 Restaurant signs ("Fat Colonel's Fried Chicken" and "The Southern Belle")
Garbage bag of foam sandwich boxes
Paramedic uniform and kit
Peasant costumes (male and female)
Prince's costume
Full fairy godmother regalia
Sewing supplies
Contracts
Cell phone

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is the middle of a school play rehearsal. Onstage is a rudimentary set of a poor peasant house: door and frame SR, table and two chairs, narrow bed or couch, fireplace tools. Main curtain is pulled to frame the little set. During the blackout there is a loud KNOCKING. No response. More knocking. As dialog begins, dim LIGHTS come up on CHRISTINA getting out of bed, drawing a shawl around her school clothes. CAST is not in costumes yet.)

CHRISTINA: Yes, yes, I'm coming. Hold your horses. Who could be knocking so late at night and my husband not at home? *(SHE opens the door and looks out, not seeing the basket, which is sitting behind the door.)* Yes, who is it? I don't see anyone or anything ... hello, is there anybody there? *(Long pause.)* Hello, is there anybody there? *(Long pause; SHE looks to back of theater at the control booth; she's obviously waiting for a cue.)* Hello!!

MRS. CLANGHORNE: *(Standing in the aisle in the audience, turning to the control room in back.)* Sound?! Where's the baby cry? You're late as usual.

SOUND: *(From booth.)* Sorry, Mrs. Clanghorne. The tape wasn't cued up right. Here it is.

MRS. CLANGHORNE: Wait for the cue. Once more, Christina.

CHRISTINA: Hello, is there anybody there?

(Loud train WHISTLE. CHRISTINA reacts in disgust.)

MRS. CLANGHORNE: That's supposed to be a human baby, not a baby steam engine.

SOUND: Sorry, Mrs. C. Okay, once more, we got it.

CHRISTINA: Hello. Is anybody there? *(Baby CRIES. CHRISTINA looks behind the door.)* Oh, look, a basket. What's this? Why, it's a little baby. Why, it's a little baby...

(SHE'S once again obviously waiting for a cue of some sort.)

MRS. CLANGHORNE: Cue cards? We need an "OH!"

(CARD GIRL runs in from SL and holds up an OH! sign.)

CARD GIRL: Sorry, Mrs. C. *(SHE encourages the audience to say OH!)*

CHRISTINA: It's all wrapped up in cloth. Oh, it's a little boy! *(CARD: OH! again.)* A beautiful little boy. Someone must have known I could never have children and left this precious gift at my door. Come in, little foundling child. Come in and I will take care of you as if you were my own. Oh, I wish my husband weren't away. His job as woodsman of this vast forest is never done, especially since the cruel master of the estate requires him to do so much. *(Sitting on bed with baby.)* Wait, what's this? It is a strange birthmark on his shoulder. Why, it looks like a strawberry! How strange. *(SADIE pops out from behind the curtain SR as a good fairy with a few costume effects [halo, wand, wings] but otherwise in street clothes. Again there obviously should have been a sound effect. CHRISTINA looks up at the control booth.)* I said, "HOW STRANGE!"

MRS. CLANGHORNE: What now, Sound?

SOUND: We got it, just a sec. Okay. Give us the cue.

CHRISTINA: How strange! *(SADIE pops out one more time, this time to a loud "PING." Cue card GIRL holds up APPLAUSE sign and tries to get the audience to applaud.)* Oh, my stars! Who are you?

SADIE: *(High, sing-song voice.)* I am the Good Fairy of the Forest. I have come to tell you that this foundling at your door is no ordinary child. He comes with a curse and a blessing. Raise the child as your own and he will overcome the curse and earn the blessing.

CHRISTINA: But who is the little thing?

SADIE: That I cannot tell you. Someday I will return and identify the strawberry birthmark. Then you and he will know his identity and his destiny. Farewell!

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