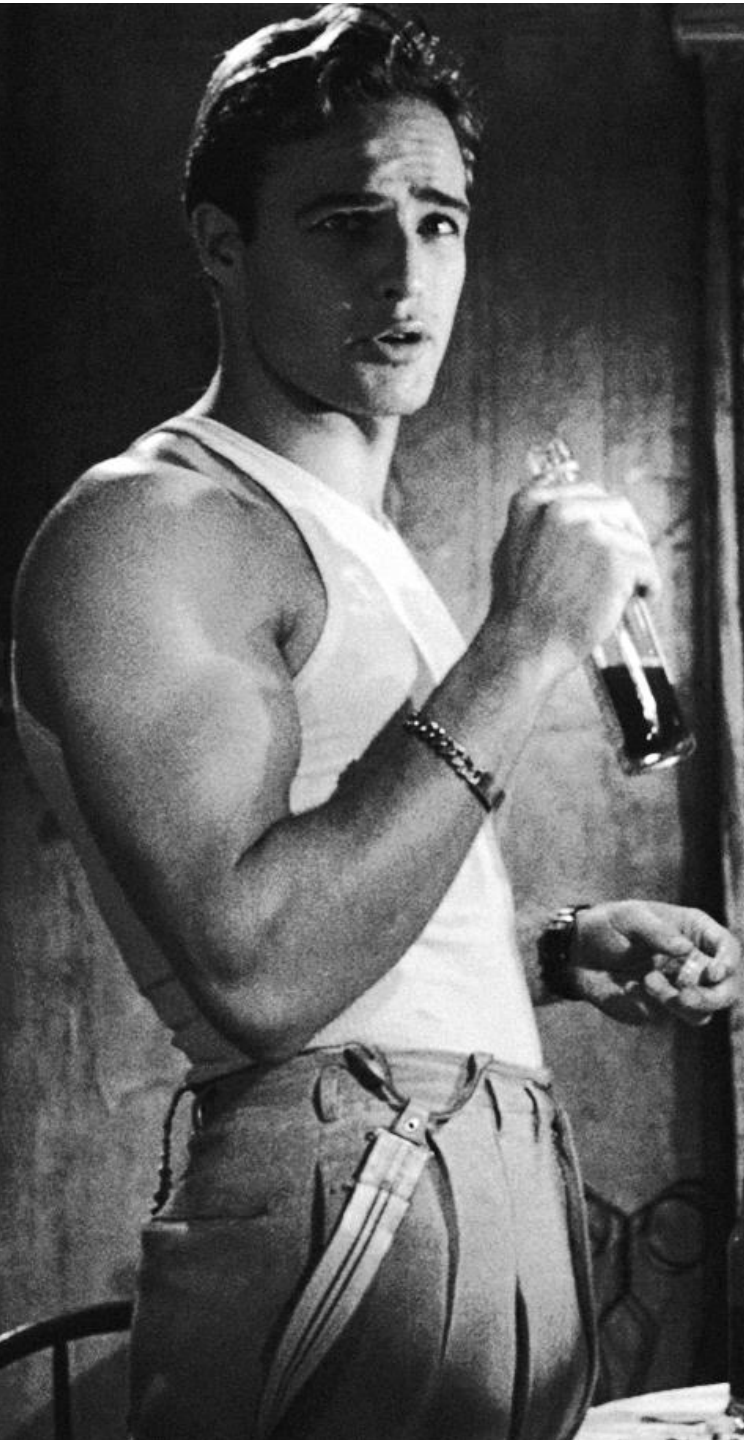


# A Streetcar Named Desire

Synopsis, Analysis, Key Quotations







# Overview

- **Significance of the title:** A streetcar named ‘desire’ takes Blanche to ‘Elysian Fields’, which could be representative of the afterlife, or heaven of some sort. The ‘Elysian Fields’ were where the Ancient Greeks thought that heroes went after their death. Blanche’s ‘desire’ is either therefore a vehicle that transports her to heaven – or leads to death?
- **Setting:** New Orleans – the French quarter. Very multicultural (this is seen throughout the play) and cosmopolitan. Home of Jazz, oddly tolerant city, despite being in the middle of the deep south. The city is one of powerful contrasts: old French architecture and the new jazz; Old World refinement mixed with the grit of poverty and modern life; decay and corruption alongside the regenerative powers of desire and procreation.

# Overview

- **Plot:** Concerned with Blanche's arrival, her dreams and desires, and eventual break down.
- **Context:** Premiered in 1947, into a world that was looking forward into the future after WWII. It enjoyed 855 performances in its first run, and won all 3 major dramatic awards – typical of Tennessee's style.
- **Devices:** Uses light music and intense stage directions for atmosphere – e.g. stage direction at the beginning of the play.

# Scene 1 – Synopsis

- Eunice and an African-American woman are on the steps of the building when Stanley and Mitch arrive. Stanley calls for Stella, and she appears on the first-floor landing of their apartment. Stanley tosses her some meat, and announces that he is going bowling. Stella wants to come to watch.
- Just after she leaves, Blanche Dubois arrives on the black; she looks at the address she has and at her surroundings, shocked that her sister Stella lives in such a place.
- She is helped into the Kowalski apartment by Eunice, the landlady. Eunice mentions that she saw pictures of the Dubois home, Belle Reve. Blanche, exhausted and in no mood for small talk, finally says that she wants to be left alone. Eunice goes to fetch Stella.
- Stella and Blanche greet each other with some emotion. Things start out cordially enough, but before long Blanche is irritable.
- They speak about the poor conditions Stella lives in; Stella talks about how much she needs Stanley. Blanche seems to disapprove of the relationship; the Dubois sisters come from Southern aristocracy, and now Stella is married to a "polack."
- Blanche has bad news:



# Scene 1 – Synopsis cont'

- *Belle Reve* has been lost. Blanche, with her teacher's salary, couldn't keep the place up. She stayed and fought for Belle Reve, caring for all of their dying relatives, while Stella left.
- Blanche is full of resentment, and her harshness makes Stella cry. While Stella goes to the bathroom to wash her face, Stanley comes home.
- Outside, Stanley, Steve, and Mitch plan their next poker game. Stanley enters, giving Blanche a frank stare.
- They have an awkward conversation. Stanley is coarse and rough compared to delicate Blanche, and he is a very sexual man. Through their conversation, we learn that Blanche had a husband long ago, but the young man died.





# Scene 1 – Analysis

- From the beginning, the three main characters of *Streetcar* are in a state of tension - the apartment is small, confining, the weather hot, oppressive, and the characters have good reason to come into conflict.
- **Old South Values:** Blanche and her sister come from a dying world. The pretensions of their world are becoming a thing of memory – for example, the family mansion is called "*Belle Reve*". The old life may have been beautiful, but it is gone forever, which is shown by the fact that *Belle Reve* is lost.
  - Blanche clings to pretensions of aristocracy. She is as poor as Stanley and Stella, but she looks down on the Kowalski apartment. Stanley tells her that she'll probably see him as "the unrefined type."



# Scene 1 – Analysis (2)

- **Desire:** it is a driving force in the play. Blanche is unable to come to terms with her desire. She is repelled and fascinated by Stanley at the same time. Though she stayed behind and took care of the family while Stella ran off to find a new life, Blanche is jealous of Stella's choice: she seems fixated on the idea of Stella sleeping with her "Polack." Stella has chosen a life built around her sexual relationship with Stanley. Blanche is both repulsed by and jealous of the choice.
  - Stanley is comfortable with desire and satisfying his physical needs. Sex is part of what makes him tick. His appraisal of women is frank and straightforward, and he makes no pretenses of being sexually self-controlled.
- **Death:** The play is haunted by mortality. Desire and death and loneliness are played off against each other again and again. The setting is one of decay - the dying Old South and the dying DuBois family. Blanche's first monologue is a graphic description of tending to the terminally ill. There is also the specter of Blanche's husband, who died when they were both very young; Blanche still refers to him as a "boy."



# Scene 1 - Setting

- ‘Elysian Fields’ – where Greek heroes ended up after death – the three main characters are therefore linked to death, whether this is emotionally or mentally.
- There is an unhealthy atmosphere which will be exacerbated by Blanche’s arrival.



# Scene 1 - Atmosphere



- Two conflicting moods created by the initial atmosphere – creates tension, points towards conflict ahead. First atmosphere – bustling, lively and romantic, there is music in the area and the buildings have ‘raffish’ charm. Creates a light tone, and also a sense of exoticism “bananas and coffee”, involves the senses.
- New Orleans is portrayed as a cosmopolitan city, does not suffer from racial discrimination (the play opens on two neighbours, one white, one black). “Voices of people on the street overlapping” gives the reader the impression that the city is thriving.

However...

There is also an underlying feeling of decay. The houses are ‘weathered grey’ with ‘rickety stairs’. The sky is a ‘tender blue’ – is the bustling atmosphere a fragile façade? The use of the word ‘decay’ implies that there is rot beneath the surface (particularly true in the case of Blanche, who is deteriorating mentally). The ‘faded white stars’ and the fact that it is ‘first dark’ lends the atmosphere a sense of foreboding.

# First Impressions

- **Blanche** – tense, breaking down already? Talks frantically – has an alcohol dependency? Insensitive – makes sister cry, rude to Eunice (who tries to be welcoming). Vain, self centred. Fixated on old ways, doesn't fit into Stella's way of life. Insecure, defensive, high maintenance (posh clothing, incongruous to surroundings.) White – purity, cleanliness. Cleaner than her surroundings (to cover up a dirty past?) “Moth” attracted to light – desires glamour, life? Destructive – moths are attracted to light, it kills them. Will her desire for life and glamour lead to her destruction?



# First Impressions (2)

- **Stanley** – meat = blood or death? Foreboding atmosphere around him. Sexual implications? He is the archetypal primitive hunter gatherer, bringing home meat to his ‘little wife’. Caveman implications? Typical alpha male – dominating (use of imperatives towards Stella). Dominated the conversation with Blanche.



# FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE CHARACTERS

- **Stella** – weak, dominated by sister (doesn't speak) and by husband. Victim. Not from Stanley's background- patient when listening to repetitions, Blanche's vanity. Compared to Eunice, more polite BUT: is a pushover?





## *Background*

### **Stanley**

- Working class upbringing, an immigrant.

NEW SOUTH

### **Blanche**

- Remnant of the plantation house era, upper class, WASP.

OLD SOUTH

## *Appearance*

### **Stanley**

- Gaudy, sexual, a ‘brightly coloured male bird’. Open and honest – in Scene 1, he takes off his shirt, even though he is sweaty.

### **Blanche**

- Dressed in white, to represent purity. Concerned with ‘powdering her face’, flashy jewellery – dishonest, a façade.
- “Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a **moth**.”

## *Use of Language*

### **Stanley**

- Uses a rougher tongue, and pronunciation – uses slang terms like ‘little woman’.
- ‘You going to shack up here?’

### **Blanche**

- Speaks properly (Standard English) with literary references to show her education (Edgar Allen Poe).
- ‘I thought I would if its not inconvenient.’

## **Stanley** *Vocation/Talents*

- He was ‘never a very good English student’

## **Blanche**

- English teacher, who uses literary references frequently.

## *Actions*

### **Stanley**

- Stanley recommends that Blanche ‘take it easy’
- He ‘grins at Blanche’.

### **Blanche**

- She is the nervous type – ‘springs up’ when a cat outside screeches.
- She can not return his smile, she tries ‘unsuccessfully to smile back’.

# The moth symbolises....

- Concealment and disguise
- Vulnerability
- Faith
- Attraction
- Determination
- Metamorphosis and change
- Incurable illness and death



As opposed to the butterfly (the moth is older), the moth is **nocturnal**. The moth uses celestial navigation, navigating by the lunar light and is **attracted** to man-made light. The moth is **ever-vigilant** in seeking the course of a path of light, which it will seek at considerable **risk** to itself.

Unlike butterflies, the nocturnal moth **disguises** itself from **predators** with drab brown, grey, white or black coloured wings.

Across cultures, the white moth has been variously associated with **purity** and **misfortune**.

What connections be made between the the moth and Blanche?

# The “richly feathered male bird” connotes...

- Dominance
- Virility
- Loudness
- Aggression
- Arrogance
- Crudeness and gaudiness

What connections can be made between the rooster and Stanley?



The rooster is other known as the cockerel or cock. It is a **polyagmous** animal, distinguished by its vociferous **loudness**. A rooster crows to proclaim his territory.

Some are bred especially for fighting (so-called “cockfighting”), trained for **aggression** and **stamina**.

# Scene 2 – Synopsis

- Six o'clock, the following evening. The Kowalski apartment is being prepared for a poker game. Stella and Blanche are going to go out for the evening.
- Blanche is taking a bath, and Stella tries to tell Stan to be nice to her. She also tells Stan that they've lost Belle Reve. Stan, convinced that the plantation was sold, begins to ask about papers. Stella is sure, and rightly so, that Blanche has not profited from the home's loss.
- Almost in a frenzy, Stanley begins to pull out Blanche's "expensive" clothing. He is convinced that Blanche has pocketed the money and spent it on finery: in truth, anything fine that Blanche owns is old, and anything new is cheap. Stanley can't tell the difference.
- Blanche emerges. As she prepares for her night out, Blanche tries to make small talk with Stanley, but the two converse in a way that is entirely incompatible.





## Scene 2 – Synopsis cont'

- Stanley is increasingly rude, and Blanche is fully aware of what he suspects: she sends Stella to get a soft drink for her, and tells Stanley to ask away. He demands to see papers, and begins to search through the trunk. He upsets her terribly when he begins to examine love letters from her dead husband.
- She gives him the papers he demands, and Stanley says he's going to have a lawyer acquaintance go over them. Blanche is unconcerned. Stanley lets slip that Stella is pregnant.
- Blanche greets her sister with joy. She feels exhilarated about winning her confrontation with Stanley, as well as the idea of Stella having a baby.
- Blanche feels strong, and the women go out for their dinner; on their way out into town, Blanche is startled by the shout of a tamale vendor.



# Scene 2 – Analysis

- **Class:** Stella tries to tell Stanley how to treat Blanche (she is anticipating conflict.) This suggests she is ashamed of his low class status, because she feels the need to tell him how to behave.
- **Bathing as a Symbolic:** Blanche is bathing - attempting to cleanse herself – emotionally, spiritually, mentally? Obsessed with cleanliness, and becoming pure, perhaps from a sense of guilt.
- Stella does not want to tell Stanley about the baby, because she is not sure how Blanche will react. A baby would complete the Kowalski family unit, and emphasise Blanche's isolation.
- **Male Violence:** Blanche understands, as if by instinct, the threat that Stanley represents. She knows that he has no need for the manners that are important to her. She is not blind to Stanley's aggression as Stella is: "I have an idea she doesn't understand you as well as I do".
- **Idealism v Pragmatism:** We see that Blanche cares nothing for money; her class only understands how to spend it. When Stanley (thinks he is being swindled) demands if it was lost on a mortgage, Blanche can only respond "That must have been what happened." She is ignorant on business matters and unable to survive in the real world.



## Scene 2 – Analysis Cont'd



- Illusion: the contents of Blanche's trunk show that although she is used to an upper class life, it is only an a façade of luxury. The contents are costume jewellery, fake furs, and show how she uses fantasy to make reality more bearable.
- Delusion; Blanche also believes she is much stronger than she is. Speaking of her dead husband, she tells Stanley that she hurt the boy, in the same way that Stanley would like to hurt Blanche. But she believes he can't: "I'm not young and vulnerable anymore".
- Blanche's attitude towards fantasy and reality is shown in her reactions to the letters. She is happy to let Stanley handle the legal letters, representative of the real world, but not the love letters – they are her illusions, her fantasies.
- Reality: the truth is far harsher. Although Blanche is exuberant after her supposed victory over Stanley, we soon see how frayed her nerves are. When the tamale vendor shouts out to hawk his product, the cry startles Blanche terribly. She reacts as if she's seen a ghost.

## Scene 2 Key Quotations

STANLEY: The Kowalskis and the DuBois have different notions.

\*\*\*

*Blanche throws off her robe and slips into a flowered print dress.*

*[Stanley] crosses the drapes with a smoldering look.*

\*\*\*

STANLEY: I never met a dame that didn't know she was good looking or not without being told, and some of them give themselves credit for more than they've got.

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: ...Life is too full of evasions and ambiguities, I think. I like an artist who paints in bold colours...when you walked in last night, I said to myself – ‘My sister married a man!’

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: The poor thing was out there listening to us, and I have an idea she doesn't understand you as well as I do...

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: The blind are – leading the blind!

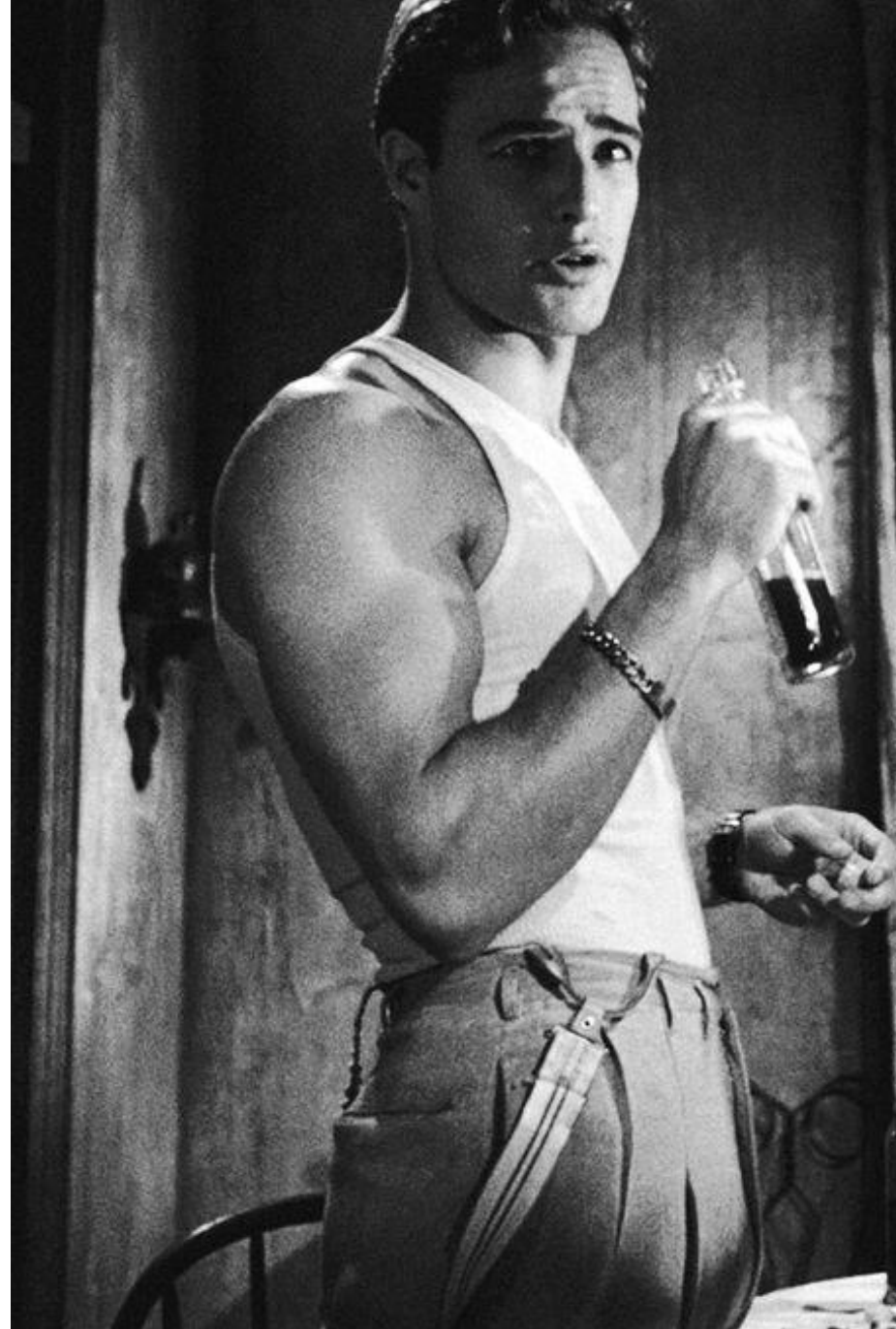
# Scene 3 – Synopsis

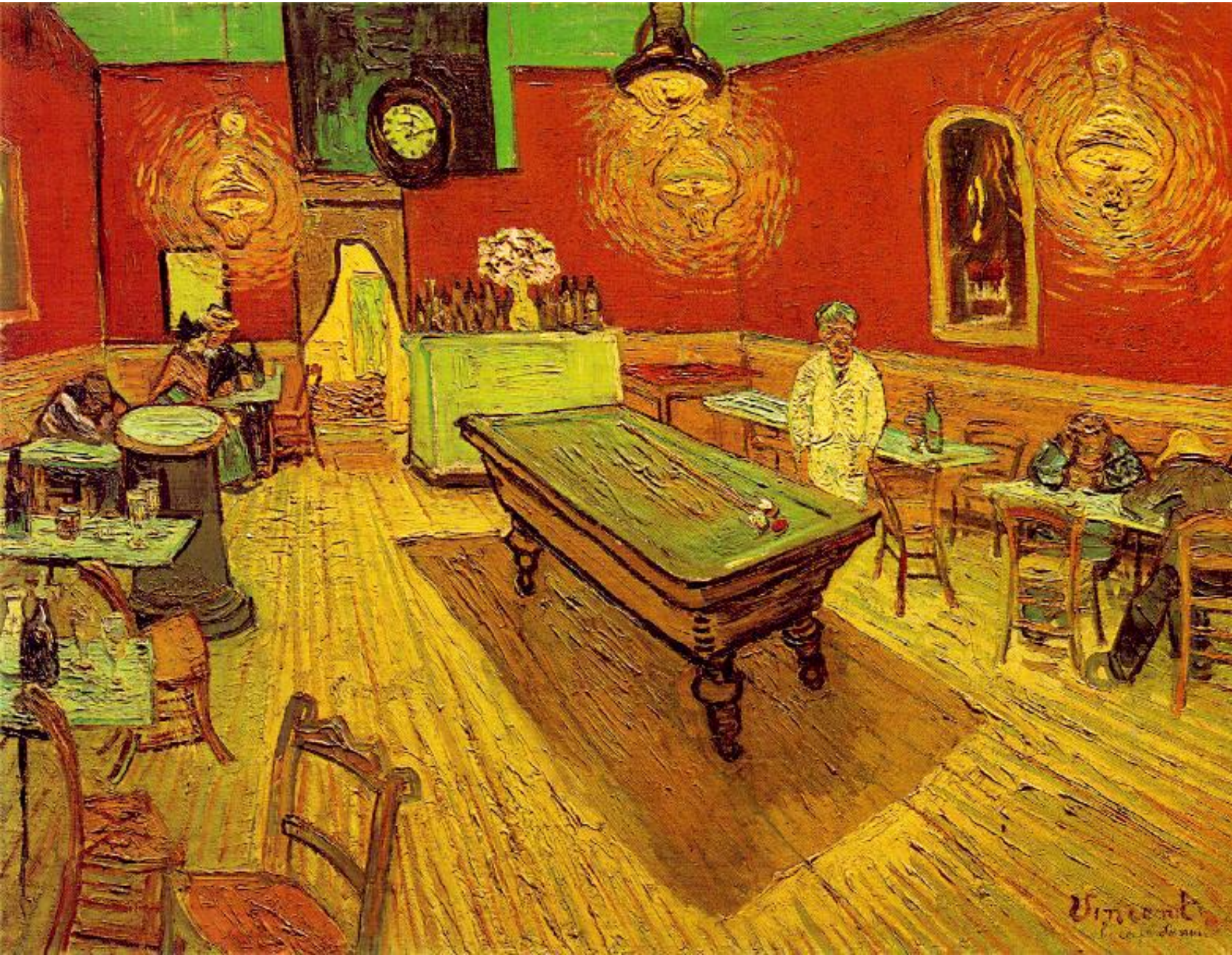
- The same night, the men play poker. Everyone is drunk. Stanley is bossy with the other men. Mitch announces that he should go home - he fears his sick mother is waiting for him.
- Stella and Blanche return home. Stanley rebuffs Blanche's overtures with rudeness. On her way to the bathroom, Blanche meets Mitch – they are attracted to each other.
- Blanche asks Stella about Mitch. They chat and Blanche turns on the radio. The other men like the music, but Stanley demands that it be shut off. When the women don't obey, he jumps up and shuts it off himself.
- Mitch goes to the bathroom, but it is being used by Stella. He chats with Blanche, they smoke together. She admires his cigarette case, which was a gift from a dead ex-girlfriend.
- Blanche has bought a Chinese paper lantern and asks Mitch to put it over the bulb. Stanley grows angry at Mitch's absence; he is in a bad mood because he's been losing.
- When Stella comes out of the bathroom, Blanche turns on the radio again and starts dancing; Mitch moves in imitation of her. Furious, Stanley jumps up and throws the radio out the window.



# Scene 3 – Synopsis cont'd

- Stella, embarrassed by Stanley's behavior, calls Stanley a drunken animal and tells all the men to go home. Stanley begins beating her. The men restrain him; at first he resists, but eventually goes limp.
- Blanche is hysterical. She gathers Stella's clothes and they go up to Eunice's place. Stanley attacks the men. The men sweep up their winnings and leave.
- Stanley tries to call up to Eunice's place. When that doesn't work, Stanley goes outside and bellows Stella's name. Eunice comes out and tells him to go away. She goes back inside, but Stanley keeps calling to her. Stella comes out, and the two come together like animals in heat.
- Blanche comes out looking for Stella, frantic with fear. She goes down to the landing in front of the Kowalski apartment, and stops, stunned by something she sees. She looks around, lost.
- Mitch appears. Blanche is shocked that Stella went back to Stanley, but Mitch seems unsurprised. Blanche and Mitch smoke on the steps, and Blanche thanks Mitch for his kindness.





Van Gough

*Billiard  
Parlour*

# Scene 3 - Setting

- Stanley's apartment, the kitchen. The stage directions give the impression of a manly scene – **gaudy bright colours** are dominant. Drinking whiskey (masculine) and eating watermelon – red, also has seeds – associated with the idea of Stanley as the 'gaudy seed bearer'?
- Compared to a Van Gogh painting, described as 'lurid'. Contrasts with Blanche's pastel colours and white – when she arrives she seems incongruous and out of place. The colours are described as 'raw', giving an impression that everything is unrefined and primitive – the kitchen therefore echoes Stanley himself?





“Set design is an important part of almost any theatre production, as almost every show will utilize some sort of set, however minimal. Sets can be **abstract**, highly **realistic**, or anything in between, and they are a chance for a designer to showcase interesting concepts, new techniques, and unusual materials. The **primary function** of a set, of course, is to provide the audience with some **context** for the play, but it can also be a chance to create something stunning to draw in the audience.”

Harvard Theatre Handbook – Drama Department

# Scene Three - Atmosphere

It is night – use of **pathetic fallacy** to create a sense of forbiddance. The presence of alcohol also contributes to this – it often leads to violence and is therefore a bad omen.

- The stage directions describe an ‘**absorbed silence**’, which creates a tense and uneasy atmosphere.
- The bright colours described in the stage directions **clash** with each other, and so also give the audience the idea that there may be conflict in the scene.



# Scene 3 Key Quotations

*The kitchen now suggests that sort of lurid nocturnal brilliance, the raw colours of a childhood's spectrum. Over the yellow linoleum of the kitchen table hangs an electric bulb with a vivid green glass shade.*

*The poker players – STANLEY, STEVE, MITCH and PABLO – wear coloured shirts, solid blues, a purple, a red-and-white check, a light green, and they are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and direct and powerful as the primary colours.*

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: I'm sorry, but I haven't noticed the stamp of genius on Stanley's forehead.

STELLA: It isn't on his forehead and it isn't genius.

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: It's a French name. It means woods and Blanche means white, so the two together means white woods. Like an orchard in spring!

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: I can't stand a naked lightbulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action.

## Scene 3 Key Quotations Cont'd

*The low-tone clarinet moans. The door upstairs opens again. STELLA slips down the rickety stairs in her robe. Her eyes are glistening with tears and her hair loose about her throat and shoulders. They stare at each other. Then they come together with low animal moans. He falls on his knees on the steps and presses his face to her belly, curving a little with maternity. Her eyes go blind tenderness as she catches his head and raises him level with her. He snatches the screen door open and lifts her off her feet and bears her into the dark flat.*

# Blanche's Idealism and Romantic Poetry

What do the following allusions in Scene 3 tell us about Blanche's character?

“Agonies are one of my changes of garments.”

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

“I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity.”

Edgar Allen Poe, *Letters*

“*All* that we see or seem / Is but a dream within a dream.”

Edgar Allen Poe, *Collected Poems*









# Scene 4 – Synopsis

- The next morning. Blanche stayed at Eunice's last night. When Stanley is gone, she rushes into the Kowalski apartment, frantic with worry.
- Stella seems baffled by Blanche's concern; she thinks Blanche is overreacting. Blanche cannot understand how Stella could return to a man who beat her.
- Stella insists that she loves Stanley, and his impulsive and ferocious nature is part of what she loves about him.
- Blanche is awash with plans to "escape." She seems oblivious to the fact that Stella does not want to escape Stanley. She recently ran into an old college friend of hers, who has since become a millionaire. She thinks he might provide the funds to set the women up in a shop.
- As she tries to think of an appropriate way to word the telegraph message, Stella tries to assure Blanche that everything is fine. She tries to share some of the money Stanley has given her, and she also tries to convince Blanche that what she saw was Stanley at his worst. Blanche believes she saw Stanley's true self.
- Stanley comes home, but the sound of a passing train masks the sound of his coming. He overhears as Blanche condemns him as an animal, a primitive, an ape-like creature. Stanley hears it all. He waits for the sound of another train to leave and make another entrance. He embraces Stella and grins at Blanche over Stella's shoulder.

## Scene 4 – Analysis (1)

- The stage directions portray a conflicting air of confusion ‘confusion of street cries’ and serenity ‘serene’. Stella is serene, in a ‘narcotized tranquillity’ (Stanley is her drug?) She is relaxed. Just as serenity and tension clashed in the stage directions, they also clash in Stella and Blanche.
- Blanche is panicked – she spent a ‘sleepless night’. This shows that although she can be callous, she does care about her sister.
- **Stella’s Simplicity:** Stella is holding comics, showing that like her sister, she has the capacity to lose herself in fantasy and implying that she has the need to delude herself? Comics = simple, childish.
- **Illusion and Feminist Reading:** Blanche soothes herself by creating an elaborate illusion, a fantasy that would never work out as she would like it to. She dreams of luxury, but this does not appeal to Stella. This also shows her dependence on men and on a patriarchal society – she immediately turns to a man for help.



## Scene 4 – Analysis (2)

- **Metaphor:** the streetcar named Desire comes up again as a metaphor. As Blanche and Stella argue about desire, Blanche talks about the rattletrap streetcar. Stella asks if Blanche has ever ridden it; Blanche says that it brought her here.
- **Symbolism:** Blanche denounces the streetcar, just as she denies the power and appeal of desire. But in reality, she has known desire, too. In her loneliness, it's been one of her refuges. As she says of the streetcar, "It brought me here," she is speaking also of how her desire and loneliness caused her to be run out of town.
- Stanley's overhearing Blanche's denunciation of him will ultimately be disastrous for her. If before they were enemies, now they will become locked in a more serious struggle. Stanley will not be content until Blanche is gone from the apartment, even if it means her destruction.



## Scene 4 Analysis (3)

- **Stanley's Brute Masculinity:** Stanley is totally alien from 'art' 'poetry and music'- this is true. He is totally unrefined, uncultured and down to earth, as shown through first conversations with Blanche.
  - 'grunting', 'swilling', 'knawing', 'hulking'
    - Blanche is very negative towards Stanley
    - he's her opposite, and the antithesis of the refined upper class gentleman she used to, hence to overreaction to his animal-like nature.
- **Conflict:** Stanley becomes engaged in a war for Stella with Blanche in this scene, as can be seen from the grin he gives Blanche – almost like an animal baring its teeth in challenge?



# Scene 4 Analysis (4)

- **Stanley and Stella's Physical Relationship:** They share a lot of physical contact ('embraced' with both arms, fiercely 'clasps her head to him') this visually shows that their relationship is based on desire.
- **Tension:** There is tension as Blanche and Stanley are clearly fighting over Stella (the tension is clear). Stanley grins pointedly at Blanche before making sure that she can see him hug Stella. There is also tension due to him overhearing Blanche insulting him – there is potential for further violence!
- **Foreshadowing:** Could his triumph in this scene be foreshadowing his triumph in the penultimate scene, when he rapes Blanche?
- **Music** – the 'blue piano' – makes it clear to the audience that Stanley has the upper hand – round one is complete, and it ends with Stanley in control.



# Scene 4 Key Quotes

*There is a confusion of street cries like a choral chant.*

\*\*\*

STELLA: He smashed all the light-bulbs with the heel of my slipper [...] I was sort of thrilled by it.

\*\*\*

*Under the cover of the train's noise, STANLEY enters from outside. He stands unseen by the women, holding some packages in his arms, and overhears their following conversation.*

BLANCHE: He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits [...] Yes, there's something ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in – anthropological studies! [...] maybe we are a long way way from being made in God's image, but Stella – my sister – there has been *some* progress since then! Such things as art – as poetry and music – such kinds of light have come into the world since then! [...] *Don't – don't hang back with the brutes!*

# Scene 5 – Synopsis

- Blanche is in the middle of writing a letter full of lies, describing a jet-set life for Stella and Blanche to Shep, her millionaire friend.
- Upstairs, Eunice and Steve are fighting. Eunice rushes down out of the apartment, saying she's going to call the police. Stanley comes home, dressed to bowl. Steve comes down, with a bruise on his forehead; Stanley tells Steve that Eunice has gone to a neighborhood bar. He rushes out to find her.
- Stanley asks some unsettling questions. A friend of his goes through Laurel, Blanche' and Stella's hometown, this friend claims that Blanche was a guest at a disreputable hotel called the Flamingo. Blanche denies it. Stanley leaves. Steve and Eunice come home, Eunice sobbing and Steve trying to make it up to her.
- Blanche is shaken. She asks if Stella has heard any rumors about her; Stella is baffled by Blanche's behavior. Blanche admits that she "wasn't so good" during the last few years; she sought comfort with men. She insinuates that she was sexually intimate with these men, but Stella has stopped listen because Blanche is being so morbid. Blanche is clearly on edge.



## Scene 5 – Synopsis cont'

- Stella fixes her a drink. Blanche gushes with emotion and affection for Stella; Stella is embarrassed by Blanche's sentimentality.
- Stella and Blanche talk about Mitch. Blanche will be going out with him later that night. Blanche is quite taken with him. She hopes that their relationship can go somewhere. Stella leaves for an outing with Stanley. Eunice bounds out of the apartment, shrieking with laughter, and Steve chases after her.
- A young man comes to collect for the paper. Blanche hits on him with shocking forwardness. The young man, a boy probably not out of his teens, seems nervous and excited at the same time. Finally, she kisses him, and then sends him on his way.
- Mitch comes with a dozen roses, and Blanche accepts them with mock-formality.





“Many of Williams sexual outcasts are devoured, literally or figuratively, as punishment for sexual misconduct. Blanche [...] is a good example of Williams’ portrayal of a sexual outcast as a martyr... she is the sensitive, nonconformist individual who must suffer at the hands of conventional morality’” (Haley 7 - 8).

## Scene 5 – Analysis (1)

- **Idealism and Illusion:** the theme of illusion runs through this scene, and we see how the past is beginning to catch up with Blanche. Stanley is learning of her past, and her old desires are coming back to haunt her.
  - We watch Blanche fabricate a series of lies in her telegraph to Shep. She has no qualms; the truth is less interesting than the illusion she offers, so why not ?
  - Blanche is not the only character with some fear of the truth. When she confesses to Stella about her behavior in Laurel, Stella stops listening - whenever Blanche is morbid; this convenient ability to block out the truth foreshadows Stella's betrayal of Blanche at the end of the play.
- **Dramatic Tension:** created around a conflict between Stanley and Blanche – she ‘recognises his entrance with nervous glances’



# Scene 5 – Analysis (2)

- **Astrological Symbolism:** Blanche's star sign is ironic – Virgo – 'the virgin' – does she want to reclaim her virginity spiritually and emotionally? Create a new life for herself?
  - Stanley's sign is Capricorn – 'the ram' – goats are supposed to be promiscuous and stubborn. He is both. Capricorn and Virgo are opposites – they either conflict or...opposites attract?
- **Escalating Tension:** Stanley mentions his friend Shaw, and the tension escalates. This gives the impression he has been investigating Blanche.
  - Blanche's illusions are quite fragile. Stanley upsets her by hinting that he knows the truth. She is rendered vulnerable by this attack; her lies have isolated her.
  - Stanley has the last word – 'clear up a mistake' – he threatens to get proof and reveal truth, leaving Blanche in a panic. She starts making excuses and makes Stella suspicious.
- **Pathetic Fallacy** – thunder is foreboding for Blanche.



# Scene 5 – Analysis (3)



- **Loneliness:** Afterward she gushes with emotion for Stella. The theme of loneliness, central to the play, is rendered skillfully in this scene. Stella is uncomfortable with these displays of emotion; - they make her feel guilty because Stella is all that Blanche has in the world, and Stella herself has Stanley?
- **Metaphor:** The soda spilling and foaming out the bottle is a metaphor for Blanche –it stains her white shirt, just as her purity is stained. It also represents her emotions spilling over, how she herself is now out of control, and the way that the truth will spill out. The local couples provide a contrast to Blanche's less healthy outlets for her desire.

•**Love and Violence:** The near-comic altercation between Eunice and Steve shows a world where more stable people go through the same convulsions of violence and desire, with a somewhat healthier approach. The fight is over another woman, but Steve and Eunice seem to work it out. The violence of the fight also shows an alternative to the brutality of Stanley and Stella; Steve comes down the stairs with a bruise on his forehead. A woman striking her husband, who afterward is none the worse for wear, is a healthier alternative to a man savagely beating his pregnant wife. By the middle of the scene, all is well between them.



## Scene 5 – Analysis (4)

- Eunice and Steve also put Blanche's fantasies into perspective – whilst she fabricates a life of cocktails and luncheons, they are a reality check.
- Blanche cannot seem to recover from the convulsions of desire. She denounced the physicality of Stanley's and Stella's relationship, but suffers from a terrible loneliness, from which she seeks to escape in inappropriate ways. Her advances at the Young Man are the first direct sign, on stage, that she occasionally seeks desperate remedies for her loneliness. Blanche has been the lone observer of two happy couples: Stella and Stanley, Steve and Eunice. Left alone in the apartment, she seeks some connection with the first person she sees.



# Scene 5 Key Quotes

BLANCHE: Astrological sign! I bet you were born under Aries. Aries people are forceful and dynamic. They dote on noise!

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: You haven't heard any – unkind – gossip about me?

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: I was never hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are soft – soft people have got to court the favour of hard ones, Stella. Have got to be seductive...

*BLANCHE laughs shrilly and grabs the glass, but her hand shakes so it slips from her grasp. STELLA pours the coke into the glass. It foams over and spills. BLANCHE gives a piercing cry.*

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: I want to kiss you – just once – softly and sweetly – on your mouth [*without waiting for him to accept, she crosses quickly to him and presses her lips to his.*] Run along now! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good and keep my hands off children! Adios!

“Scene 5 unfolds tragically for Blanche...[she] will never capture the pursuing man...she is tragically unable to incorporate [pursuit and lovemaking] into her life [...] it is clear Blanche cannot have the sexual happiness that she sees, both metaphorically and literally, all around her.” (Kolin 109 - 110).

# Scene 6 – Synopsis

- Blanche and Mitch return from a carnival. Blanche is exhausted, Mitch is upset that she did not have a good time, but Blanche tells him it's her fault.
- He asks to kiss her, and she asks why he asks - he says because of a previous incident, when she rebuked him. She tells him that during the incident, she objected to his familiar fingers. A girl needs to protect herself or she is lost. He says she is like no one else he knows.
- Blanche invites Mitch in for a drink. Blanche briefly speaks naughty French to Mitch - he doesn't understand. They discuss Mitch's build - he speaks of his height, weight and trim waistline awkwardly. Blanche seems impressed by his physique. He lifts her. They flirt.
- Blanche proclaims her devotion to old-fashioned values. She asks anxiously if Stanley has said anything about her. Mitch says no. She talks about the difficulties of the situation, staying with Stella and Stanley. Mitch asks Blanche's age, but she deflects the question.





## Scene 6 – Synopsis cont'

- They talk about Mitch's mother, who is terminally ill. Mitch is devoted to her. Blanche tells Mitch about her husband. They were only teenagers when they married. The boy was beautiful, sensitive, and talented. She eloped with him, not realizing that the boy needed her help. She "discovered" his secret: she found him in bed with someone else.
- Afterward, everyone pretended that nothing had happened. All three of them went to a casino, and danced the polka. As Blanche retells her memory, she hears the music again. In the middle of their dance, the boy broke away and shot himself. When Blanche describes hearing the gunshot, the music stops.
- During their dance, Blanche had pulled the boy to her and said, "I know! I know! You disgust me."
- Blanche begins to hear the polka music again. She talks about how much the experience has changed her; she begins to sob. As Mitch embraces her and comforts her, the polka music fades away. Blanche is grateful - "Sometimes there's God so quickly!"



# Scene 6 - Analysis

- **Fragility and Deception:** Blanche's fatigue after the carnival emphasizes how frail she is. We see how the act of deception is wearying to her. She pretends to be taken with old-fashioned values. Her need to appear as the virginal Southern belle is not malicious – she indulges in the deception for the purpose of survival.
  - Mitch seems insecure and tense – he laughs ‘uneasily’. Maybe because of Blanche’s previous rejection of him? Their relationship is weak – they do not understand each other.
- **Comedic Moment:** The conversation about Mitch's size is a comic moment. The discussion of Mitch's weight, his membership and Blanche ooh-ing and ah-ing over Mitch's muscles is wonderful courtship scene, a brief respite from the increasing darkness of the play. There is an awkward silence afterward though, emphasizing the immaturity of their relationship.



## Scene 6 – Analysis (2)



- **Censorship:** Finally, we hear the truth about Blanche's marriage. In some editions of the play, Blanche speaks of finding her husband in bed with someone, but the gender is censored; in other versions, she tells Mitch that she found him in bed with an older man. Likewise, the Elia Kazan film version was censored due to the Hays Code, which prohibited reference “sexual depravity”.
- **Guilt:** Blanche has never overcome her guilt for what happened - her expression of disgust set the boy off; she blames herself, and has relived the music right up to the gunshot many times.
- **Loneliness:** loneliness plays itself out in so many ways throughout the play. Blanche's intense loneliness goes far back; she discovered that the man she loved had a secret life, quite separate from his life with her. Since then, she has been a girl caring for dying relatives.
  - Mitch, too, is lonely. He had a love who died; he also is caring for his dying mother. Mitch makes Blanche feel safe. He is touchingly gentle and sensitive. In his company, the music fades away, and Blanche notices the difference. She dares to hope that Mitch's entrance into her life is a touch of God helping her.

# Scene 6 Key Quotes

BLANCHE: But honey, you know as well as I do that a single girl, a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she'll be lost!

\*\*\*

*[BLANCHE looks at him gravely; then she bursts into laughter and then claps a hand on her mouth.]*

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: I guess it is just that I have – old-fashioned ideals! *[She rolls her eyes, knowing her cannot see her face].*

BLANCHE: He hates me. Or why would he insult me? Of course there is such a thing as hostility of – perhaps in some perverse kind of way he – No! To think of it makes me...*[She makes a gesture of revulsion. Then finishes her drink. A pause follows.]*

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: I loved someone too, too, and the person I loved I lost.

# Scene 6 Key Quotes

BLANCHE: I ran out – all did – all ran and gathered about the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. 'Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!' See? See what? Then I heard voices say – Allan! Allan! The Grey boy! He'd stuck a revolver into his mouth and fired – so that the back of his head had ben – blown away

*[She sways and covers her face.]*

It was because – on the dance-floor – unable to stop myself – I'd suddenly said – 'I know! I know! You disgust...' And then the searchlight which had turned on the world was turned off again and never one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this – kitchen – candle...

*[Mitch gets up awkwardly and moves towards her a little. The polka music increases.]*

**Streetcar exists in multiple published versions, with lines excised in some..**

BLANCHE: Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty — which wasn't empty, but had two people in it ... **the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years**

...

# Scene 7 - Synopsis

- Late one afternoon, in mid-September, Stella is preparing for Blanche's birthday celebration. Stanley comes home with some disturbing information.



- Blanche is taking a bath, and Stanley takes the opportunity to tell Stella the many rumors he has collected about her.
- As he unfolds the sordid details of Blanche's last few years in Laurel, Blanche can be heard offstage, singing "It's Only a Paper Moon."
- After Belle Reve was lost, Blanche stayed at the Flamingo Hotel; they eventually kicked her out, on account of the endless string of male guests she entertained. She apparently was involved with boys from the nearby military base.
- She lost her job teaching high school English because of an affair with a seventeen-year-old student.

# Scene 7 - Synopsis

- Stella is horrified and angry that Stanley believes the stories; but apparently, Stanley has checked the rumors with several sources.
- When Blanche calls for a towel, and Stella brings it, Blanche notices Stella's upset expression. But Stella tries to pretend everything is fine.
- Stella defends Blanche, explaining that Blanche was crushed by the death of her husband. Stanley lets drop that Mitch won't be coming to the party tonight, as previously expected; he told Mitch about everything.
- Stella is horrified; she had hoped that Mitch would marry Blanche.
- Blanche emerges, feeling cool and rested; Stanley stomps past her into the bathroom to use the toilet. Blanche notices that Stella is upset, but Stella tries to pretend that nothing has happened.







## Scene 7 – Analysis

- **Symbolism:** Blanche's habit of always bathing is symbolic; when she emerges, she always announces that she feels like a new person. The baths are a cleansing ritual, but the feeling of refreshment and renewed strength is not long lasting. We have seen before how frail Blanche is, and how quickly she tires. We also will see that the past does not wash away so easily.
- **Musical Allusion:** Blanche's song, "It's Only a Paper Moon," was a popular song of the 1940's. The lyrics speak of a make-believe world, which is phony but pleasurable if everybody plays. The song not-so-subtly parallels Blanche's attitude toward illusion and fantasy. She seems to pay no attention to the fact that her lies, sooner or later, will be found out. The pleasure of illusion is not primarily its power to keep people deceived; Blanche delights in the act of creating these lies. The performance is part of the fun for her. As if life were a party at Belle Reve, she hopes that everyone will stay constantly entertained. Masking the truth is part of this entertainment.

## Scene 7 – Analysis (2)



- **Foreshadowing:** Stella's reaction to Stanley's news about Blanche's past foreshadows her later unwillingness to believe her sister about the fact of the rape, which she chooses to attribute to mental illness and delusion.
- **Juxtaposition;** There are two scenes going on during Scene 7 – the light hearted song scene, which is juxtaposed with the tense atmosphere created by Stanley. Music is used at the end – the distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown'. This is to mimic the breakdown of the cheerful atmosphere, the order of things Blanche's 'charade' and mental stability.

• **Dramatic Irony:** drama is created through Blanche's ignorance of the information being disclosed. Her singing makes this plain, and increases tension as it prolongs the wait before we see the elaboration on her past and how she will react. It also contrasts Blanche's optimism and hope for a life with Mitch, a hope that Stanley has ruined.

# Scene 7 Key Quotes

STANLEY: That girl calls *me* common!

\*\*\*

[*BLANCHE is singing in the bathroom a saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntually with STANLEY'S speech*].

\*\*\*

STELLA: What – contemptible – lies!

STANLEY: Sure, I can see how you'd be upset by this. She pulled the wool over your eyes as much as Mitch's!

STELLA: There are things about my sister I don't approve of – things that caused sorrow at home. She was always flighty [...] but when she was young, very young, she had an experience that – killed her illusions!

\*\*\*

STELLA [*turning quickly away*]: Why, nothing has happened, Blanche.

BLANCHE: You're lying! Something has!

[*She stares fearfully at STELLA, who pretends to be busy at the table. The distant piano goes into hectic breakdown.*]

“It is clear that Williams’ outcast characters do not suffer because of the acts or situations that make them outcasts – in other words, because they are immoral or evil. They suffer at the hands of individuals who represent conventional morality because they [are] a threat to social orthodoxy [...] the conflict between nonconformists and representatives of conventional morality is at the heart of all of Williams’ major plays [...] the violent and ultimately futile struggle [...] is unavoidable”” (Haley 3).

# Scene 8 – Synopsis

- Blanche's birthday dinner. One of the places at the table is empty; Mitch has stood Blanche up.
- Stella seems upset and embarrassed; Stanley is sullen; Blanche is making painful attempts to seem happy.
- To lighten the mood, Blanche asks Stanley to tell a joke. When he refuses, she tells one; it flops.
- Stanley is eating like a pig. Stella comments so, and asks him to clear the table.
- Infuriated by her tone, he throws his plate on the floor. Stella begins to cry, and Stanley goes out on the porch to smoke. Blanche goes to call Mitch; he doesn't come to the phone.
- Stella goes out to talk to Stanley; she scolds him for telling Mitch. Stanley defends his actions; he longs for the day when he can have privacy with Stella, and they can make noise again without worrying about disturbing the guest who sleeps in the next room.



## Scene 8 – Synopsis cont'



- Back at the table, Stella lights the candle's for Blanche's birthday cake. Blanche is upset. The phone rings, but it turns out to be for Stanley.
- After the call, Stanley presents his present: a bus ticket back to Laurel. She runs to the bathroom, sick. Stella reproaches Stanley, asking why he is being cruel.
- Stanley tells her, in rough, angry words, that Blanche has changed everything between them: Stella was happy enough with him before, but now she seems more and more unsatisfied with him because he is "common."
- Stella becomes distracted suddenly. She tells him to take her to the hospital. The baby is coming.

# Scene 8 – Analysis

- **Symbolic Light:** It is evening/sunset – moving towards darkness/dark times. Symbolises fading hope.
- **Colour and Conflict:** there is a conflict of characters seen in this scene – Stanley is associated with ‘coloured lights’ but Blanche is associated with ‘candles on the white cake’.
- **Mood:** ‘Blanche has a light artificial smile’, ‘Stanley looks sullen’, ‘Stella is embarrassed and sad’. Fourth place at the table vacant. All of this creates tension, and sadness in the audience.
- **Male Domination:** Stanley’s outburst demonstrates his need to possess Stella completely. He will not tolerate any kind of equality between them. She is not allowed to ask him for help with the chores. She is not allowed to criticize him.



# Scene 8 – Analysis (2)

- **Disruption/Subversion of Patriarchy:**  
Stanley yells at her, "Huey Long said 'Every man is a King!' And I am the king around here, so don't forget it!"
  - Blanche's presence seems like a threat to his authority. He feels that Stella has become insubordinate since Blanche arrived. His motivations are clear: he is jealous of Blanche, he seeks to preserve his authority, and he delights in the power of hurting another.
  - Stanley re-establishes control of the scene after the phone call.
  - He is absolutely merciless with Blanche. He gives her the bus ticket in the moment of her highest vulnerability, knowing full well that she cannot return to Laurel. He delights in hurting her. However, there is an implication that he feels guilty – he tries to justify his actions, and overdoes it. Perhaps he is justifying them to himself?





# Scene 8 Key Quotes

*The three people are completing a dismal birthday supper. STANLEY looks sullen. STELLA is embarrassed and sad. BLANCHE has a tight, artificial smile on her drawn face. There is a fourth place at the table which is left vacant.*

\*\*\*

STANLEY: Who do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said – ‘Every Man is a King!’ And I am a king around here, so don’t forget it!

\*\*\*

STANLEY: I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is one hundred percent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it, so don’t ever call me a Polack.

STANLEY: Ticket! Back to Laurel! On the Greyhound! Tuesday! [*The ‘Varsouviana’ music steals in softly and continues playing*].

\*\*\*

STELLA: ...You didn’t know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody was tender and trusting as she was. But people liked you abused her, and forced her to change.

\*\*\*

STANLEY: When we first met, you thought I was common. How right you was, baby. I was common as dirt. You showed me a snapshot of the place with the columns. I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it...

# Scene 9 – Synopsis

- Later that evening, Blanche is home alone. She has been drinking - hears the polka music. Mitch enters, unkempt, in work clothes. He, too, has been drinking. She tries to brush aside his standing her up earlier; he treats her coldly.
- She offers a drink, but he insists he doesn't want any. Blanche hears the music of the polka again; the music ends with the gunshot, as always. She continues to offer Mitch a drink but he refuses, says that Stanley told him she's lapped up his liquor all summer. She brushes aside the accusation.
- Mitch wants to turn on the light. He's never seen in her in the light. Blanche stalls. She doesn't want realism: "I'll tell you what I want. Magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people".
- Mitch turns on the light, and Blanche gasps. He tells her he doesn't mind her being older than he thought, but he does mind the act she put on all summer; pretending to be old-fashioned, devoted to old ideals of chastity. He's heard the stories from Stan, and confirmed them.



## Scene 9 – Synopsis cont'd



- Blanche admits the truth. After Alan, she had intimacies with strangers, looking for protection; until she became involved with a seventeen-year-old boy, and lost her job. She had nowhere to go; her youth, beauty and innocence were gone.
- Mitch repeats simply, "You lied to me, Blanche." She tells him she never lied in her heart.
- Outside, a Mexican woman comes by, selling flowers for the dead. As the vendor cries outside, Blanche remembers the terrible days caring for her dying relatives. Changing the blood-stained sheets, when in her youth servants had waited on her. Lonely, abandoned by her sister. Near Belle Reve, there was a training camp for young soldiers; weekends, they would get drunk in town. On their way back, they would come back to the lawn of the mansion and call for Blanche. The only relative left was an old deaf woman, who suspected nothing. Sometimes, she slipped out of the house and went to the boys.
- Mitch comes to her, wanting "what I've been missing all summer." Blanche asks him to marry her. He tells her that she's not clean enough to be in the same house as his mother. Blanche tells him to get out, or she'll scream. When he doesn't comply, she starts to scream. He leaves quickly.

## Scene 9 – Analysis

- **Illusions Shatter:** Blanche has a difficult time relinquishing illusion. Chaotic colors and the polka music show her chaotic mental state. Even as Mitch begins to confront her with the truth, she seeks to brush aside anything that is bothersome. She wants to pretend everything is fine. When Mitch arrives, the polka music she has been hearing stops – it snaps her back to reality, but could also be that he is still her hope for the future, her rescue.
- **Mendacity:** She is not a malicious liar; she lies from weakness, from immaturity, from a fear of reality. She tells Mitch that she speaks of the world as it ought to be, and as people would prefer it to be. She lies because she not want “reality”, she wants “magic”.
  - Blanche tries to recreate the old routine, desperate to find some form of conversation. Painfully awkward ‘how is your mother?’.
  - But Mitch continues to insist on the truth, and when Blanche finally gives up her lies, the effect is like a dam breaking. He tears down the paper lantern that represented the start of their relationship, and protected Blanche’s need to hide in the illusion that she is young.



## Scene 9 – Analysis (2)

- **Loneliness:** We hear in lurid detail about her escapades in Laurel, as with the description of the soldiers calling out her name from the lawn of Belle Reve. The story shows the depths of Blanche's loneliness and depravity; she sought comfort and protection in impossible places.
  - She might as well have been alone at Belle Reve, and in all the beds she frequented. Blanche is terrifyingly isolated. In her loneliness, her desires became more and more difficult to control, and more and more unhealthy. The Polka music is taking over by this point in time.
- **Death:** Throughout this whole scene, the theme of death and oblivion is underscored by the vendor selling flowers for the dead. The flowers recall the deaths of the elderly Dubois family members, and foreshadows Blanche's destruction.
  - Blanche puts herself at Mitch's mercy. She asks him to save her, and he refuses. When he leaves, so does Blanche's last hope at salvation. She is hearing the polka music again and again, and she is no shape for the coming confrontation with Stanley.



# Scene 9 Key Quotes

*A while later, BLANCHE is seated in a tense hunched position [...] the rapid, feverish polka tune, the 'Varsouviana', is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her...*

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: Something's the matter tonight, but never mind. I won't cross examine the witness. I'll just – [*she touches her forehead vaguely. The polka tune starts up again.*] – pretend I don't notice anything different about you! That – music again..

\*\*\*

[*He tears the paper lantern off the light-bulb. She utters a frightened gasp*].

BLANCHE: I don't want realism.

MITCH: Naw, I guess not.

BLANCHE: I'll tell you what I want. Magic!

\*\*\*

BLANCHE: Yes, a big spider! That's where I brought my victims... Yes I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan – intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with... I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to to another, hunting for some protection...

\*\*\*

MEXICAN WOMAN: *Flores. Flores. Flores para los muertos. Flores. Flores.*

# Scene 10 – Synopsis

- Several hours later, that same night. Blanche has been drinking since Mitch left. Stanley comes home. The baby won't come until morning, so he has been sent home for some sleep. He asks why she's all dressed up; she tells him that while he was away a millionaire admirer called and invited her on vacation. Stanley plays along wryly.
- Stanley takes out the pajamas he wore on his wedding night. He wears them on special occasions. He wants to be wearing them when the hospital calls to tell him he has a new son. They continue to talk about the millionaire, and Blanche speaks of how this millionaire respects her. She has "beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart." She says that she does not consider herself a poor woman; as she speaks, she fights hard to stifle her sobs.



## Scene 10 – Synopsis cont'd

- She says that she has cast her pearls before 'swine', not only with Stanley, but with Mitch. She says that Mitch came and repeated the stories he had heard and that she told him to leave, and rejected him when he came back begging for forgiveness and bearing gifts. She is trying to build her ego back up again, desperately trying to rebuild her self esteem. The only unforgivable crime, she says, is deliberate cruelty.
- Stanley is merciless. He tears down her illusions one by one, Blanche only able to cry out as he does it. She tries to wire Shep, the millionaire, with a desperate message begging for help. She never finishes: Stanley emerges from the bathroom, wearing his silk pajamas.
- 'She breaks a bottle, trying to use it as a weapon, but she's no match for Stanley, who can resist a confrontation. He wrests the bottle out of her hands. He says to her, "We've had this date with each other from the beginning".





# Scene 10 – Analysis

- **Symbolic Costuming:** She is dressed in a ‘soiled and crumpled white evening gown’ – represents her purity, virginity? Representing the final destruction of Blanche’s illusions?
  - When Blanche describes how Mitch begged for forgiveness, she is trying to build her ego back up again, desperately trying to rebuild her self esteem.
  - Blanche's illusions are not with the intent to hurt. When she speaks of the only unforgivable crime being deliberate cruelty, she's not being hypocritical. As she says, it is a crime of which she has never been guilty. And here, at the end of her rope, she spins out another series of illusions.
  - Unlike before, these lies are not even remotely credible. She does not seek necessarily to be credible: she only seeks the comfort of fantasy, even if the fantasy is ridiculous. Blanche is drunk, rejected, and about to become a vagabond; all she asks is to be indulged.

## Props

- **Shattered Mirror:** mirrors Blanche’s declining sanity
- **Bottle:** Spurting sexual image from the bottle of beer – like ejaculation. Stanley has won.
- **Triumph of New over Old South:** Stanley refuses Blanche. He is on the brink of his great triumph. His child is about to be born; this birth, coinciding with Blanche's birthday and destruction, is a symbol of the new order coming into being as the old passes away. Blanche will have no descendants. The South she represents, ineffectual and frail and ultimately sterile, is dying.



# Scene 10 – Analysis (2)

- **Tragic Climax:** ‘Swine’ the turning point here – calling Stanley an animal always sets him off.
  - In the climax, the themes of desire and loneliness come into focus. Blanche has longed for some kind of contact; she needs company, and protection. She is not a stranger to desire.
  - But finally, the man she hoped for rejects her, and the man she despises takes her by force. She is not strong enough to offer any resistance; and at the same time, Stanley is right when he says that they've had this encounter coming since the beginning.
  - Part of her does long for Stanley; in her loneliness, she is desperate for contact. Her previous comments indicate that some part of her is fascinated by Stanley's animal nature. The animal side of desire is emphasized by the jungle sound effects outside the apartment.
- **Stage Directions and Blanche's Mental State:**
  - ‘Lurid reflections appear on the walls around Blanche’ ‘inhuman jungle noises rise up’.
  - Stage directions show a prostitute – parallel to Blanche? The real world is shown to offset the unreality of everything that happens in Blanche's mind. Her attempt to telephone to real world fails – this shows that she has completely lost touch with reality.

Stanley defeats Blanche's illusions, and therefore, rips her ability to cope from her.



# Scene 10 Key Quotes

*...[Blanche] has decked herself out in a somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliants set in their heels. [Now she is placing the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table and murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admireres].*

\*\*\*

*[The bottle cap pops off and a geyser of foam shoots up. STANLEY laughs happily...]*

\*\*\*

BLANCHE:...how strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all these treasures locked in my heart. [A choked sob comes from her.] I think of myself as a very, very rich woman! But I have been foolish – casting my pearls before swine!

\*\*\*

BLANCHE:...deliberate cruelty is not forgivable. It is the one unforgivable thing in my opinion and it is the one thing of which I have never, ever been guilty.

\*\*\*

STANLEY: There isn't a goddam thing but imagination!

BLANCHE: Oh!

STANLEY: And lies and tricks and conceits!

\*\*\*

*[Lurid reflections appear on the walls around Blanche. The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form...]*

\*\*\*

*[...The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle. The shadows and lurid reflections move sinuously as flames along the wall spaces, Through the back wall of the rooms, which have become transparent, can be seen the sidewalk. A prostitute has rolled a drunkard...]*

\*\*\*

STANLEY: We've had this date with each other from the beginning!

# Scene 11 – Synopsis

- Several weeks later - men are playing poker. Stella is upset Mitch ill at ease. Eunice, helping Stella, complains that men are unfeeling; it becomes clear that it is the day the doctors come to take Blanche away - has not been well since the rape.
- Stella tells Eunice that Blanche's story is too wild to believe; Stella couldn't believe it and continue living with Stanley. Eunice tells her not to believe it, no matter what, because life has to go on.
- Blanche comes out fresh from her bath. The polka music plays in the background. She is unhinged, though cheerful. The women are in the bedroom, while the men play poker in the kitchen. Stella and Eunice compliment her, and Blanche continues to make strange, ungrounded comments.
- Mitch is completely unnerved by Blanche's madness. Stanley tries to get Mitch to snap out of it; the sound of Stanley's voice frightens Blanche. She demands to know what's going on. The women assure her that everything is fine. They tell her that she is going to go on vacation. Blanche speaks dreamily about the sea, and living by the ocean until she dies.



# Scene 11 – Synopsis cont'

- The doctor and nurse arrive. Blanche goes out to greet them, thinking that it's Shep arrived to pick her up. She sees the doctor and nurse and retreats back into the apartment, saying she's forgotten something. The polka music plays in the background, along with the animal noises that played during the end of Scene 10. Weird shadows dance around the walls. She grabs a chair in defense. The nurse goes in to capture her.
- Stella cannot bear to watch the struggle. Eunice comforts Stella, telling her not to go inside. The men call for the doctor as Blanche continues to fight the nurse.
- Mitch is furious; he tells Stanley that this tragedy is all due to his interfering. Mitch hits Stanley, but the other men rush to restrain him; he breaks down into sobs. The Nurse has succeeded in pinning Blanche.
- The doctor enters, and at Blanche's plea, he commands the Nurse to release her. Blanche delivers her famous line: "Whoever you are I have always depended on the kindness of strangers". As she is led out like a blind woman, Stella cries out her name, sobbing.
- Blanche walks by her and says nothing. Eunice gives Stella her baby, and Stella continues to sob. Stanley comes out onto the porch to comfort her. In the kitchen, the men have silently resumed their places at the card table. Steve deals a new hand.



# Scene 11 – Analysis

- **Stella and Illusion:** Although Blanche is the character most dependent on illusion throughout the play, it would be too simple to describe Stanley and Stella as representing "truth." Stella is able to stay with Stanley only after an act of self-deception.
  - Stella tells Eunice that she wouldn't be able to stay with Stanley if she believed Blanche's story. Eunice tells Blanche not to believe it, but does not seem interested in trying to see if the story is true. Eunice advises dismissing the accusation outright, and doing whatever it takes to go on living.
  - On some level, it seems likely that Stella knows she has betrayed her sister. As they nurse, wrestles Blanche to submission, Stella cries out, "What have I done to my sister?" As she leaves, Blanche pays no heed to Stella's cries. Even in the midst of her dementia, Blanche is aware that Stella has betrayed her.
- **Stanley Hypocrisy:** Stanley's comforting of Stella is an act of hypocrisy. Blanche's madness is largely his doing, as Mitch correctly ascertains. But Stanley comforts Stella lovingly, "voluptuously," and plays the role of tender caretaker. Their relationship will now be based on a series of lies.



# Scene 11 – Analysis (2)

- **The Kindness of Strangers:** Blanche's famous line is full of bitter verbal irony.
  - Blanche has often depended on the kindness of strangers, but all of them have abused and abandoned her. In the end, even her own sister has betrayed her. Her fragility, her inability to fend for herself, and her self-deception have brought her to madness.
  - She speaks the line with hope; in her madness, she clings to a belief in chivalry. But we see no chivalry in this play. The representative of the new man, Stanley, is more ape than knight.
  - Blanche's line is earnest in that it shows her terrible loneliness. For so long, she has known only strangers; young girl in a house of the dying, and a woman seeking protection from callous men.
- **Tragedy and Renewal:** Her tragedy will for the most part be forgotten. Stella is crying, but she has decided to stay with Stanley. She will have to busy herself with caring for the baby. The other men have chosen to go on with their poker game on this day, denying Blanche the dignity of being taken away in private.

The Old South dies, and the New South does not mourn her passing. Everyone is going to move on: as the play ends.



# Scene 11 Key Quotes

STELLA: I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.

EUNICE: Don't ever believe it. Life got to go on...

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*[Blanche] has a tragic radiance in her red satin robe following the sculptural lines of her body...*

BLANCHE: I can smell the sea air. The rest of my time I'm going to spend on the sea. And when I die, I'm going to die on the sea. You know what I shall die of? *[She plucks a grape]*. I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day out of the ocean.

*[Blanche] rushes past him into the bedroom. Lurid reflections appear on the wall in odd, sinuous shapes. The 'Varsouviana' is filtered into weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle. Blanche seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself.*

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STELLA: What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?

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BLANCHE *[holding tight to his arm]*: Whoever you are – I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.