

A Streetcar Named Desire

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Content Introduction	<p><i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> is a 1947 play written by American playwright Tennessee Williams for which he received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1948. The play opened on Broadway on December 3, 1947, and closed on December 17, 1949, in the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. The Broadway production was directed by Elia Kazan and starred Marlon Brando, Jessica Tandy, Kim Hunter, and Karl Malden. The London production opened in 1949 with Bonar Colleano, Vivien Leigh, and Renee Asherson and was directed by Laurence Olivier.</p> <p>Disturbed Blanche DuBois moves in with her sister in New Orleans and is tormented by her brutish brother-in-law while her reality crumbles around her. Blanche is in real need of a protector at this stage in her life when circumstances lead her into paying a visit to her younger sister Stella in New Orleans. She doesn't understand how Stella, who is expecting her first child, could have picked a husband so lacking in refinement. Stanley Kowalski's buddies come over to the house to play cards and one of them, Mitch, finds Blanche attractive until Stanley tells him about what kind of a woman Blanche really is.</p>

The story

The showy southern belle Blanche DuBois, steps into New Orleans. She arrives at New Orleans as the product of her desires, to the final sojourn open for her. Her sister Stella Kowalski and Stanley Kowalski stay at Elysian Fields, a run down two-story accommodation. Blanche is surprised at the way of life. Here, Stella seems to have pushed away from her upper-class background and found happiness in a Polish man from a working-class background. Blanche begins to dislike Stanley from the beginning. Later she tells her sister why she left Laurel and her teaching job. In an attempt to minimize her sister's criticism, Blanche quickly explains how she tried to defend everything they had. Stanley's work requires him to be constantly on the move. This leads Blanche, to think of Stella's love for Stanley as perplexing. Stella meanwhile tries to continually persuade Stanley to be nice to Blanche. When Stanley sees Blanche's things he gets agitated and does not want to pamper Blanche. He could not believe her stories of rich suitors. Also, Stanley is curious to know what happened of all the property Blanche's family possessed at Belle Reve. It was going to be the poker night for Stanley and his friends and therefore some commotion. Stella takes Blanche out for dinner. When they get back home, Blanche meets Mitchel, Stanley's friend. They have a light conversation and Mitch is taken to Blanche. In the meanwhile Stanley gets drunk and the rhumba music played aggravates him further. In a drunken state he makes an assault on Stella. Blanche is shocked by this behavior. His poker buddies try sobering him down, showering him with some cold water. Then he realizes he had hit Stella and runs out on the street shouting out her name. Blanche is again taken by surprise that Stella had returned to her abusive husband. She urges Stella to leave Stanley and plans an exit for them both. This irritates Stanley. The fact that Blanche attempts to destroy his home, leads him to become growingly antagonistic and unfriendly towards her. He thus becomes resolute to expose Blanche's false pretense. Stanley's friend Shaw lends him information about Blanche's past. Shaw, who regularly traveled to Mississippi, reported that Blanche had been seen at the foul Flamingo Hotel. Blanche denies any association with the place. Blanche's relationship with Mitch builds up with time. About six months pass and Stanley's behavior towards Blanche worsens. The mistrust and suspicion that an indifferent Stanley displays towards Blanche intensifies. Stanley tells Stella of what he had discovered. Firstly, he told her, after losing Belle Reve, Blanche turned to prostitution while at the Flamingo Hotel. Further, she lost her teaching position and was forced to resign as a result of an illicit affair with a high school student.

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He destroys the relationship between Mitch and Blanche too. Blanche fears, Stanley has told Mitch about her past. She tries to get in touch with Mitch but in vain. Stella goes into labor and asks to be taken to hospital. Another individual enters their home, leaving no place for Blanche. Blanche's mental condition worsens. Mitch confronts her about her past and berates her. She accepts the truth and confesses about her affair with the student. When she asks him to marry her, he declines outright. Later in the empty house, Blanche in a pathetic state dresses up in a creased white satin gown and places a rhinestone circlet on her head. She rattles off conversations and talks to an imaginary set of people. Stanley's sudden entry alarms her. He confronts a half-drunken Blanche who tells him she is waiting for a telegram from an old lover, a millionaire named Shep Huntleigh who has apparently invited her on a Caribbean cruise. Blanche supposes that Huntleigh will respect her not raid her privacy. She assumes that he will want a refined woman like herself. Blanche also tells Stanley that Mitch had called and begged for her forgiveness. Little did she know that Stanley had met Mitch and knew that what she was rattling off was all lies. By then, Stanley was smashed too. He changes into his satin pajamas. In a last attempt to ripping her off her dignity, he throws her onto the bed, overpowering her and rips into her, robbing her of her 'illusions' therefore... completing the humiliation. Stella returns from the hospital with their baby. Blanche tells her of what had happened. She faces a predicament of whether she should stay with Stanley or move. But she refuses to believe what Blanche has to tell her and chooses to stay with Stanley. Stanley projects Blanche to all, as a mentally ruined woman. They arrange for her to be sent to an institution... to a place where her 'illusions' can be kept unspoiled. Blanche still assumes that Shep Huntleigh will come to take her far from the mess. But she is surprised that instead, there is a doctor trying to take her away. She at first resists. The doctor addresses Blanche as Miss DuBois and she allows herself to be lead away by the elderly doctor with a naïve expression enveloping her.

About characters in the play

Blanche Dubois

When the play begins, Blanche is already a fallen woman in society's eyes, though she pretends to be a woman who has never known indignity. She was a schoolteacher of English in Mississippi and presents herself as very prim, proper, and

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prudent. Her family fortune and estate are gone. She also lost her young husband to suicide years earlier that she suffers from continual delusions of hearing polka tunes and gunshots and that she has a bad drinking problem. Blanche is an aging Southern belle who lives in a state of perpetual panic about her fading beauty. She cannot be around direct light and is overly concerned with her appearance, accessories, bathing, and age. She demands to be seen for what she wished to be, rather than what she really is. This is the reason for the paper lanterns, the constant bathing - she is creating her world of illusion. Besides, Blanche depends on male sexual admiration for her sense of self-esteem, which means that she has often succumbed to passion. She has a brief romance with Mitch and is later committed to a mental institution. Stanley's relentless persecution of Blanche foils her pursuit of Mitch as well as her attempts to shield herself from the harsh truth of her situation. Stanley himself takes the final stabs at Blanche, destroying the remainder of her sexual and mental esteem by raping her and then committing her to an insane asylum. In the end, Blanche blindly allows herself to be led away by a kind doctor, ignoring her sister's cries.

Stanley Kowalski:

Stanley is a man full of energy. He loves his work, loyal to his friends, passionate to his wife, honest to everyone. He hates to disguise and lie, and that is why Stanley hates Blanche so much. He loves his wife, but sometimes he will out of control from his reason and hurt her. Blanche calls him animal because of his pouring energy and impulsiveness. And the way that Stanley acts is to present the faded southern noble. He treats his sister-in-law, Blanche, with cruelty. Despite her obvious mental illness, he rapes her and leads her to the extent of hopelessness. In addition, he slams his wife, Stella, and then, asks for her forgiveness. This movement shows how man treats woman: a never-changing pattern. As far as the character for concern, I suppose that Stanley is a person who dares to show his love and hatred. He does not care how people think of him, even being considered "ape." A ferocious man is my personal opinion towards Stanley in A Streetcar Named Desire.

Stella Kowalski:

Stella is a Southern beautiful girl who was tempted away to New Orleans by her husband, a working class construction worker, Stanley Kowalski. Her character is portrayed as independent, young and fair, everything that Blanche had once but no longer is. In the story, she is horrified by her sister. Blanche tries to convince her to

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divorce Stanley, but she refuses, bound to Stanley by sexual attraction and her pregnancy with his child. When Stanley tells the truth about Blanche, Stella refuses to believe him at first. The night Stella goes into labor, Stanley drunkenly happens upon Blanche and rapes her. This sends Blanche completely over the edge into a nervous breakdown, and Stanley forces Stella to send her off to a mental institution. She is a woman who wants to believe her sister but finally chooses his husband.

Harold Mitchell (Mitch)

If I were Mitch, I would be the one who is kind and friendly. Unlike my friends, I am more sensitive and more gentlemanly than them. I live with my dying mother, who I care about most. She wants to see me settle down before she passes away. In order to fulfill her will and deal with my loneliness, I start looking for an ideal mate. Then, one day, I encounter Blanche, she is Stella's sister. I find out that she is knowledgeable and decent. And after hearing her sad story, I fall in love with her quickly. I want her to be my wife. But things go wrong, Stanley tells me about her sordid sexual past one day. I am conscious of that she isn't pure and decent. Therefore, I end the relationship between us. Finally, Blanche is raped by Stanley and then she collapses totally and is sent to hospital. Although I feel angry about her, I am the only person present besides Stella who despairs over the tragedy. I genuinely care for her.

Comment on Blanche DuBois of Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire"

The play reveals to the very depths the character of Blanche du Bois, a woman whose life has been undermined by her romantic illusions, which lead her to reject – so far as possible – the realities of life with which she is faced and which she consistently ignores. The pressure brought to bear upon her by her sister, with whom she goes to live in New Orleans, intensified by the earthy and extremely “normal” young husband of the latter, leads to a revelation of her tragic self-delusion and, in the end, to madness

Blanche DuBois, a woman who used to live in the high society. She was artificial, sensitive, fragile, and lonely. She lacked the sense of safety because of her age and the difficult financial situation. The cruelty of lives let her feel sad, and she

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could only smoke and drink to forget the sorrow temperately. And she always washing her body, this also showed she couldn't take any dirt in her body and mind.

She couldn't endure cruel truths, so she chose to run away. She proved her charm by enticing men, like Stanley and Mitch; but after chasing this, she still felt so empty. She told Mitch her past life with exaggerations, and the long description also reflected her weakness of love. But when male rule all and Stanley told Mitch the truth, Blanche lost all of her value in Mitch's eyes. Blanche also confessed, all she wanted is dream, not the truth; she lived in her own dream kingdom, not the fact.

Lies and fairy tales were her weapon; but when they were destroyed by Stanley, she lost her ability of striking back. She lost her self-respect and fell into deep disappointment.

Finally, she was raped by Stanley. It showed the arrogance of men power, and contrasted the weakness of women. The desire of conqueror conquered all, and Stanley won. For Stanley, "rape" was only captured equipment or accessories of conquering Blanche.

It seemed to predict the final result when Blanche got on the car named Desire; when the car drove into the street of graves, it also brought her on the road toward death. She lost all in Stanley's desire.

We live in an age which has lost control; untruth and lies are full of our world, and the sensitive mind is going to be broken down. Tennessee Williams had told us: fragile people can't live in such world. We may mourn for them with ridiculous tear. In the end, when Blanche gave her hand to the doctor, Tennessee Williams had gave her self-respect back to Blanche.

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Reference

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