

THE GLASS MENAGERIE,
by Tennessee Williams, 1944

SIDES FOR MAC AUDITIONS

AMANDA

Pages

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10-14

16-21

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JIM

Pages

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93-95

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LAURA

Pages

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TOM

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TOM: Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.

In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion.

In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis. . . .

This is the social background of the play.

[MUSIC]

The play is memory.

Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic.

In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings.

I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, my sister Laura and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.

He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for. There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than-life-size photograph over the mantel.

This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town. . . . The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words -

'Hello - Good-bye!' and no address.

I think the rest of the play will explain itself ...

[AMANDA's voice becomes audible through the portières.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'Où SONT LES NEIGES'.

He divides the portieres and enters the upstage area.

AMANDA and LAURA are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils. AMANDA faces the audience. TOM and LAURA are Seated in profile.

The interior has lit up softly and through the scrim we see AMANDA and LAURA seated at the table in the upstage area]

AMANDA [calling] Tom? Yes, Mother.

AMANDA: We can't say grace until you come to the table!

TOM: Coming, Mother. [He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.]

AMANDA [to her son]: Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew !chew! Animals have sections in their stomachs which enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are

supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lots of delicate flavours that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function !

[TOM deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and his chair back from the table.]

TOM: I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that makes me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening - spoils my appetite - all this discussion of - animals' secretion - salivary glands - mastication !

AMANDA [lightly]: Temperament like a Metropolitan star ! [He rises and crosses downstage.]

You're not excused from the table.

TOM: I'm getting a cigarette.

AMANDA: You smoke too much.

[LAURA rises.]

LAURA: I'll bring in the blancmangé.

[He remains standing with his cigarette by the portières during the following.]

AMANDA [rising]: No, sister, no, sister - you be the lady this time and I'll be the darkey

LAURA: I'm already up.

AMANDA: Resume your seat, little sister, I want you to stay fresh and pretty for gentleman callers!

LAURA: I'm not expecting any gentleman callers.

AMANDA [crossing out to kitchenette. Airily]: Sometimes they come when they are least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain -[Enters kitchenette.]

TOM: I know what's coming

LAURA: Yes. But let her tell it.

TOM: Again?

LAURA: She loves to tell it.

[AMANDA returns with bowl of dessert.]

AMANDA: One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain, your mother received seventeen! gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

TOM [remaining at portières]: How did you entertain those gentleman callers?

A M A N D A: I understood the art of conversation !

TOM: I bet you could talk.

AMANDA: Girls in those days knew how to talk, I can tell you.

TOM: Yes?

[IMAGE: AMANDA AS A GIRL ON A PORCH GREETING CALLERS.]

AMANDA: They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure although I wasn't alighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.

TOM: What did you talk about?

AMANDA: Things of importance going on in the world ! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar.

[She addresses Tom as though he were seated in the vacant chair at the table though he remains by portieres. He plays this scene as though he held the book.]

My callers were gentleman -all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta - planters and sons of planters!

[Tom motions for music and a spot of light on AMANDA. Her eyes lift, her face glows, her voice becomes rich and elegiac.

SCREEN LEGEND: 'Où SONT Les NEIGES']

There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank.

Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds.

There were the Cutrere brothers, Wesley and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux! He got in a quarrel with that wild Wainwright boy. They shot it out on the floor of Moon Lake Casino. Bates was shot through the stomach. Died in the ambulance on his way to Memphis. His widow was also well provided for, came into eight or ten thousand acres, that's all. She married him on the rebound - never loved her - carried my picture on him the night he died !And there was that boy that every girl in the Delta had set her cap for! That brilliant, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County!

TOM: What did he leave his widow?

AMANDA: He never married ! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies !

TOM: Isn't this the first you've mentioned that still survives ?

AMANDA: That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune - came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold!

And I could have been Mrs Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But - I picked your father !

LAURA [rising]: Mother, let me clear the table.

AMANDA: No, dear, you go in front and study your typewriter chart. Or practise your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty! It's almost time for our gentlemen callers to start arriving. [She flounces girlishly toward the kitchenette.] How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon?

[Tom throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan.]

LAURA [alone in the dining-room]: I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

AMANDA [reappearing, airily] What? Not one - not one? You must be joking!

[LAURA nervously echoes her laugh. She slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portières and draws them in gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face against the faded tapestry of the curtains.]

[MUSIC: 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE' UNDER FAINTLY. Lightly.]

Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true ! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

LAURA: It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain. ... [Tom utters another groan. LAURA glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catching a little.] Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid.

'I wonder,' she said, 'if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance?'

'No,' I said, 'Laura, my daughter, has been going to school every day for the past six weeks !'

'Excuse me,' she said. She took the attendance book out and there was your name, unmistakably printed, and all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school.

I still said, 'No, there must have been some mistake I There must have been some mix-up in the records !'

And she said, 'No - I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys ! The first time we gave a speed-test, she broke down completely - was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer' -while I was working at Famous and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those - Oh!

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet !

I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water !

Fifty dollars' tuition, all of our plans - my hopes and ambition for you - just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that. [LAURA draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet She crosses to the victrola and winds it up.]

What are you doing?

LAURA: Oh I [She releases the handle and returns to her seat.]

AMANDA: Laura, where have you been going when you've gone on pretending that you were going to business college ?

L A U R A: I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA: That's not true.

LAURA: It is. I just went walking.

AMANDA: Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA: All sorts of places - mostly in the park.

AMANDA: Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA: It was the lesser of two evils, Mother. [IMAGE: WINTER SCENE IN PARK.] I couldn't go back up. I threw up -on the floor !

AMANDA: From half past seven till after five every day you mean to tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted to make me think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?

LAURA: It wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get warmed up.

AMANDA: Inside where?

LAURA: I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the jewel-box, that big glass-house where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA: You did all this to deceive me, just for deception? [LAURA looks down.] Why?

LAURA: Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum !

AMANDA: Hush !

LAURA: I couldn't face it.

[Pause. A whisper of strings.

LEGEND: 'THE CRUST OF HUMILITY'.]

AMANDA [hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook]: So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? We won't have a business career - we've given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion ! [Laughs wearily.] What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife ! - stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life !

Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of !

It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course - some girls do marry!

[LAURA twists her hands nervously.]

Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA: Yes. I liked one once. [Rises.] I came across his picture a while ago.

AMANDA [with some interest]. He gave you his picture?

LAURA: No, it's in the year-book.

AMANDA: [disappointed]: Oh - a high-school boy.

[SCREEN IMAGE: JIM AS HIGH-SCHOOL HERO BEARING A SILVER CUP.]

LAURA: Yes. His name was Jim. [LAURA lifts the heavy annual from the claw-foot table.] Here he is in The Pirates of Penzance.

AMANDA [absently]: The what?

LAURA: The operetta the senior class put on. He had a wonderful voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the silver cup for debating !See his grin?

AMANDA [absently]: He must have had a jolly disposition.

LAURA: He used to call me - Blue Roses.

[IMAGE: BLUE ROSES.]

AMANDA: Why did he call you such a name as that?

LAURA: When I had that attack of pleurosis - he asked me what was the matter when I came back. I Said pleurosis he thought that I said Blue Roses ! So that's what he always called me after that. Whenever he saw me, he'd holler, 'Hello, Blue Roses ! I didn't care for the girl that he went out with. Emily Meisenbach. Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan. She never struck me, though, as being sincere. . . . It says in the Personal Section - they're engaged. That's - six years ago ! They must be married by now.

AMANDA: Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. [Gets up with aspark of revival.] Sister, that's what you'll do !

[LAURA utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.]

LAURA: But, Mother

AMANDA: Yes ? [Crossing to photograph.]

LAURA [in a tone of frightened apology]: I'm - crippled !

[IMAGE: SCREEN.]

AMANDA: Nonsense ! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect - hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it - develop charm - and vivacity and - charm! That's all you have to do ![She turns again to the photograph.] One thing your father had plenty of - was charm!

[Tom motions to the fiddle in the wings.]

A M A N D A: Ida Scott? This is Amanda Wingfield! We missed you at the D.A.R. last Monday! I said to myself: She's probably suffering with that sinus condition ! How is that sinus condition? Horrors ! Heaven have mercy !- You're a Christian martyr, yes, that's what you are, a Christian martyr !

Well, I just have happened to notice that your subscription to the Companion's about to expire! Yes, it expires with the next issue, honey !- just when that wonderful new serial by Bessie Mae Hopper is getting off to such an exciting start. Oh, honey, it's something that you can't miss !You remember how 'Gone With the Wind' took everybody by storm? You simply couldn't go out if you hadn't read it. All everybody talked was Scarlet O'Hara. Well, this is a book that critics already compare to Gone With the Wind. It's the 'Gone With the Wind' of the post-World War generation! - What? -Burning !- Oh, honey, don't let them bum, go take a look in the oven and I'll hold the wire! Heavens - I think she's hung up !

[DIM OUT]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'YOU THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH CONTINENTAL SHOEMAKERS?']

[Before the stage is lighted, the violent voices Of TOM and AMANDA are heard.

They are quarrelling behind the portières. In front of them stands LAURA with clenched hands and panicky expression. A clear pool of light on her figure throughout this scene.]

TOM: What in Christ's name am !

AMANDA [shrilly]: Don't you use that -

TOM: Supposed to do !

AMANDA: Expression !Not in my -

TOM: Ohhh! !

AMANDA: Presence ! Have you gone out of your senses?

TOM: I have, that's true, driven out !

AMANDA: What is the matter with you, you - big - big IDIOT !

TOM: Look !- I've got no thing, no single thing !

AMANDA: Lower Your Voice !

TOM: In my life here that I can call my OWN ! Everything is -

AMANDA: Stop that shouting !

TOM: Yesterday you confiscated my books ! You had the nerve to -

AMANDA: I took that horrible novel back to the library- yes ! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. [Tom laughs wildly.] I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them - [Tom laughs still more wildly.] BUT I WON'T ALLOW SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE ! NO, no, no, no, no !

TOM: House, house ! Who pays rent on it, who makes a slave of himself to -

AMANDA [fairly screeching]: Don't you DARE to -

TOM: No, no, I mustn't say things ! I've got to just -

AMANDA: Let me tell you-

TOM: I don't want to hear any more! [He tears the portières open. The upstage area is lit with a turgid smoky red glow.]

[AMANDA's hair is in metal curlers and she wears a very old bathrobe much too large for her slight figure, a relic of the faithless Mr Wingfield. An upright typewriter and a wild disarray of manuscripts are on the drop-leaf table. The quarrel was probably precipitated by his creative labour. A chair lying overthrown on the floor.

Their gesticulating shadows are cast on the ceiling by the fiery glow.]

AMANDA: You will hear more, you -

TOM: No, I won' t hear more, I'm going out !

AMANDA: You come right back in -

TOM: Out, out, out ! Because I'm -

A M A N D A: Come back here, Tom Wingfield ! I'm not through talking to you !

TOM: Oh, go -

LAURA [desperately]: Tom !

AMANDA: You're going to listen, and no more insolence from you ! I'm at the end of my patience !

[He comes back toward her.]

TOM: What do you think I'm at? Aren't I supposed to have any patience to reach the end of, Mother? I know, I know. It seems unimportant to you, what I'm doing - what I want to do - having a little difference between them ! You don't think that -

AMANDA: I think you've been doing things that you're ashamed of. That's why you act like this. I don't believe that you go every night to the movies. Nobody goes to the movies night after night. Nobody in their right mind goes to the movies as often as you pretend to. People don't go to the movies at nearly midnight, and movies don't let out at two a.m. Come in stumbling. Muttering to yourself like a maniac! You get three hours' sleep and then go to work. Oh, I can picture the way you're doing down there. Moping, dopping, because you're in no condition.

TOM [wildly]: No, I'm in no condition !

AMANDA: What right have you got to jeopardize your job - jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we'd manage if you were -

TOM: Listen ! You think I'm crazy about the warehouse? [He bonds fiercely toward her slight figure.] You think I'm in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-

five years down there in that - celotex interior! with - fluorescent - tubes! Look! I'd rather somebody picked up a crowbar and battered out my brains - than go back mornings! I go ! Every time you come in yelling.....

that God damn 'Rise and Shine!'- 'Rise and Shine!' I say to myself, 'How lucky dead people are ! 'But I get up. I go! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever! And you say self - selfs' all I ever think of. Why, listen, if self is what I thought of, Mother, I'd be where he is -G O N E ! [Pointing to fathers picture.] As far as the system of transportation reaches ! [He starts past her. She grabs his arm.] Don't grab at me, Mother !

AMANDA: Where are you going?

TOM: I'm going to the movies!

AMANDA: I don't believe that lie !

TOM [crouching toward her, overtowering her tiny figure. She backs away, gasping]: I'm going to opium dens ! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals' hang-outs, Mother. I've joined the Hogan gang, I'm a hired assassin, I carry a tommy-gun in a violin case! I run a string of cat-houses in the Valley! They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield, I'm leading a double-life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic tsar of the underworld, Mother. I go to gambling casinos, I spin away fortunes on the roulette table ! I wear a patch over one eye and a false moustache, sometimes I put on green whiskers. On those occasions they call me -El Diablo ! Oh, I could tell you things to make you sleepless ! My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They're going to blow us all sky-high some night ! I'll be glad, very happy, and so will you ! You'll go up, up on a broomstick, over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers! You ugly - babbling old - witch. [He goes through a series of violent, clumsy movements, seizing his overcoat, lunging to do door, pulling it fiercely open. The women watch him, aghast. His arm catches in the sleeve of the coat as he struggles to pull it on. For a moment he is pinioned by the bulky garment. With an outraged groan he tears the coat of again, splitting the shoulder of it, and hurls it across the room. It strikes against the shelf of Laura's glass collection, there is a tinkle of shattering glass. LAURA cries out as if wounded.]

[MUSIC. LEGEND: 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE'.]

L A U R A [shrilly] : My glass ! - menagerie. . . . [She covers her face and turns away.]

[But AMANDA is still stunned and stupefied by the 'ugly witch' so that she barely notices this occurrence. Now she recovers her speech.]

AMANDA [in an awful voice]: I won't speak to you - until you apologize ! [She crosses through portières and draws them together behind her. TOM is left with LAURA. LAURA Clings weakly to the mantel with her face averted. TOM stares at her stupidly for a moment. Then he crosses to shelf. Drops awkwardly on his knees to collect the fallen glass, glancing at LAURA as if he would speak but couldn't.]

'The Glass Menagerie' steals in as

THE SCENE DIMS OUT

The interior is dark. Faint light in the alley.

A deep-voiced bell in a church is tolling the hour of five as the scene commences.

[Tom appears at the top of the alley. After each solemn boom of the bell in the tower, he shakes a little noise-maker or rattle as

if to express the tiny spasm of man in contrast to the sustained power and dignity of the Almighty. This and the unsteadiness of his advance make it evident that he has been drinking.

As he climbs Me few steps to the fire-escape landing light steals up inside. Laura appears in night-dress observing Tom's empty bed in the front room.

TOM fishes in his pockets for door-key removing a motley assortment of articles in the search, including a perfect shower

of movie-ticket stubs and an empty bottle. At last he finds the key, but just as he is about to insert it, it slips from his fingers. He strikes a match and crouches below the door.]

TOM [bitterly]:: One crack -and it falls through !

[LAURA opens the door.]

LAURA: Tom ! Tom, what are you doing?

TOM: Looking for a door-key.

LAURA: Where have you been all this time?

TOM: I have been to the movies.

LAURA: All this time at the movies?

TO M: There was a very long programme. There was a Garbo picture and a Mickey Mouse and a travelogue and a newsreel and a preview of coming attractions. And there was an organ solo and a collection for the milk-fund - simultaneously - which ended up in a terrible fight between a fat lady and an usher !

LAURA [innocently]: Did you have to stay through everything?

TOM: Of course ! And, oh, I forgot ! There was a big stage show ! The headliner on this stage show was Malvolio the

Magician. He performed wonderful tricks, many of them, such as pouring water back and forth between pitchers.

First it turned to wine and then it turned to beer and then it turned to whisky. I knew it was whisky it finally turned

into because he needed somebody to come up out of the audience to help him, and I came up - both shows ! It was

Kentucky Straight Bourbon. A very generous fellow, he gave souvenirs. (He pulls from his back pocket a shimmering

rainbow-coloured scarf.) He gave me this. This is his magic scarf. You can have it, Laura. You wave it over a canary

cage and you get a bowl of gold- fish. You wave it over the gold-fish bowl and they fly away canaries. . . . But the

wonderfullest trick of all was the coffin trick. We nailed him into a coffin and he got out of the coffin without removing one nail, [He has come inside.] There is a trick that would come in handy for me - get me out of this 2 by 4 situation ! [Flops on to a bed and starts removing shoes.]

LAURA: Tom ? Shhh!

TO M: What're you shushing me for?

LAURA: You'll wake up mother.

TOM: Goody, goody ! Pay 'er back for all those 'Rise an' Shines'. [Lies down, groaning.] You know it don't take much intelligence to get yourself into a nailed-up coffin, Laura. But who in hell ever got himself out of one without removing one nail?

[As if in answer, the father's grinning photograph lights up.]

Tom: No. No, Mother, just coffee.

AMANDA: You can't put in a day's work on an empty stomach. You've got ten minutes - don't gulp ! Drinking

too hot liquids makes cancer of the stomach. Put cream in.

TOM: No, thank you.

AMANDA: To cool it.

TOM . No! No, thank you, I want it black.

AMANDA: I know, but it's not good for you. We have to do all that we can to build ourselves up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is - each other. . . . That's why it's so important to - Tom, ! - I sent out your sister so I could discuss something with you. If you hadn't spoken I would have spoken to you. [Sits down.]

TOM [gently]: What is it, Mother, that you want to discuss?

AMANDA: Laura!

[Tom puts his cup down slowly.]

LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'LAURA.'

MUSIC: ' THE GLASS MENAGERIE']

TOM: - Oh. - Laura ...

AMANDA [touching his sleeve] You know how Laura is. So quiet but - still water runs deep ! She notices things and I think she - broods about them. [Tom looks up.] A few days ago I came in and she was crying.

TOM: What about?

AMANDA: YOU.

TOM: Me?

AMANDA: She has an idea that you're not happy here

TOM: What gave her that idea?

AMANDA: What gives her any idea? However, you do act strangely. ! - I'm not criticizing, understand that! I know your ambitions do not lie in the warehouse, that like everybody in the whole wide world - you've had to make sacrifices, but - Tom - Tom - life's not easy, it calls for - Spartan endurance ! There's so many things in my heart that I cannot describe to you ! I've never told you but - I loved your father. . . .

TOM [gently] : I know that, Mother.

AMANDA: And you - when I see you taking after his ways ! Staying out late - and - well, you had been drinking the night you were in that - terrifying condition ! Laura says that you hate the apartment and that you go out nights to get away from it! Is that true, Tom?

TOM: No. You say there's so much in your heart that you can't describe to me. That's true of me, too. There's so much in my heart that I can't describe to "you! So let's respect each other's -

AMANDA: But, why - why, Tom - am you always so restless? Where do you go to, nights?

TOM: I - go to the movies.

AMANDA: Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?

TO M: I go to the movies because - I like adventure

Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies.

AMANDA: But, Tom, you go to the movies entirely too much !

TOM: I like a lot of adventure.

[AMANDA looks baffled, then hurt As the familiar inquisition resumes he becomes hard and impatient again. AMANDA SLIPS back into her querulous attitude towards him.

IMAGE ON SCREEN: SAILING VESSEL WITH JOLLY ROGER.]

AMANDA: Most young men find adventure in their careers.

TOM: Then most young men are not employed in a warehouse.

AMANDA: The world is full of young men employed in warehouses and offices and factories.

TOM: Do all of them find adventure in their careers?

AMANDA: They do or they do without it! Not everybody has a craze for adventure.

TOM: Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse !

AMANDA: Man is by instinct! Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have got away from ! It belongs to animals ! Christian adults don't want it !

TOM: , What do Christian adults want, then, Mother?

AMANDA: Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit ! Only animals have to satisfy instincts ! Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs ! Than monkeys - pigs

TOM: I reckon they're not.

AMANDA: You're joking. However, that isn't what I wanted to discuss.

TOM [rising] I haven't much time.

AMANDA [pushing his shoulders] Sit down.

TOM: You want me to punch in red at the warehouse, Mother?

AMANDA: You have five minutes. I want to talk about Laura.

[LEGEND: 'PLANS AND PROVISIONS'.]

TOM: All right! What about Laura?

AMANDA: We have to be making some plans and provisions for her. She's older than you, two years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along.

TOM: I guess she's the type that people call home girls.

AMANDA: There's no such type, and if there is, it's a pity ! That is unless the home is hers, with a husband !

TOM: What?

AMANDA: Oh, I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my face ! It's terrifying ! More and more you remind me of your father ! He was out all hours without explanation ! - Then left ! Good-bye ! And me with the bag to hold. I saw that letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you're dreaming of. I'm not standing here blindfolded.

Very well, then. Then, do it ! But not till there's somebody to take your place.

TOM: What do you mean?

AMANDA: I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independent ?- why, then you'll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea, whichever way the wind blows you !

But until that time you've got to look out for your sister. I don't say me because I'm old and don't matter - I say for your sister because she's young and dependent.

I put her in business college - a dismal failure ! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach.

I took her over to the Young Peoples League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out records. What kind of a life is that for a girl to lead?

TOM: What can I do about it?

AMANDA: Overcome Selfishness ! Self, self, self is all that you ever think of !

[Tom springs up and crosses to get his coat. It is ugly and bulky He pulls on a cap with earmuffs.]

Where is your muffler? Put your wool muffler on ! [He snatches it angrily from the closet and tosses it around his neck and pulls both ends tight.] Tom ! I haven't said what I had in mind to ask you.

TOM: I'm too late to

AMANDA [catching his arm - very importunately. Then shyly]: Down at the warehouse, aren't there some - nice young men?

TOM: No !

AMANDA: There must be - some

TOM: Mother [Gesture.]

AMANDA: Find out one that's clean-living - doesn't drink and - ask him out for sister !

TOM: What?

AMANDA: For sister ! To meet ! Get acquainted

TOM [stamping to door]: Oh, my go- osh !

AMANDA: Will you? [He opens door. Imploringly.] Will you? [He starts down.] Will you? Will you, dear?

TOM [calling back]: YES !

AMANDA [her voice trembling and her eyes suddenly filling with tears]: Happiness ! Good fortune !

[The violin rises and the stage dims out.]

CURTAIN

[IMAGE: HIGH SCHOOL HERO.]

TOM: And so the following evening I brought Jim home to dinner. I had known Jim slightly in high school. In high school Jim was a hero. He had tremendous Irish good nature and vitality with the scrubbed and polished look of white chinaware. He seemed to move in a continual spotlight. He was a star in basket-ball, captain of the debating club, president of the senior class and the glee club and he sang the male lead in the annual light operas. He was always running or bounding, never just walking. He seemed always at the point of defeating the law of gravity. He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that you would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of the White House by the time he was thirty. But Jim apparently ran into more interference after his graduation from Soldan. His speed had definitely slowed. Six years after he left high school he was holding a job that wasn't much better than mine.

[IMAGE: CLERK.]

He was the only one at the warehouse with whom I was on friendly terms. I was valuable to him as someone who could remember his former glory, who had seen him win basketball games and the silver cup in debating. He knew of my secret practice of retiring to a cabinet of the washroom to work on poems when business was slack in the warehouse. He called me Shakespeare. And while the other boys in the warehouse regarded me with suspicious hostility, Jim took a humorous attitude toward me. Gradually his attitude affected the others, their hostility wore off and they also began to smile at me as people smile at an oddly fashioned dog who trots across their path at some distance.

I knew that Jim and Laura had known each other at Soldan, and I had heard Laura speak admiringly of his voice. I didn't know if Jim remembered her or not. In high school Laura had been as unobtrusive as Jim had been astonishing. If he did remember Laura, it was not as my sister, for when I asked him to dinner, he grinned and said, 'You know, Shakespeare, I never thought of you as having folks !'

He was about to discover that I did.

[LIGHT UPSTAGE.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'THE ACCENT OF A COMING FOOT'.

Friday evening. It is about five o'clock of a late spring evening which comes 'scattering poems in the sky.'

A delicate lemony light is in the Wingfield apartment.

AMANDA has worked like a Turk in preparation for the gentleman caller. The results are astonishing. The new floor lamp with its rose-silk shade is in place, a coloured paper lantern conceals the broken light fixture in the ceiling, new billowing white curtains are at the windows, chintz covers are on chairs and sofa, a pair of new sofa pillows make their initial appearance.

Open boxes and tissue paper are scattered on the floor.

LAURA stands in the middle with lifted arms while AMANDA crouches before her, adjusting the hem of the new dress, devout and ritualistic. The dress is coloured and designed by memory. The arrangement of LAURA's hair is changed; it is softer and more becoming. A fragile, unearthly prettiness has come out in LAURA: she is like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting.]

AMANDA [impatiently]: Why are you trembling?

LAURA: Mother, you've made me so nervous !

A M A N D A: How have I made you nervous ?

AMANDA: All pretty girls are a trap, a pretty trap, and men expect them to be !

[LEGEND: ' A PRETTY TRAP']

Now look at yourself, young lady. This is the prettiest you will ever be ! I've got. to fix myself now ! You're going to be surprised by your mother's appearance ! [She crosses through portières, humming gaily.]

[LAURA moves slowly to the long mirror and stares solemnly at herself. A wind blows the white curtains inward in a slow, graceful motion and with a faint, sorrowful sighing.]

AMANDA [off stage]: It isn't dark enough yet. [LAURA turns slowly before the mirror with a troubled look.]

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' THIS IS MY SISTER: CELEBRATE HER WITH STRINGS!' MUSIC.]

AMANDA [laughing, off]: I'm going to show you something. I'm going to make a spectacular appearance I

LAURA: What is it, Mother?

AMANDA: Possess your soul in patience ? you will see !

Something I've resurrected from that old trunk! Styles haven't changed so terribly much after all.

[She parts the portières.]

Now just look at your mother !

[She wears a girlish frock of yellowed voile with a blue silk sash. She carries a bunch of jonquils - the legend of her youth is nearly revived.]

[Feverishly]: This is the dress in which I led the cotillion, won the cakewalk twice at Sunset Hill, wore one spring to the Governor's ball in Jackson !

See how I sashayed around the ballroom, Laura?

[She raises her skirt and does a mincing step around the room.]

I wore it on Sundays for my gentlemen callers ! I had it on the day I met your father I had malaria fever all that spring. The change of climate from East Tennessee to the Delta - weakened resistance I had a little temperature all the time - not enough to be serious - just enough to make me restless and giddy I Invitations poured in - parties all over the Delta! - 'Stay in bed,' said mother, 'you have fever!' - but I just wouldn't. - I took quinine but kept on going, going ! Evenings, dances ! - Afternoons, long, long rides! Picnics. - lovely! - So lovely, that country in May. - All lacy with dogwood, literally flooded with jonquils! - That was the spring I had the craze for jonquils. Jonquils became an absolute obsession. Mother said, 'Honey, there's no more room for jonquils.' And still I kept on bringing in more jonquils. Whenever, wherever I saw them, I'd say, "Stop ! Stop! I see jonquils ! I made the young men help me gather the jonquils ! It was a joke, Amanda and her jonquils ! Finally there were no more vases to hold them, every available space was filled with jonquils. No vases to hold them? All right, I'll hold them myself - And then I - [She stops in front of the picture. M U S I C.] met your father ! Malaria fever and jonquils and then - this - boy....

[She switches on the rose-coloured lamp.]

I hope they get here before it starts to rain.

[She crosses upstage and places the jonquils in bowl on table.]

I gave your brother a little extra change so he and Mr O'Connor could take the service car home.

LAURA [with altered look]: What did you say his name was?

AMANDA: O'Connor.

LAURA: What is his first name?

AMANDA: I don't remember. Oh, yes, I do. It was - Jim !

[LAURA sways slightly and catches hold of a chair.

LEGEND ONSCREEN: ' NOT JIM !']

LAURA [faintly]: Not - Jim!

AMANDA: Yes, that was it, it was Jim ! I've never known a Jim, that wasn't nice !

[MUSIC OMINOUS.]

LAURA: Yes, we - spoke to each other.

JIM: When did you recognize me?

LAURA: Oh, right away !

JIM: Soon as I came in the door?

LAURA: When I heard your name I thought it was probably you. I knew that Tom used to know you a little in high school. So when you came in the door Well, then I was - sure.

JIM: Why didn't you say something, then?

LAURA [breathlessly]: I didn't know what to say, I was - too surprised !

JIM: For goodness' sakes I You know, this sure is funny !

LAURA: Yes I Yes, isn't it, though ...

JIM: Didn't we have a class in something together?

LAURA: Yes, we did.

JIM: What class was that?

LAURA: It was - singing - Chorus !

JIM: Aw !

LAURA: I sat across the aisle from you in the Aud.

JIM: Aw!

LAURA: Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays.

JIM: Now I remember - you always came in late.

LAURA: Yes, it was so hard for me, getting upstairs. I had that brace on my leg - it clumped so loud I

JIM: I never heard any clumping.

LAURA [wincing at the recollection]: To me it sounded like thunder !

JIM: Well, well, well, I never even noticed.

LAURA: And everybody was seated before I came in. I had to walk in front of all those people. My seat was in the back row. I had to go clumping all the way up the aisle with everyone watching I

JIM: You shouldn't have been self-conscious.

LAURA: I know, but I was. It was always such a relief when the singing started.

JIM: Aw, yes, I've placed you now I I used to call you Blue Rom. How was it that I got started calling you that?

LAURA: I was out of school a little while with pleurosis. When I came back you asked me what was the matter. I said I had pleurosis - you thought I said Blue Roses That's what you always called me after that I

JIM: I hope you didn't mind.

LAURA: Oh, no - I liked it. You see, I wasn't acquainted with many - people....

JIM: As I remember you sort of stuck by yourself.

LAURA: I - I - never have had much luck at - making friends.

JIM: I don't see why you wouldn't.

LAURA:'. Well, I - started out badly.

JIM: You mean being -

LAURA: Yes, it sort of - stood between me -

JIM: You shouldn't have let it !

LAURA: I know, but it did, and -

JIM: You were shy with people !

LAURA: I tried not to be but never could -

JIM: Overcome it?

LAURA: No, I - I never could !

JIM: I guess being shy is something you have to work out of
kind of gradually.

LAURA [sorrowfully]: Yes - I guess it -

JIM: Takes time !

LAURA: Yes -

JIM - People are not so dreadful when you know them. That's what you have to remember ! And everybody has

problems, not just you, but practically everybody has got some problems. You think of yourself as having the only

problems, as being the only one who is disappointed. But just look around you and you will see lots of people as

disappointed as you are. For instance, I hoped when I was going to high-school that I would be further along at this

time, six years later, than I am now - You remember that wonderful write-up I had in The Torch?

LAURA:: Yes ! [She rises and crosses to table.]

JIM: It said I was bound to succeed in anything I went into!

[LAURA returns with the annual.] Holy Jeez ! The Torch ! [He accepts it reverently. They smile across it with

mutual wonder. LAURA crouches beside him and they begin to turn through it. LAURA's shyness is dissolving in his warmth.]

LAURA:: Here you are in The Pirates of Penzance!

JIM: [wistfully] : I sang the baritone lead in that operetta.

LAURA [raptly]: So - beautifully!

JIM [protesting]: Aw -

LAURA: Yes, yes - beautifully - beautifully !

JIM: You heard me?

LAURA: All three times !

JIM: No !

LAURA: Yes !

JIM: All three performances?

LAURA [looking down]: Yes.

JIM: Why?

LAURA: I - wanted to ask you to - autograph my programme.

JIM: Why didn't you ask me to?

LAURA: You were always surrounded by your own friends so much that I never had a chance to.

JIM: You should have just

LAURA: Well, I - thought you might think I was

JIM: Thought I might think you was - what?

LAURA: Oh

JIM [with reflective relish]: I was beleaguered by females In those days.

LAURA: You were terribly popular !

JIM: Yeah

LAURA: You had such a - friendly way

JIM: I was spoiled in high school.

LAURA: Everybody - liked you !

JIM: Including you?

LAURA: I - yes, I - I did, too - [She gently closes the book in her lap.]

JIM: Well, well, well ! - Give me that programme, Laura. [She hands it to him. He signs it with a flourish.] There you are - better late than never !

LAURA: Oh, I - what a - surprise!

JIM: My signature isn't worth very much right now. But some day - maybe - it will increase in value ! Being disappointed is one thing and being discouraged is something else. I am disappointed but I am not discouraged. I'm twenty-three years old. How old are you?

LAURA:: I'll be twenty-four in June.

JIM: That's not old age!

LAURA: No, but

JIM: You finished high school?

LAURA [with difficulty]: I didn't go back.

JIM: You mean you dropped out?

LAURA: I made bad grades in my final examinations. [She rises and replaces the book and the programme. Her voice strained.] How is - Emily Meisenbach getting along?

JIM: Oh, that kraut-head!

LAURA:: Why do you call her that ?

J I M: That's what she was.

LAURA: You're not still - going with her?

J I M: I never see her.

LAURA: It said in the Personal Section that you were engaged!

J I M: I know, but I wasn't impressed by that -propaganda I

LAURA: It wasn't - the truth?

J I M: Only in Emily's optimistic opinion !

J I M [laughs gently.]: What are you doing now?

LAURA: I don't do anything - much. Oh, please don't think I sit around doing nothing! My glass collection takes up a good deal of time. Glass is something you have to take good care of

JIM: What did you say - about glass?

LAURA: Collection I said - I have one - [she clears her throat and turns away, acutely shy.]

JIM: [abruptly]: You know what I judge to be the trouble with you?

Inferiority complex I know what that is? That's what they call it when someone low-rates himself !

I understand it because I had it, too. Although my case was not so aggravated as yours seems to be. I had it until I took up public speaking, developed my voice, and learned that I had an aptitude for science. Before that time I never thought of myself as being outstanding in any way whatsoever I

Now I've never made a regular study of it, but I have a friend who says I can analyse people better than doctors that make a profession of it. I don't claim that to be necessarily true, but I can sure guess a person's psychology, Laura I [Takes out his gum] Excuse me, Laura. I always take it out when the flavour is gone. I'll use this scrap of paper to wrap it in. I know how it is to get it stuck on a shoe.

Yep - that's what I judge to be your principal trouble. A lack of amount of faith in yourself as a person. You don't have the proper amount of faith in yourself. I'm basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observations I've made. For instance that clumping you thought was so awful in high school. You say that you even dreaded to walk into class. You see what you did? You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I know was practically non-existent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even! Magnified thousands of times by imagination !

You know what my strong advice to you is? Think of yourself as superior in some way!

LAURA: In what way would I think?

JIM: Why, man alive, Laura! just look about you a little. What do you see? A world full of common people! All of 'em born and all of 'em going to die !

Which of them has one-tenth of your good points I Or mine ! Or anyone else's, as far as that goes
- Gosh !

Everybody excels in some one thing. Some in many !

[Unconsciously glances at himself in the mirror.]

All you've got to do is discover in what! Take me, for instance.

[He adjusts his tie at the mirror.]

My interest happens to lie in electro-dynamics. I'm taking a course in radio engineering at night school, Laura, on top of a fairly responsible job at the warehouse. I'm taking that course and studying public speaking.

LAURA: Ohhhh.

JIM: Because I believe in the future of television !

[Turning back to her.]

I wish to be ready to go up right along with it. Therefore

I'm planning to get in on the ground floor. In fact I've already made the right connexions and all that remains is for the industry itself to get under way I Full steam

[His eyes are starry.]

Knowledge - Zzzzzp ! Money - Zzzzzzp I - Power! That's the cycle democracy is built on I

[His attitude is convincingly dynamic. LAURA stares at him, even her shyness eclipsed in her absolute wonder. He suddenly grins.]

I guess you think I think a lot of myself !

LAURA: No - o-o-o, !

JIM: Now how about you? Isn't there something you, take more interest in than anything else?

LAURA: Well, I do - as I said - have my - glass collection [A peal of girlish laughter from du kitchen]

JIM: I'm not right sure I know what you're talking about What kind of glass is it?

LAURA: Little articles of it, they're ornaments mostly I

Most of them are little animals made out of glass, the tiniest little animals in the world. Mother calls them A

JIM: Still I'm awfully sorry that I was the cause.

LA U R A [smiling] I'll just imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less - freakish !

[They both laugh.]

Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don't have horns. .

JIM: Ha-ha, that's very funny !

[Suddenly serious]

I'm glad to see that you have a sense of humour. You know - you're - well - very different !
Surprisingly different from anyone else I know !

[His wire become soft and hesitant with a genuine feeling]

Do you mind me telling you that?

[LAURA is abashed beyond speech]

I mean it in a nice way ...

[LAURA nods shyly, looking away.]

You make me feel sort of - I don't know how to put it ! I'm usually pretty good at expressing things, but This is something that I don't know how to say !

[LAURA touches her throat and clears it - turns the unicorn in her hands. Even softer.]

Has anyone ever told you that you were pretty?

[PAUSE: MUSIC.

LAURA looks up slowly with wonder and shakes her head.]

Well, you are! In a very different way from anyone else. And all the nicer because of the difference, too.

[His voice becomes low and husky. LA U R A turns away, nearly faint with the novelty of her emotions.]

I wish that you were my sister. I'd teach you to have some confidence in yourself. The different people are not like other people, but being different is nothing to be ashamed of. Because other people are not such wonderful people. They're one hundred times one thousand. You're one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They're common as - weeds, -but - you - well, you're - Blue Roses!

[IMAGE ON SCREEN: BLUE ROSES.

MUSIC CHANGES.]

LAURA: But blue is wrong for - roses...

JIM: It's right for you ! - You're - pretty !

LAURA: In what respect am I pretty?

JIM: In all respects - believe me ! Your eyes - your hair are pretty! Your hands are pretty !

[He catches hold of her hand.]

You think I'm making this up because I'm invited to dinner and have to be nice. Oh, I could do that ! I could put on an act for you, Laura, and say lots of things without being very sincere. But this time I am. I'm talking to you sincerely. I happened to notice you had this inferiority complex that keeps you from feeling comfortable with people. Somebody needs to build your confidence up and make you proud instead of shy and turning away and - blushing - Somebody -ought to - Ought to - kiss you, Laura !

[His hand slips slowly up her arm to her shoulder.

MUSIC SWELLS TUMULTUOUSLY

He suddenly turns her about and kisses her on the lips.

When he releases her, LAURA sinks on the sofa with a bright, dazed look.

JIM backs away and fishes in his pocket for a cigarette.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: ' SOUVENIR'.]

Stumble-john !

[He lights the cigarette, avoiding her look.