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## Streetcar named desire analysis scene 3

A Streetcar Named Desire written by Tennessee Williams is set in the French Quarter of New Orleans. The year is 1947 - the same year in which the play was written. All of the action of A Streetcar Named Desire takes place in on the first floor of a two-bedroom apartment. The set is designed so that the audience can also see "outside" and observe characters on the street. Stanley Kowalski is a gruff, crude, yet charismatic blue-collar worker. During the World War II, he was a Master Sergeant in the Engineers' Corps. He likes bowling, booze, poker, and sex. (Not necessarily in that order.) His wife, Stella Kowalski, is a good-natured (though often submissive) wife who was raised on a wealthy Southern estate that fell on hard times. She left behind her "proper," upper-class background and embraced a more hedonistic life with her "low brow" husband. At the beginning of Act One, they seem poor but happy. And even though Stella is pregnant, and their cramped apartment is going to become even more crowded, one gets the sense that Mr. and Mrs. Kowalski might be content for decades. (But then that wouldn't be much of a play, would it?) Conflict arrives in the form of Blanche Dubois, Stella's older sister. The play begins with the arrival of Blanche Dubois, a woman who bears many secrets. She has recently given up on her deceased family's debt-ridden estate. Because she has nowhere else to go, she is forced to move in with Stella, much to the annoyance of Stanley. In the stage directions, Tennessee Williams describes Blanche in a way that sums up her character's predicament as she looks at her lower class surroundings: Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting. She is faintly dressed in a white suit with fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat... Her delicate beauty must avoid strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth. Even though she is financially downtrodden, Blanche maintains the appearance of elegance. She is only five years older than her sister (around age 35 to 40), and yet she obsessed with properly lit rooms. She doesn't want to be seen in direct sunlight (at least not by gentlemen callers) because she longs to preserve her youth and beauty. When Williams compares Blanche to a moth, the reader immediately gets the sense that this is a woman that is drawn towards disaster, in the same way a moth unwittingly destroys itself when it is drawn to the flame. Why is she so psychologically frail? That's one of the mysteries of Act One. When Blanche arrives at the apartment, her sister Stella has mixed feelings. She is happy to see her older sister, yet Blanche's arrival makes Stella feel very self-conscious because her living conditions pale in comparison to the home in which they once lived, a place named Belle Reve. Stella notices that Blanche seems very stressed, and finally Blanche explains that after all of their older relatives passed away, she was no longer able to afford the property. Blanche envies Stella's youth, beauty, and self-control. Stella says that she envies her sister's energy, but many of her comments reveal that Stella knows that something is wrong with her sister. Stella wants to help her impoverished (yet snobby) sister, but she knows that it won't be easy to fit Blanche into their home. Stella loves Stanley and Blanche, but they are both strong-willed and used to getting what they want. Towards the end of the first scene, Stanley returns from work and meets Blanche Dubois for the first time. He undresses in front of her, changing out of his sweaty shirt, and thus creating the first of many moments of sexual tension. At first, Stanley behaves in a friendly manner; he non-judgmentally asks her if she will be staying with them. For the moment, he does not display any sign of annoyance or aggression to Blanche (but that will all change by Scene Two). Feeling very casual and free to be himself, Stanley says: STANLEY: I'm afraid I'll strike you as being the unrefined type. Stella's spoke of you a good deal. You were married once, weren't you? Blanche replies that she was married but that the "boy" (her young husband) died. She then exclaims that she is going to be sick. Scene One concludes the audience/reader is left wondering what tragic events befell Blanche Dubois and her ill-fated husband. Williams redecorates the kitchen (in his stage directions) for a night of poker. There's an electric bulb with a vivid green shade, the men wear solid colors ("they are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and direct and powerful as the primary colors"), and there's a print by Van Gogh on the wall. So we know things are about to get weird. It's called "atmosphere." The men are drinking whiskey and eating watermelon.Stanley declares early on that "nothing belongs on a poker table but cards, chips and whiskey." It seems he means business.Mitch says he has to go home pretty soon. Stanley tells him to shut up, but Mitch retorts that he's got a sick mother. All the other men are married, explains Mitch, but he'll be alone once his mother dies.Stanley isn't exactly sympathetic. He tells Mitch to "Hurry back and we'll fix you a sugar-tit." (That's Kowalski for "find you a girl to sleep with.")Mitch heads for the bathroom and Steve tells a crude joke.Stanley, still irate and also drunk, harasses him to hurry up and deal.Stella and Blanche get back from their night out, just in time for a dramatic encounter. Blanche is feeling "hot and frazzled." What's new?Stanley welcomes Stella home with a loud, "Where you been?"They watched a show.Blanche wants to watch the card game, but Stanley isn't having it. He tells them to go upstairs to see Eunice.Stella exclaims that it's 2:30 a.m. The boys have been at their game for a long time, and could they finish up after one more hand?Stanley responds by slapping Stella on the thigh with one hand, which is Kowalski for "No."The men laugh and Stella goes into the bedroom with Blanche, remarking that she hates when he does that "in front of people." Blanche and Mitch run into each other at the bathroom door. (Ah, romance.)Mitch makes an "awkward courtesy" and heads back to the card table. He's still carrying the bathroom towel, though, and, when he realizes it, he shyly hands it back to Stella.Blanche looks at him, as Williams puts it, "with a certain interest." And we all know what that means.Is he married? Blanche wants to know.No.What does he do? (She's unbuttoning her blouse.)Stella says he's "on the precision bench in the spare parts department." We don't know what that means any more than you do, but we get the feeling it's not the most romantic job title for a potential suitor.Blanche thinks that there is something "superior" in Mitch (compared to the other crass men). Stella agrees, but then says that Stanley is the only one at the plant who's likely to get somewhere.Blanche responds that she sees no stamp of genius on Stanley's forehead, but Stella retorts it's not on his forehead.What she means is that it isn't about genius, it's about his drive to succeed.Stanley's words break in on their gossip. He yells, "You hens cut out that conversation in there!"Stella heads to the bathroom, while Blanche turns on the radio. Rumba music starts to play.Stanley yells for them to turn it off, but Steve says to let the girls have their music.Stanley jumps up and turns the radio off himself. He sees Blanche, now half-dressed, in the bedroom chair. She stares back at him without flinching. He returns to playing cards.The men are arguing over what the wild card is.Mitch gets up to leave the game; the other guys are mad because he's leaving while he's winning. (To anyone familiar with cards, this is not surprising. Some think it's poor form to win and leave a table before the game's over.)Mitch heads for the bathroom. Again.He runs into Blanche though, who is now wearing her red satin robe. Needless to say, he lingers and chats for a bit (with the excuse of waiting for the occupied bathroom).Blanche bums a cig from him, and he shows her his cigarette case, with a poetry inscription that Blanche recognizes is from a Mrs. Browning sonnet. (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, by the way: "And if God choose, / I shall but love thee better—after—death").Mitch explains that the case was given to him by a girl who's now dead. Alarm bells should be ringing. You've heard a similar history before.Blanche is genuinely touched and intrigued. She says, in her eloquent Southern way, "Sorrow makes for sincerity, I think."She also slips up in her conversation a bit... apparently she's been out drinking.Stanley, from the other room, hollers for Mitch.Mitch says to deal him out, he's talking to Miss—(he doesn't know her last name).DuBois, answers Blanche. She explains that her name means "white woods." "Like an orchard in spring!" she informs him.Mitch asks if she's French.She says "French by extraction." Her American ancestors were French Huguenots.Mitch asks if she's Stella's sister (a seemingly stupid question, but we get the impression he's a bit flustered at the moment).Yes, says Blanche, Stella's her precious little sister, even though she's actually somewhat older than Blanche. Oh, ha, ha, how marvelous. Blanche asks Mitch to do her a favor and place a Chinese light-shade over the bulb. You might want to remember that she's like a moth and can't stand too much light.Blanche says she bought the lamp-shade "at a Chinese shop on Bourbon."They keep up their semi-flirtatious small-talk.Blanche says she can't stand rudeness or vulgarity, and Mitch, naturally, becomes self-conscious.Blanche then remarks that she's easily adaptable.They chat about her profession as an English teacher.Stanley, meanwhile, continues to bellow for Mitch to come back to the table.Mitch ignores him for the time being.Blanche keeps Mitch's attention with words about their rich literary heritage. And teaching English. "In the spring, it's touching to notice them [her students] making their first discovery of love!" And the flirtation continues.Stella enters from the bathroom.Blanche turns on the radio, and it begins to play a German waltz. Blanche dances with "romantic gestures," and our awkward Mitch tries to do the same. But he just ends up looking like a dancing bear.Stanley rushes in, fuming, and tosses the radio out the window.Stella calls him a drunken animal and goes into the poker table, demanding that everyone go home.Stanley follows Stella. He backs her offstage, where we hear the sound of a blow. Stella cries out.Blanche screams and runs into the kitchen. Mayhem ensues.Blanche cries out, "My sister is going to have a baby!"Stanley is forced into the bedroom by the other men. He finally goes limp.Out of sight, Stella can be heard wailing, "I want to go away, I want to go away!"Mitch, always the one for dim-witted comments, blames the poker game. Blanche speedily packs a bag of Stella's clothes. Then she leads her sister outside and upstairs to Eunice's.Stanley acts as if he's just woken up. He asks dully what's happened.Mitch tells Stanley that he "blew his top."Stanley asks for some water.The men give him water, all right. They put him in the shower. Then they rush out, taking their winnings with them.The blues start playing again, from down the street.Stanley comes out of the bathroom dripping water and wearing "clinging wet polka dot drawers." "Stella!" he cries. "My baby doll's left me!"He uses the phone to call upstairs to Eunice.Eunice must not give him the answer he wants, because he flings the phone to the floor.Stanley then stumbles outside, half-dressed, onto the pavement in front of the building. There, he "throws back his head like a baying hound and bellows his wife's name: 'Stella! Stella, sweetheart! Stella! Stell-lahhhhhh!'"This scene is justly famous, and it's one of Marlon Brando's claims to fame. And it looks like this.Anyhow, Eunice calls down to Stanley from the door of her apartment, saying, "You can't beat on a woman an' then call 'er back!"Stella comes outside and "slips down the rickety stairs in her robe." Her hair is tousled and she's been crying.Then, as Williams writes, "They stare at each other. Then they come together with low, animal moans."The scene continues... "He falls to his knees on the steps and presses his face to her belly [...] She catches his head and raises him level with her."Stanley then sweeps Stella off her feet and carries her into the dark flat.Blanche comes downstairs, confused and asking, "Where is my little sister? Stella? Stella?"She hovers outside the flat and then "catches her breath as if struck."She looks right and left down the street, like a frantic animal.The music fades and good ol' Mitch shows up. He tells Blanche not to worry, since this is a perfectly natural routine for the couple. (That's real comforting, Mitch.)After all, he says, "They're crazy about each other."Blanche and he sit on the steps together and have a cigarette.Blanche looks dreamily up at the stars and says, "There's so much—so much confusion in the world [...] Thank you for being so kind! I need kindness now."(You're going to want to remember those lines. Trust us.)

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