



SIGNET

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

The Pulitzer Prize-winning Play by

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

8 Pages of Photographs

SCENE ONE •

The exterior of a two-story corner building on a street in New Orleans which is named Elysian Fields and runs between the L & N tracks and the river. The section is poor but, unlike corresponding sections in other American cities, it has a raffish charm. The houses are mostly white frame, weathered grey, with rickety outside stairs and galleries and quaintly ornamented gables. This building contains two flats, upstairs and down. Faded white stairs ascend to the entrances of both.

It is first dark of an evening early in May. The sky that shows around the dim white building is a peculiarly tender blue, almost a turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay. You can almost feel the warm breath of the brown river beyond the river warehouses with their faint redolences of bananas and coffee. A corresponding air is evoked by the music of Negro entertainers at a barroom around the corner. In this part of New Orleans you are practically always just around the corner, or a few doors down the street, from a tinny piano being played with the infatuated fluency of brown fingers. This "Blue Piano" expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here.

Two women, one white and one colored, are taking the air on the steps of the building. The white woman is Eunice, who occupies the upstairs flat; the colored woman a neighbor, for New Orleans is a cosmopolitan city where there is a relatively warm and easy intermingling of races in the old part of town.

Above the music of the "Blue Piano" the voices of people on the street can be heard overlapping.

[Two men come around the corner, Stanley Kowalski and Mitch. They are about twenty-eight or thirty years old, roughly dressed in blue denim work clothes. Stanley carries his bowling jacket and a red-stained package from a butcher's. They stop at the foot of the steps.]

STANLEY [bellowing]:

Hey, there! Stella, Baby!

[Stella comes out on the first floor landing, a gentle young

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woman, about twenty-five, and of a background obviously quite different from her husband's.]

STELLA [*mildly*]:

Don't holler at me like that. Hi, Mitch.

STANLEY:

Catch!

STELLA:

What?

STANLEY:

Meat!

[He heaves the package at her. She cries out in protest but manages to catch it; then she laughs breathlessly. Her husband and his companion have already started back around the corner.]

STELLA [*calling after him*]:

Stanley! Where are you going?

STANLEY:

Bowling!

STELLA:

Can I come watch?

STANLEY:

Come on. [*He goes out.*]

STELLA:

Be over soon. [*To the white woman*] Hello, Eunice. How are you?

EUNICE:

I'm all right. Tell Steve to get him a poor boy's sandwich 'cause nothing's left here.

[They all laugh; the colored woman does not stop. Stella goes out.]

COLORED WOMAN:

What was that package he th'ew at 'er? [*She rises from steps, laughing louder.*]

EUNICE:

You hush, now!

NEGRO WOMAN:

Catch what!

[She continues to laugh. Blanche comes around the corner,

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carrying a valise. She looks at a slip of paper, then at the building, then again at the slip and again at the building. Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting. She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district. She is about five years older than Stella. 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.]

EUNICE [*finally*]:

What's the matter, honey? Are you lost?

BLANCHE [*with faintly hysterical humor*]:

They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields!

EUNICE:

That's where you are now.

BLANCHE:

At Elysian Fields?

EUNICE:

This here is Elysian Fields.

BLANCHE:

They mustn't have—understood—what number I wanted.

EUNICE:

What number you lookin' for?

[*Blanche wearily refers to the slip of paper.*]

BLANCHE:

Six thirty-two.

EUNICE:

You don't have to look no further.

BLANCHE [*uncomprehendingly*]:

I'm looking for my sister, Stella DuBois. I mean—Mrs. Stanley Kowalski.

EUNICE:

That's the party.—You just did miss her, though.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

is one of the most remarkable plays of our time. It created an immortal woman in the character of Blanche DuBois, the haggard and fragile southern beauty whose pathetic last grasp at happiness is cruelly destroyed. It shot Marlon Brando to fame in the role of Stanley Kowalski, a sweat-shirted barbarian, the crudely sensual brother-in-law who precipitated Blanche's tragedy.

Produced across the world, translated into many languages, and recreated as a prize-winning film, **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE** has attracted one of the widest audiences in contemporary literature.

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