SCENE FOUR

It is early the following morning. There is a confusion of street cries like a choral chant.

Stella is lying down in the bedroom. Her face is serene in the early morning sunlight. One hand rests on her belly, rounding slightly with new maternity. From the other dangles a book of colored comics. Her eyes and lips have that almost narcotized tranquility that is in the faces of Eastern idols.

The table is sloppy with remains of breakfast and the debris of the preceding night, and Stanley’s gaudy pyjamas lie across the threshold of the bathroom. The outside door is slightly ajar on a sky of summer brilliance.

Blanche appears at this door. She has spent a sleepless night and her appearance entirely contrasts with Stella’s. She presses her knuckles nervously to her lips as she looks through the door, before entering.

BLANCHE:
Stella?

STELLA [stirring lazily]:
Hmmm?

[Blanche utters a moaning cry and runs into the bedroom, throwing herself down beside Stella in a rush of hysterical tenderness.]

BLANCHE:
Baby, my baby sister!

STELLA [drawing away from her]:
Blanche, what is the matter with you?

[Blanche straightens up slowly and stands beside the bed looking down at her sister with knuckles pressed to her lips.]

BLANCHE:
He’s left?

STELLA:
Stan? Yes.

BLANCHE:
Will he be back?

STELLA:
He’s gone to get the car greased. Why?

BLANCHE:
Why! I’ve been half crazy, Stella! When I found out you’d been insane enough to come back in here after what happened—I started to rush in after you!

STELLA:
I’m glad you didn’t.

BLANCHE:
What were you thinking of? [Stella makes an indefinite gesture] Answer me! What? What?

STELLA:
Please, Blanche! Sit down and stop yelling.

BLANCHE:
All right, Stella. I will repeat the question quietly now. How could you come back in this place last night? Why, you must have slept with him!
SCENE FOUR

[Stella gets up in a calm and leisurely way.]

STELLA:
Blanche, I'd forgotten how excitable you are. You're making much too much fuss about this.

BLANCHE:
Am I?

STELLA:
Yes, you are, Blanche. I know how it must have seemed to you and I'm awful sorry it had to happen, but it wasn't anything as serious as you seem to take it. In the first place, when men are drinking and playing poker anything can happen. It's always a powder-keg. He didn't know what he was doing.... He was as good as a lamb when I came back and he's really very, very ashamed of himself.

BLANCHE:
And that—that makes it all right?

STELLA:
No, it isn't all right for anybody to make such a terrible row, but—people do sometimes. Stanley's always smashed things. Why, on our wedding night—soon as we came in here—he snatched off one of my slippers and rushed about the place smashing the light-bulbs with it.

BLANCHE:
He did—what?

STELLA:
He smashed all the light-bulbs with the heel of my slipper! [She laughs.]

BLANCHE:
And you—you let him? Didn't run, didn't scream?

STELLA:
I was—sort of—thrilled by it. [She waits for a moment] Eunice and you had breakfast?

BLANCHE:
Do you suppose I wanted any breakfast?

STELLA:
There's some coffee left on the stove.

BLANCHE:
You're so—matter of fact about it, Stella.

STELLA:
What other can I be? He's taken the radio to get it fixed. It didn't land on the pavement so only one tube was smashed.

BLANCHE:
And you are standing there smiling!

STELLA:
What do you want me to do?

BLANCHE:
Pull yourself together and face the facts.

STELLA:
What are they, in your opinion?

BLANCHE:
In my opinion? You're married to a madman!

STELLA:
No!

BLANCHE:
Yes, you are, your fix is worse than mine is! Only you're not being sensible about it. I'm going to do something. Get hold of myself and make myself a new life!
SCENE FOUR

STELLA:
Yes?

BLANCHE:
But you’ve given in. And that isn’t right, you’re not old! You can get out.

STELLA [slowly and emphatically]:
I’m not in anything I want to get out of.

BLANCHE [incredulously]:
What—Stella?

STELLA:
I said I am not in anything that I have a desire to get out of. Look at the mess in this room! And those empty bottles! They went through two cases last night! He promised this morning that he was going to quit having these poker parties, but you know how long such a promise is going to keep. Oh, well, it’s his pleasure, like mine is movies and bridge. People have got to tolerate each other’s habits, I guess.

BLANCHE:
I don’t understand you. [Stella turns toward her] I don’t understand your indifference. Is this a Chinese philosophy you’ve—cultivated?

STELLA:
Is what—what?

BLANCHE:
This—shuffling about and mumbling—‘One tube smashed—beer-bottles—mess in the kitchen!’—as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened! [Stella laughs uncertainly and picking up the broom, swirls it in her hands.]
STELLA:
No.

BLANCHE:
Well, I did. I took the trip as an investment, thinking I'd meet someone with a million dollars.

STELLA:
Did you?

BLANCHE:
Yes. I ran into Shep Huntleigh—I ran into him on Biscayne Boulevard, on Christmas Eve, about dusk ... getting into his car—Cadillac convertible; must have been a block long!

STELLA:
I should think it would have been—inconvenient in traffic!

BLANCHE:
You've heard of oil-wells?

STELLA:
Yes—remotely.

BLANCHE:
He has them, all over Texas. Texas is literally spouting gold in his pockets.

STELLA:
My, my.

BLANCHE:
Y'know how indifferent I am to money. I think of money in terms of what it does for you. But he could do it, he could certainly do it!

STELLA:
Do what, Blanche?

BLANCHE:
Why—set us up in a—shop!

STELLA:
What kind of a shop?

BLANCHE:
Oh, a—shop of some kind! He could do it with half what his wife throws away at the races.

STELLA:
He's married?

BLANCHE:
Honey, would I be here if the man weren't married? [Stella laughs a little. Blanche suddenly springs up and crosses to phone. She speaks shrilly] How do I get Western Union?—Operator! Western Union!

STELLA:
That's a dial phone, honey.

BLANCHE:
I can't dial, I'm too—

STELLA:
Just dial O.

BLANCHE:
O?

STELLA:
Yes, "O" for Operator! [Blanche considers a moment; then she puts the phone down.]

BLANCHE:
Give me a pencil. Where is a slip of paper? I've got to write it down first—the message, I mean ...
SCENE FOUR

[She goes to the dressing table, and grabs up a sheet of Kleenex and an eyebrow pencil for writing equipment.]

Let me see now . . . [She bites the pencil] 'Darling Shep. Sister and I in desperate situation.'

STELLA:
I beg your pardon!

BLANCHE:
'Sister and I in desperate situation. Will explain details later. Would you be interested in—?' [She bites the pencil again] 'Would you be—interested—in . . . ?' [She smashes the pencil on the table and springs up] You never get anywhere with direct appeals!

STELLA [with a laugh]:
Don't be so ridiculous, darling!

BLANCHE:
But I'll think of something, I've got to think of—something! Don't, don't laugh at me, Stella! Please, please don't—I—I want you to look at the contents of my purse! Here's what's in it! [She snatches her purse open] Sixty-five measly cents in coin of the realm!

STELLA [crossing to bureau]:
Stanley doesn't give me a regular allowance, he likes to pay bills himself, but—this morning he gave me ten dollars to smooth things over. You take five of it, Blanche, and I'll keep the rest.

BLANCHE:
Oh, no. No, Stella.

STELLA [insisting]:
I know how it helps your morale just having a little pocket-money on you.

BLANCHE:
No, thank you—I'll take to the streets!

STELLA:
Talk sense! How did you happen to get so low on funds?

BLANCHE:
Money just goes—it goes places. [She rubs her forehead] Sometime today I've got to get hold of a bromo!

STELLA:
I'll fix you one now.

BLANCHE:
Not yet—I've got to keep thinking!

STELLA:
I wish you'd just let things go, at least for a—while . . .

BLANCHE:
Stella, I can't live with him! You can, he's your husband. But how could I stay here with him, after last night, with just those curtains between us?

STELLA:
Blanche, you saw him at his worst last night.

BLANCHE:
On the contrary, I saw him at his best! What such a man has to offer is animal force and he gave a wonderful exhibition of that! But the only way to live with such a man is to—go to bed with him! And that's your job—not mine!
SCENE FOUR

STELLA:
After you've rested a little, you'll see it's going to work out. You don't have to worry about anything while you're here. I mean—expenses...

BLANCHE:
I have to plan for us both, to get us both—out!

STELLA:
You take it for granted that I am in something that I want to get out of.

BLANCHE:
I take it for granted that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with.

STELLA:
Well, you're taking entirely too much for granted.

BLANCHE:
I can't believe you're in earnest.

STELLA:
No?

BLANCHE:
I understand how it happened—a little. You saw him in uniform, an officer, not here but—

STELLA:
I'm not sure it would have made any difference where I saw him.

BLANCHE:
Now don't say it was one of those mysterious electric things between people! If you do I'll laugh in your face.

STELLA:
I am not going to say anything more at all about it!

BLANCHE:
All right, then, don't!

STELLA:
But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark—that sort of make everything else seem—unimportant. [Pause.]

BLANCHE:
What you are talking about is brutal desire—just—Desire!—the name of that rattle-trap street-car that bangs through the Quarter, up one old narrow street and down another...

STELLA:
Haven't you ever ridden on that street-car?

BLANCHE:
It brought me here.—Where I'm not wanted and where I'm ashamed to be...

STELLA:
Then don't you think your superior attitude is a bit out of place?

BLANCHE:
I am not being or feeling at all superior, Stella. Believe me I'm not! It's just this. This is how I look at it. A man like that is someone to go out with—one—twice—three times when the devil is in you. But live with? Have a child by?

STELLA:
I have told you I love him.
SCENE FOUR

BLANCHE:
Then I tremble for you! I just—tremble for you. . . .

STELLA:
I can’t help your trembling if you insist on trembling!

[There is a pause.]

BLANCHE:
May I—speak—plainly?

STELLA:
Yes, do. Go ahead. As plainly as you want to.

[Outside, a train approaches. They are silent till the noise subsides. They are both in the bedroom.

[Under 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. He wears an undershirt and grease-stained seersucker pants.]

BLANCHE:
Well—if you’ll forgive me—he’s common!

STELLA:
Why, yes, I suppose he is.

BLANCHE:
Suppose! You can’t have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just suppose that any part of a gentleman’s in his nature! Not one particle, no! Oh, if he was just—ordinary! Just plain—but good and wholesome, but—no. There’s something downright—bestial—about him! You’re hating me saying this, aren’t you?

STELLA [coldly]:
Go on and say it all, Blanche.

BLANCHE:
He acts like an animal, has an animal’s habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There’s even something—sub-human—something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something—ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I’ve seen in—anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is—Stanley Kowalski—survivor of the stone age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And you—you here—waiting for him! Maybe he’ll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! Night falls and the other apes gather! There in the front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling and gnawing and hulking! His poker night!—you call it—this party of apes! Somebody growls—some creature snatches at something—the fight is on! God! Maybe we are a long 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 new light have come into the world since then! In some kinds of people some tenderer feelings have had some little beginning! That we have got to make grow! And cling to, and hold as our flag! In this dark march toward whatever it is we’re approaching. . . . Don’t—don’t hang back with the brutes!

[Another train passes outside. Stanley hesitates, licking his lips. Then suddenly he turns stealthily about and withdraws through front door. The women are still unaware of his presence. When the train has passed he calls through the closed front door.]
SCENE FOUR

STANLEY:
Hey! Hey, Stella!

STELLA [who has listened gravely to Blanche]:
Stanley!

BLANCHE:
Stell, I—

[But Stella has gone to the front door. Stanley enters casually with his packages.]

STANLEY:
Hiyuh, Stella. Blanche back?

STELLA:
Yes, she's back.

STANLEY:
Hiyuh, Blanche. [He grins at her.]

STELLA:
You must've got under the car.

STANLEY:
Them darn mechanics at Fritz's don't know their ass fr'm— Hey!

[Stella has embraced him with both arms, fiercely, and full in the view of Blanche. He laughs and clasps her head to him. Over her head he grins through the curtains at Blanche.

[As the lights fade away, with a lingering brightness on their embrace, the music of the "blue piano" and trumpet and drums is heard.]
SCENE FIVE

[Eunice’s voice shouts in terrible wrath.]

EUNICE:
I heard about you and that blonde!

STEVE:
That’s a damn lie!

EUNICE:
You ain’t pulling the wool over my eyes! I wouldn’t mind if you’d stay down at the Four Deuces, but you always going up.

STEVE:
Who ever seen me up?

EUNICE:
I seen you chasing her ’round the balcony—I’m gonna call the vice squad!

STEVE:
Don’t you throw that at me!

EUNICE [shrieking]:
You hit me! I’m gonna call the police!

[A clatter of aluminum striking a wall is heard, followed by a man’s angry roar, shouts and overturned furniture. There is a crash; then a relative hush.]

BLANCHE [brightly]:
Did he kill her?

[Elaine appears on the steps in daemonic disorder.]

STELLA:
No! She’s coming downstairs.

EUNICE:
Call the police, I’m going to call the police! [She rushes around the corner.]

[They laugh lightly. Stanley comes around the corner in his green and scarlet silk bowling shirt. He trots up the steps and bangs into the kitchen. Blanche registers his entrance with nervous gestures.]

STANLEY:
What’s a matter with Eun-uss?

STELLA:
She and Steve had a row. Has she got the police?

STANLEY:
Naw. She’s gettin’ a drink.

STELLA:
That’s much more practical!

[Steve comes down nursing a bruise on his forehead and looks in the door.]

STEVE:
She here?

STANLEY:
Naw, naw. At the Four Deuces.

STEVE:
That rutting hunk! [He looks around the corner a bit timidly, then turns with affected boldness and runs after her.]

BLANCHE:
I must jot that down in my notebook. Ha-ha! I’m com-
SCENE FIVE

STANLEY:
What sign were you born under?

BLANCHE:
Oh, my birthday's next month, the fifteenth of September; that's under Virgo.

STANLEY:
What's Virgo?

BLANCHE:
Virgo is the Virgin.

STANLEY [contemptuously]:
Hah! [He advances a little as he knots his tie] Say, do you happen to know somebody named Shaw?

[Her face expresses a faint shock. She reaches for the cologne bottle and dampens her handkerchief as she answers carefully.]

BLANCHE:
Why, everybody knows somebody named Shaw!

STANLEY:
Well, this somebody named Shaw is under the impression he met you in Laurel, but I figure he must have got you mixed up with some other party because this other party is someone he met at a hotel called the Flamingo.

[Blanche laughs breathlessly as she touches the cologne-dampened handkerchief to her temples.]

BLANCHE:
I'm afraid he does have me mixed up with this "other party." The Hotel Flamingo is not the sort of establishment I would dare to be seen in!
SCENE FIVE

STANLEY:
You know of it?

BLANCHE:
Yes, I’ve seen it and smelled it.

STANLEY:
You must’ve got pretty close if you could smell it.

BLANCHE:
The odor of cheap perfume is penetrating.

STANLEY:
That stuff you use is expensive?

BLANCHE:
Twenty-five dollars an ounce! I’m nearly out. That’s just a hint if you want to remember my birthday! [She speaks lightly but her voice has a note of fear.]

STANLEY:
Shaw must’ve got you mixed up. He goes in and out of Laurel all the time so he can check on it and clear up any mistake.

[He turns away and crosses to the portieres. Blanche closes her eyes as if faint. Her hand trembles as she lifts the handkerchief again to her forehead.

[Steve and Eunice come around corner. Steve’s arm is around Eunice’s shoulder and she is sobbing luxuriously and he is cooing love-words. There is a murmur of thunder as they go slowly upstairs in a tight embrace.]

STANLEY [to Stella]:
I’ll wait for you at the Four Deuces!

STELLA:
Hey! Don’t I rate one kiss?

STANLEY:
Not in front of your sister.

[He goes out. Blanche rises from her chair. She seems faint; looks about her with an expression of almost panic.]

BLANCHE:
Stella! What have you heard about me?

STELLA:
Huh?

BLANCHE:
What have people been telling you about me?

STELLA:
Telling?

BLANCHE:
You haven’t heard any—unkind—gossip about me?

STELLA:
Why, no, Blanche, of course not!

BLANCHE:
Honey, there was—a good deal of talk in Laurel.

STELLA:
About you, Blanche?

BLANCHE:
I wasn’t so good the last two years or so, after Belle Reve had started to slip through my fingers.
SCENE FIVE

STELLA:
All of us do things we—

BLANCHE:
I never was hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are soft—soft people have got to shimmer and glow—they’ve got to put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and put a—paper lantern over the light. . . . It isn’t enough to be soft. You’ve got to be soft and attractive. And I—I’m fading now! I don’t know how much longer I can turn the trick.

[The afternoon has faded to dusk. Stella goes into the bedroom and turns on the light under the paper lantern. She holds a bottled soft drink in her hand.]

BLANCHE:
Have you been listening to me?

STELLA:
I don’t listen to you when you are being morbid! [She advances with the bottled coke.]

BLANCHE [with abrupt change to gaiety]:
Is that coke for me?

STELLA:
Not for anyone else!

BLANCHE:
Why, you precious thing, you! Is it just coke?

STELLA [turning]:
You mean you want a shot in it!

BLANCHE:
Well, honey, a shot never does a coke any harm! Let me! You mustn’t wait on me!

STELLA:
I like to wait on you, Blanche. It makes it seem more like home. [She goes into the kitchen, finds a glass and pours a shot of whiskey into it.]

BLANCHE:
I have to admit I love to be waited on . . .

[She rushes into the bedroom. Stella goes to her with the glass. Blanche suddenly clutches Stella’s free hand with a moaning sound and presses the hand to her lips. Stella is embarrassed by her show of emotion. Blanche speaks in a choked voice.]

You’re—you’re—so good to me! And I—

STELLA:
Blanche.

BLANCHE:
I know, I won’t! You hate me to talk sentimental! But honey, believe I feel things more than I tell you! I won’t stay long! I won’t, I promise I—

STELLA:
Blanche!

BLANCHE [hysterically]:
I won’t, I promise, I’ll go! Go soon! I will really! I won’t hang around until he—throws me out . . .

STELLA:
Now will you stop talking foolish?

BLANCHE:
Yes, honey. Watch how you pour—that fizzy stuff foams over!
[Blanche laughs shrilly and grabs the glass, but her hand shakes so it almost slips from her grasp. Stella pours the coke into the glass. It foams over and spills. Blanche gives a piercing cry.]

STELLA [shocked by the cry]:
Heavens!

BLANCHE:
Right on my pretty white skirt!

STELLA:
Oh... Use my hanky. Blot gently.

BLANCHE [slowly recovering]:
I know—gently—gently...

STELLA:
Did it stain?

BLANCHE:
Not a bit. Ha-ha! Isn't that lucky? [She sits down shakily, taking a grateful drink. She holds the glass in both hands and continues to laugh a little.]

STELLA:
Why did you scream like that?

BLANCHE:
I don't know why I screamed! [continuing nervously] Mitch—Mitch is coming at seven. I guess I am just feeling nervous about our relations. [She begins to talk rapidly and breathlessly] He hasn't gotten a thing but a goodnight kiss, that's all I have given him, Stella. I want his respect. And men don't want anything they get too easy. But on the other hand men lose interest quickly. Especially when the girl is over—thirty. They think a girl over thirty ought to—the vulgar term is—"put out." . . . And I—I'm not "putting out." Of course he—he doesn't know—I mean I haven't informed him—of my real age!

STELLA:
Why are you sensitive about your age?

BLANCHE:
Because of hard knocks my vanity's been given. What I mean is—he thinks I'm sort of—prim and proper, you know! [She laughs out sharply] I want to deceive him enough to make him—want me...

STELLA:
Blanche, do you want him?

BLANCHE:
I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes—I want Mitch... very badly! Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem...

[Stanley comes around the corner with a drink under his belt.]

STANLEY [bawling]:
Hey, Steve! Hey, Eunice! Hey, Stella!

[There are joyous calls from above. Trumpet and drums are heard from around the corner.]

STELLA [kissing Blanche impulsively]:
It will happen!

BLANCHE [doubtfully]:
It will?

STELLA:
It will! [She goes across into the kitchen, looking back]
SCENE FIVE

at Blanche.] It will, honey, it will... But don't take another drink! [Her voice catches as she goes out the door to meet her husband.

[Blanche sinks faintly back in her chair with her drink. Ennies shrieks with laughter and runs down the steps. Steve bounds after her with goat-like screeches and chases her around corner. Stanley and Stella twine arms as they follow, laughing.

[Dusk settles deeper. The music from the Four Deuces is slow and blue.]

BLANCHE:
Ah, me, ah, me, ah, me...

[Her eyes fall shut and the palm leaf fan drops from her fingers. She slaps her hand on the chair arm a couple of times. There is a little glimmer of lightning about the building.

[A Young Man comes along the street and rings the bell.]

BLANCHE:
Come in.

[The Young Man appears through the portieres. She regards him with interest.]

BLANCHE:
Well, well! What can I do for you?

YOUNG MAN:
I'm collecting for The Evening Star.

BLANCHE:
I didn't know that stars took up collections.

YOUNG MAN:
It's the paper.

BLANCHE:
I know, I was joking—feebly! Will you—have a drink?

YOUNG MAN:
No, ma'am. No, thank you. I can't drink on the job.

BLANCHE:
Oh, well, now; let's see... No, I don't have a dime! I'm not the lady of the house. I'm her sister from Mississippi. I'm one of those poor relations you've heard about.

YOUNG MAN:
That's all right. I'll drop by later. [He starts to go out. She approaches a little.]

BLANCHE:
Hey! [He turns back shyly. She puts a cigarette in a long holder] Could you give me a light? [She crosses toward him. They meet at the door between the two rooms.]

YOUNG MAN:
Sure. [He takes out a lighter] This doesn't always work.

BLANCHE:
It's temperamental? [It flares!] Ah!—thank you. [He starts away again] Hey! [He turns again, still more uncertainly. She goes close to him] Uh—what time is it?

YOUNG MAN:
Fifteen of seven, ma'am.

BLANCHE:
So late? Don't you just love these long rainy afternoons in New Orleans when an hour isn't just an hour—but a
SCENE FIVE

A little piece of eternity dropped into your hands—and who knows what to do with it? [She touches his shoulders.] You—uh—didn’t get wet in the rain?

YOUNG MAN:
No, ma’am. I stepped inside.

BLANCHE:
In a drug store? And had a soda?

YOUNG MAN:
Uh-huh.

BLANCHE:
Chocolate?

YOUNG MAN:
No, ma’am. Cherry.

BLANCHE [laughing]:
Cherry!

YOUNG MAN:
A cherry soda.

BLANCHE:
You make my mouth water. [She touches his cheek lightly, and smiles. Then she goes to the trunk.]

YOUNG MAN:
Well, I’d better be going—

BLANCHE [stopping him]:
Young man!

[He turns. She takes a large, gossamer scarf from the trunk and drapes it about her shoulders.]

[In the ensuing pause, the “blue piano” is heard. It continues through the rest of this scene and the opening of the next. The young man clears his throat and looks yearningly at the door.]

Young man! Young, young, young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights?

[The Young Man laughs uncomfortably and stands like a bashful kid. Blanche speaks softly to him.]

Well, you do, honey lamb! Come here. 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.]

Now run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I’ve got to be good—and keep my hands off children.

[He stares at her a moment. She opens the door for him and blows a kiss at him as he goes down the steps with a dazed look. She stands there a little dreamily after he has disappeared. Then Mitch appears around the corner with a bunch of roses.]

BLANCHE [gaily]:
Look who’s coming! My Rosenkavalier! Bow to me first ... now present them! Aaaaahh! Merciicii!

[She looks at him over them, coyly, pressing them to her lips. He beams at her self-consciously.]
SCENE SIX

It is about two A.M. on the same evening. The outer wall of the building is visible. Blanche and Mitch come in. The utter exhaustion which only a neurasthenic personality can know is evident in Blanche's voice and manner. Mitch is stolid but depressed. They have probably been out to the amusement park on Lake Pontchartrain, for Mitch is bearing, upside down, a plaster statuette of Mae West, the sort of prize won at shooting-galleries and carnival games of chance.

BLANCHE [stopping lifelessly at the steps]:
Well—
[Mitch laughs uneasily.]
Well...
MITCH:
I guess it must be pretty late—and you're tired.
BLANCHE:
Even the hot tamale man has deserted the street, and he hangs on till the end. [Mitch laughs uneasily again] How will you get home?
MITCH:
I'll walk over to Bourbon and catch an owl-car.
BLANCHE [laughing grimly]:
Is that street-car named Desire still grinding along the tracks at this hour?
MITCH [heavily]:
I'm afraid you haven't gotten much fun out of this evening, Blanche.

BLANCHE:
I spoiled it for you.
MITCH:
No, you didn't, but I felt all the time that I wasn't giving you much—entertainment.
BLANCHE:
I simply couldn't rise to the occasion. That was all. I don't think I've ever tried so hard to be gay and made such a dismal mess of it. I get ten points for trying!—I did try.
MITCH:
Why did you try if you didn't feel like it, Blanche?
BLANCHE:
I was just obeying the law of nature.
MITCH:
Which law is that?
BLANCHE:
The one that says the lady must entertain the gentleman—or no dice! See if you can locate my door-key in this purse. When I'm so tired my fingers are all thumbs!
MITCH [rooting in her purse]:
This it?
BLANCHE:
No, honey, that's the key to my trunk which I must soon be packing.
MITCH:
You mean you are leaving here soon?
BLANCHE:
I've outstayed my welcome.
SCENE SIX

MITCH:
This it?

[The music fades away.]

BLANCHE:
Eureka! Honey, you open the door while I take a last look at the sky. [She leans on the porch rail. He opens the door and stands awkwardly behind her.] I'm looking for the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters, but these girls are not out tonight. Oh, yes they are, there they are! God bless them! All in a bunch going home from their little bridge party... Y' get the door open? Good boy! I guess you—want to go now...

[He shuffles and coughs a little.]

MITCH:
Can I—uh—kiss you—goodnight?

BLANCHE:
Why do you always ask me if you may?

MITCH:
I don't know whether you want me to or not.

BLANCHE:
Why should you be so doubtful?

MITCH:
That night when we parked by the lake and I kissed you, you—

BLANCHE:
Honey, it wasn't the kiss I objected to. I liked the kiss very much. It was the other little—familiarity—that I—felt obliged to—discourage... I didn't resent it! Not a bit in the world! In fact, I was somewhat flattered that

you—desired me! 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!

MITCH [solemnly]:
Lost?

BLANCHE:
I guess you are used to girls that like to be lost. The kind that get lost immediately, on the first date!

MITCH:
I like you to be exactly the way that you are, because in all my—experience—I have never known anyone like you.

[Blanche looks at him gravely; then she bursts into laughter and then claps a hand to her mouth.]

MITCH:
Are you laughing at me?

BLANCHE:
No, honey. The lord and lady of the house have not yet returned, so come in. We'll have a night-cap. Let's leave the lights off. Shall we?

MITCH:
You just—do what you want to.

[Blanche precedes him into the kitchen. The outer wall of the building disappears and the interiors of the two rooms can be dimly seen.]

BLANCHE [remaining in the first room]:
The other room's more comfortable—go on in. This crashing around in the dark is my search for some liquor.

MITCH:
You want a drink?
BLANCHE:
I want you to have a drink! You have been so anxious and solemn all evening, and so have I; we have both been anxious and solemn and now for these few last remaining moments of our lives together—I want to create—joie de vivre! I'm lighting a candle.

MITCH:
That's good.

BLANCHE:
We are going to be very Bohemian. We are going to pretend that we are sitting in a little artists' cafe on the Left Bank in Paris! [She lights a candle stub and puts it in a bottle.] Je suis la Dame aux Camélias! Vous êtes—Armand! Understand French?

MITCH [heavily]:
Naw. Naw, I—

BLANCHE:
Voulez-vous couchez avec moi ce soir? Vous ne comprenez pas? Ah, quelle dommage!—I mean it's a damned good thing.... I've found some liquor! Just enough for two shots without any dividends, honey...

MITCH [heavily]:
That's—good.

[She enters the bedroom with the drinks and the candle.]

BLANCHE:
Sit down! Why don't you take off your coat and loosen your collar?

MITCH:
I better leave it on.

BLANCHE:
No. I want you to be comfortable.

MITCH:
I am ashamed of the way I perspire. My shirt is sticking to me.

BLANCHE:
Perspiration is healthy. If people didn't perspire they would die in five minutes. [She takes his coat from him] This is a nice coat. What kind of material is it?

MITCH:
They call that stuff alpaca.

BLANCHE:
Oh. Alpaca.

MITCH:
It's very light weight alpaca.

BLANCHE:
Oh. Light weight alpaca.

MITCH:
I don't like to wear a wash-coat even in summer because I sweat through it.

BLANCHE:
Oh.

MITCH:
And it don't look neat on me. A man with a heavy build has got to be careful of what he puts on him so he don't look too clumsy.

BLANCHE:
You are not too heavy.
SCENE SIX

M itch:
You don't think I am?

B lanche:
You are not the delicate type. You have a massive bone-
structure and a very imposing physique.

M itch:
Thank you. Last Christmas I was given a membership
to the New Orleans Athletic Club.

B lanche:
Oh, good.

M itch:
It was the finest present I ever was given. I work out
there with the weights and I swim and I keep myself fit.
When I started there, I was getting soft in the belly but
now my belly is hard. It is so hard now that a man can
punch me in the belly and it don't hurt me. Punch me!
Go on! See? [She pokes lightly at him.]

B lanche:
Gracious. [Her hand touches her chest.]

M itch:
Guess how much I weigh, Blanche?

B lanche:
Oh, I'd say in the vicinity of—one hundred and eighty?

M itch:
Guess again.

B lanche:
Not that much?

M itch:
No. More.

B lanche:
Well, you're a tall man and you can carry a good deal of
weight without looking awkward.

M itch:
I weigh two hundred and seven pounds and I'm six feet
one and one half inches tall in my bare feet—without
shoes on. And that is what I weigh stripped.

B lanche:
Oh, my goodness, me! It's awe-inspiring.

M itch [embarrassed]:
My weight is not a very interesting subject to talk about.
[He hesitates for a moment] What's yours?

B lanche:
My weight?

M itch:
Yes.

B lanche:
Guess!

M itch:
Let me lift you.

B lanche:
Samson! Go on, lift me. [He comes behind her and puts
his hands on her waist and raises her lightly off the
ground] Well?

M itch:
You are light as a feather.
BLANCHE:
Ha-ha! [He lowers her but keeps his hands on her waist. Blanche speaks with an affectation of demureness] You may release me now.

MITCH:
Huh?

BLANCHE [gaily]:
I said unhand me, sir. [He fumblingly embraces her. Her voice sounds gently reproving] Now, Mitch. Just because Stanley and Stella aren't at home is no reason why you shouldn't behave like a gentleman.

MITCH:
Just give me a slap whenever I step out of bounds.

BLANCHE:
That won't be necessary. You're a natural gentleman, one of the very few that are left in the world. I don't want you to think that I am severe and old maid schoolteacherish or anything like that. It's just—well—

MITCH:
Huh?

BLANCHE:
I guess it is just that I have—old-fashioned ideals! [She rolls her eyes, knowing he cannot see her face. Mitch goes to the front door. There is a considerable silence between them. Blanche sighs and Mitch coughs self-consciously.]

MITCH [finally]:
Where's Stanley and Stella tonight?
SCENE SIX

M itch:
No, he hasn’t said much.

B lanche:
But what he has said. What would you say his attitude toward me was?

M itch:
Why do you want to ask that?

B lanche:
Well—

M itch:
Don’t you get along with him?

B lanche:
What do you think?

M itch:
I don’t think he understands you.

B lanche:
That is putting it mildly. If it weren’t for Stella about to have a baby, I wouldn’t be able to endure things here.

M itch:
He isn’t—nice to you?

B lanche:
He is insufferably rude. Goes out of his way to offend me.

M itch:
In what way, Blanche?

B lanche:
Why, in every conceivable way.

M itch:
I’m surprised to hear that.

B lanche:
Are you?

M itch:
Well, I—don’t see how anybody could be rude to you.

B lanche:
It’s really a pretty frightful situation. You see, there’s no privacy here. There’s just these portieres between the two rooms at night. He stalks through the rooms in his underwear at night. And I have to ask him to close the bathroom door. That sort of commonness isn’t necessary. You probably wonder why I don’t move out. Well, I’ll tell you frankly. A teacher’s salary is barely sufficient for her living-expenses. I didn’t save a penny last year and so I had to come here for the summer. That’s why I have to put up with my sister’s husband. And he has to put up with me, apparently so much against his wishes. . . . Surely he must have told you how much he hates me!

M itch:
I don’t think he hates you.

B lanche:
He hates me. Or why would he insult me? The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner! That man will destroy me, unless ——

M itch:
Blanche—

B lanche:
Yes, honey?
MICH:
Can I ask you a question?

BLANCHE:
Yes. What?

MICH:
How old are you?
[She makes a nervous gesture.]

BLANCHE:
Why do you want to know?

MICH:
I talked to my mother about you and she said, "How old is Blanche?" And I wasn’t able to tell her. [There is another pause.]

BLANCHE:
You talked to your mother about me?

MICH:
Yes.

BLANCHE:
Why?

MICH:
I told my mother how nice you were, and I liked you.

BLANCHE:
Were you sincere about that?

MICH:
You know I was.

BLANCHE:
Why did your mother want to know my age?
SCENE SIX

MITCH:
Dead? [She crosses to the window and sits on the sill, looking out. She pours herself another drink.] A man?

BLANCHE:
He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery—love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking—still—that thing was there... He came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me—but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him! I didn't know that. I didn't know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. 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...

[A locomotive is heard approaching outside. She claps her hands to her ears and crouches over. The headlight of the locomotive glares into the room as it thunders past. As the noise recedes she straightens slowly and continues speaking.]

Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way.

[Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance.]

We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later—a shot!

[The Polka stops abruptly.]

[Blanche rises stiffly. Then, the Polka resumes in a major key.]

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 struck the revoler into his mouth, and fired—so that the back of his head had been—blown away!

[She sways and covers her face.]

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

[Mitch gets up awkwardly and moves toward her a little. The Polka music increases. Mitch stands beside her.]
SCENE SIX

MITCH [drawing her slowly into his arms]:
You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be—you and me, Blanche?

[SHE stares at him vacantly for a moment. Then with a soft cry huddles in his embrace. She makes a sobbing effort to speak but the words won't come. He kisses her forehead and her eyes and finally her lips. The Polka tune fades out. Her breath is drawn and released in long, grateful sobs.]

BLANCHE:
Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!

SCENE SEVEN

It is late afternoon in mid-September.
The portieres are open and a table is set for a birthday supper, with cake and flowers.
Stella is completing the decorations as Stanley comes in.

STANLEY:
What's all this stuff for?

STELLA:
Honey, it's Blanche's birthday.

STANLEY:
She here?

STELLA:
In the bathroom.

STANLEY [mimicking]:
"Washing out some things"?

STELLA:
I reckon so.

STANLEY:
How long she been in there?

STELLA:
All afternoon.

STANLEY [mimicking]:
"Soaking in a hot tub"?

STELLA:
Yes.